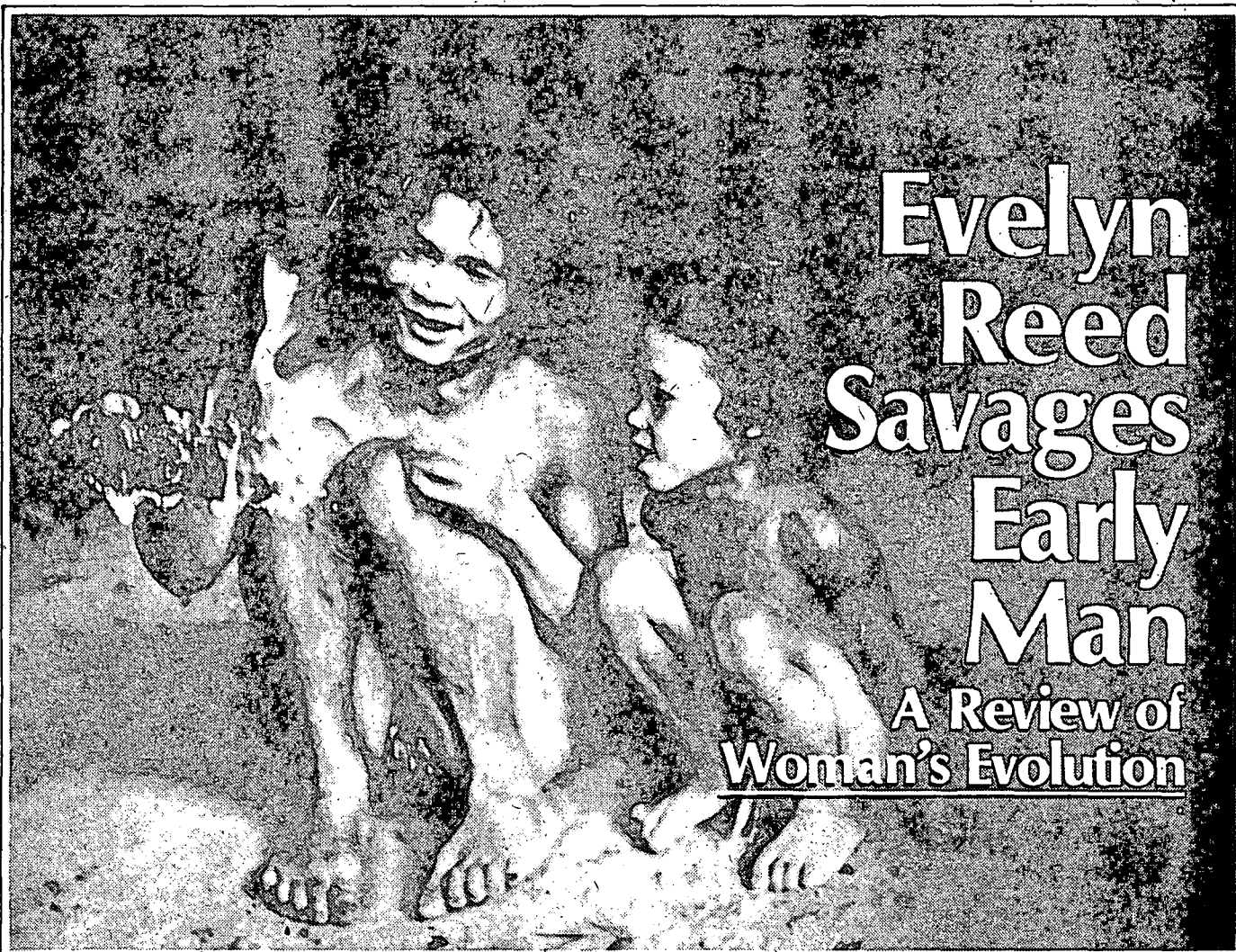


Women and Revolution



Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League

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Evelyn Reed Savages Early Man

Reed, Evelyn. *Woman's Evolution*. New York, Pathfinder Press, 1975.

A Review by Ellen Rawlings

In its eagerness to capitulate to feminism without actually dropping the word "socialist" from its name (yet), the ex-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has found itself in the awkward position of trying to embrace two contradictory world views: socialism and feminism. Hyphenating the two words fools neither socialists nor feminists; i.e., genuine socialists continue to get thrown out of "socialist-feminist" meetings.

The question of the origin of women's oppression has presented particularly thorny problems for the SWP reformists. Many feminists, ignoring the connection between women's oppression and class oppression, reject the Marxist view presented by Frederick Engels that the qualitative degeneration of women's position in society was integrally linked with the development of private property. The idealist and ahistorical conception that women's oppression is rooted in patriarchal relations leads to the conclusion that the struggle for women's liberation is something independent from—at best parallel to—the struggle against capitalist exploitation. And since it is argued that patriarchal relations existed before class society, many feminists conclude that women have been oppressed throughout the entire history of the human species and that mechanisms other than the rise of class society must therefore be sought to explain this oppression. Often women's role in reproduction is seen as the culprit. Shulamith Firestone, author of *The Dialectic of Sex*, for example, goes so far as to argue that since women's oppression has been eternal because it is biologically based, the only means of liberation lies in

the development of artificial reproduction (test tube babies).

The SWP has naturally attempted to mediate, conciliate and compromise. A major effort in this direction has been its publication of Evelyn Reed's *Woman's Evolution*—a book which pays lip service to Engels while winning the hearts and minds of the "sisters" by arguing that "feminids" (this term is apparently one of Reed's own invention; early ancestors of modern man are generally known as "hominids") were biologically destined to play the leading role as the organizers and leaders of social life.

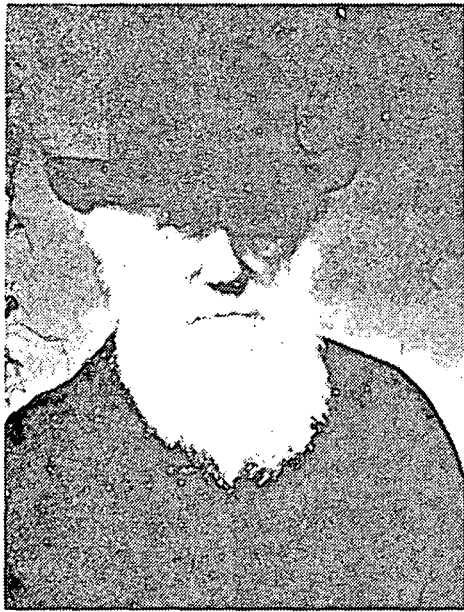
Man the Hunter vs. Woman the Nurturer

Until recently, most anthropological accounts of cultural evolution focused almost exclusively upon the hunting aspect of early hominid adaptations. Hunting (meat-eating) was seen as the subsistence activity which increasingly distinguished early hominids from other primates, who tend mainly to forage for vegetable matter. Reed attacks the idea that a "male" activity—hunting—laid the basis for human society.

The standard hunting scenario—in a simplified version—posited a fairly strict division of labor. The male hunted while the female generally cared for the young, gathered vegetable material, which continued to be an important component of the diet, and processed the remains of the animals which the hunters brought back to camp. It was assumed that effective hunting required cooperation; males hunted and therefore needed the ability to cooperate with one another. It was further assumed that since an increased capacity for learned behavior would allow for improved cooperative abilities (hence better hunting), selection pressures would have continually propelled early hominids toward a higher cultural and biological level. In other words, according



Primitive Cave Painting from Spain.



Charles Darwin



Lewis H. Morgan



Frederick Engels

Progress

to this scenario, it is a "male" activity which provides the major impetus for the course of human evolution.

Reed's own scenario, which stars Woman the Nurturer, runs like an inversion of the above. In Reed's work, we again find a fairly rigid sexual division of labor. And also, once again, the female is solely responsible for infant care. However, it is this very responsibility which, in Reed's eyes, gives the female the biological edge; that is, it is through her maternal functions that the female possesses "the natural trait of cooperation." Thus, according to Reed:

"Although both sexes were equally endowed with the hand, brain, and other anatomical preconditions required for human activity, it was the female who led the way over the bridge from animality to humanity. The mothers alone were equipped with the maternal and affective responses that were extended into the human world in the form of social collaboration."

Moreover, since the period of mothercare becomes even longer in the developing human species than it is among other primates, Reed argues further that:

"...there is another side to this prolonged period of mothercare—its effect upon the females themselves. The more extensive functions of the females in providing for and protecting their infants, together with the longer periods in which they exercise these functions, make the females the more intelligent, capable, and resourceful sex."

Reed's reconstruction of the early division of labor in society is based upon her fantastic assertion that throughout the course of human evolution males and females had separate diets; however, as Reed herself admits, she is unable to come up with any reasonable explanation for this "divergence" from all other animal behavior:

"In the animal world both sexes eat the same food. Male and female herbivores feed upon grass and other vegetation. Among the carnivores both sexes are hunters and eaters of flesh. But in the human world, with the advent of the 'omnivorous' diet, there is a sudden unexplained divergence between the sexes both in

occupation and diet. The males are the hunters and eaters of flesh foods, the females the collectors and eaters of vegetable foods."

For Reed it was hunting and the fact that hunting was a male occupation that proved extremely "hazardous" to the human species in the course of its evolution. According to Reed, since early hominid hunters (i.e., males) were unable to distinguish between themselves and other species, they were led to the practice of cannibalism. And this "mistake" was further complicated by "the violent nature of male sexuality":

"...male sexuality in the animal world where males fight one another for access to females—is a violent force. Such individualism and competitiveness had to be suppressed since human survival depended upon the closest cooperation of all the members of the group. Thus, it became imperative to overcome animal sexuality and convert fighting males into the human brotherhood."

And who was better equipped by "nature" to organize this conversion than "Woman the Nurturer"?

continued on next page

Women and Revolution

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Reed...

Reed's early "feminid" is not only smarter than the male but has the added incentive of wishing to avoid having either herself or her young mistaken for food by the male:

"...the twin hazards...confronted early humanity. On the one hand there was the violence of male sexuality, on



the other the problem of cannibalism. It is improbable that the males imposed the necessary restraints upon themselves in their hunt for food and mates. Rather, it was the females, with their highly developed maternal functions and their inhibitions with respect to eating meat, who led the way."

Here we have the females "inventing" kinship so that the dimwitted and violent males would not devour them along with everything else. Thus Reed, in her own peculiar way, sees hunting as an adaptive strategy important to the development of the human species: it introduced the menace of cannibalism which in turn sparked the development of kinship and the domestication of man by woman, thus making evolution to modern *Homo sapiens* possible.

Reed's idealistic and moralistic conjectures about the pervasiveness and importance of cannibalism in the "primal forest" (early hominids were in all probability savannah dwellers) are based upon her unscientific

speculations regarding the low mental capacity of early hominids. According to Reed:

"Our definition of cannibalism is based upon scientific knowledge of the distinctions between species, above all the demarcation of ourselves as humans and all other mammalian species. Savages did not have such knowledge.... Unable to draw the dividing line between humans and animals through biological criteria, our earliest ancestors were obliged to invent other criteria for making the distinction.... Those who were of the same kin, were of the same kind, human beings. Outsiders, non-kin, were members of the same kind, i.e., animals."

And as animals they could be eaten.

According to Reed, the domestication of the male was a process which took place over a million-year period. In fact, through the development of dating techniques based on measuring the rate of disintegration of certain radioactive isotopes and through additional fossil discoveries, the dates for the appearances of the earliest hominids—the australopithecines—most likely to have been ancestral to modern man, have been pushed back to two to five million or more years ago. Although this is well known, Reed has still not updated her "million-year" figure.

Reed's woman-as-culture-heroine is by no means content merely with the "domestication" of the male. While dragging him kicking and screaming into civilization, this female marvel of efficiency still finds time to discover or invent everything from fire to language and to produce most of the necessities of life at the same time:

"While men were hunters, women were the food-gatherers and cultivators of the soil; they were the cooks and preservers and storers of food for future use. Their industries included all the crafts from basketry and leather-making to pot-making and architecture, etc. In the course of their work they developed the rudiments of science, medicine, art, and language. They domesticated plants and animals and built settlements without which cultural life could not have existed. They were the first ambassadors and peace-makers.... All this is unambiguous evidence of the priority of the matriarchy."

Reed Distorts Engels

Reed claims as her theoretical cornerstone Engels' method in his unfinished essay, "The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man," as well as Robert Briffault's three-volume work, *The Mothers*. Briffault, who is widely regarded as a dilettante and a charlatan, argues that prolonged maternal care in the higher apes was instrumental in spurring the female sex to become the trailblazers in the advance to social life. Reed asserts that this "matriarchal theory" dovetails with Engels' "labor theory," because women were "the chief producers of the necessities of life." In fact, Reed's invocation of Engels is simply an attempt to put a Marxist gloss on a theory that amounts to little more than feminist science fiction.

It is clear that Reed's mentor is not Engels but Briffault. It is from him that she derives her central assertion that women produced most of the necessities of life. She attempts to support this claim with current anthropological data but omits the role of the male in social relations of production. Nor does she account for

the sexual division of labor in any materialist sense. The evidence indicates a great deal more variability in the division of labor based on both sex and age than Reed recognizes. For example, such division seems to be minimal among the Tasaday of the Philippines; while among Bushmen in Botswana, where both male and female productive activity are vital for group survival, the elders of both sexes play a central role in child care.

For Marxists, the labor process is the kernel of all human society—class and pre-class alike. To Marx, the labor process was characteristically human. Although the germ of tool use existed in other animals, it was the increasing capacity for more complex productive behavior that specifically characterized the development of man. In essence, humanity evolved through labor, socially modifying and re-creating its own environment.

Engels echoes this when in his essay on the transition from ape to man he argues that labor is "the prime basic condition for all human existence, and this to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that labor created man himself." If one leaves aside some of Engels' more "inventive" speculations, such as his argument about the impact of a more varied diet on the developing hominid constitution, Engels' argument is quite contemporary. Engels based many of his hypotheses on Lewis Morgan's by now dated anthropological data, as well as upon Morgan's misapplication of the theory of natural selection to the development of family and kinship systems. Moreover, he did not have available to him the information which would have allowed him to reconstruct the particularities of human evolution. Nevertheless, his essay does reveal a fine appreciation of the complex feedback process—producing a large-brained, upright, language- and tool-using primate—at work in the course of human evolution. As such, Engels' approach does serve as a point of departure for any Marxist attempting speculative reconstructions relating to human biological and cultural evolution.

But Reed's analysis is quite different. The picture which it conveys is one in which woman "evolves" man in spite of his labor (hunting begets cannibalism). Her data-base in the main consists of behavioral traits which she has extracted from studies of more modern "primitive peoples" and snippets of what mainly appears to be primate "zoo" behavior. The behavioral patterns she extracts from these sources she christens "survivals," and, as such, proceeds to project them back a million years in her attempt to reconstruct the life ways of early man.

While anthropological evidence can serve as an important source of data for hypotheses concerning human evolution, modern hunting and gathering and horticulturalist societies cannot simply be projected back in time. All such societies have been affected by emerging capitalism—in some cases for hundreds of years. At the same time, Reed minimizes the importance of archeological data—critical to uncovering the development of the labor process—except to bolster her theories regarding cannibalism.

In short, whatever reconstructions of the labor process Reed does attempt are filtered through the idealist methodology that underlies most of her

analysis. And while approaching the domain of human evolution from an idealist standpoint, her analysis is riddled with a form of biological determinism akin to Social Darwinism.

"Nature Red in Tooth and Claw"

The thread of "nature red in tooth and claw," which runs through all of Reed's work, is a conception of evolution prevalent in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It is based on a not accidental "over-literal" interpretation of Charles Darwin's formulations—

"Although both sexes were equally endowed with the hand, brain, and other anatomical preconditions required for human activity, it was the female who led the way over the bridge from animality to humanity. The mothers alone were equipped with the maternal and affective responses that were extended into the human world in the form of social collaboration."—E. Reed

"survival of the fittest" and "struggle for survival." This interpretation of Darwin's theory represented an attempt to explain and vindicate a competitive social and economic order; i.e., capitalism.

The Social Darwinists stressed both the ferocity of animals (most animals are not, in fact, ferocious by nature) and man's animal legacy. A world of scarce resources was depicted in which animals, competitive and individualistic by nature, fought "tooth and claw" for their share. It was assumed that intra-species conflict was even more vicious than inter-species conflict. The following passage from Reed could well have been written 60 years ago by any bourgeois social scientist:

"Animal behavior, fashioned by nature's mode of survival, is preponderantly individualistic and competitive. Since there is not enough food to sustain all organisms reproduced, each individual organism struggles against the others for its survival. As Darwin pointed out, this is true not only between different species; the struggle is even more intense among members of the same species, which have similar needs and rely on the same territory to provide them with food and mates."

Reed then goes on to cite the especially evil carnivores: "Carnivores... are more wary and solitary. They not only prey upon other animals but are themselves in danger of being killed and eaten by one another. These animals do not form herds and even their smaller packs, where these exist, are loose and easily dispersed."

This is followed by a rather slanderous attack upon wolves.

The modern synthetic theory of evolution, based on discoveries in the area of genetics and the emergence of "field" studies of animal behavior, has long since modified this Victorian approach. According to anthropologist David Philbeam:

"The truth of the matter is, however, rather more subtle. Animals do not continually go around fighting each other; rather, the success which really counts is

continued on next page

Reed...

reproductive success. Those animals that leave relatively more offsprings than others are 'fitter' or more successful. The 'fittest' animals are not necessarily the biggest, strongest, fastest, or sexually more attractive; merely those that leave the most progeny."

—D. Philbeam, *The Evolution of Man*

Leaving the most progeny means, of course, leaving the most progeny *alive* at least long enough to reproduce themselves; this is less a question of prodigious procreation than of developing the means of sustaining more lives longer.

If this is the case, than one is left asking why Reed continues to cling—even in her most recent essays—to the view of "nature red in tooth and claw." It is certainly not due simply to the fact that she is not a professionally trained anthropologist; "professional" anthropologists frequently produce equally silly theories. Nor is it due simply to the fact that Reed has made no attempt to update her work. It is not so much that Reed is unfamiliar with the newer studies; but that she subordinates "scholarship" to political opportunism by consciously omitting anything that might challenge her feminist reconstruction of history.

This point becomes unequivocally clear when one examines her most recent sorties into the realm of primate behavioral studies. Many anthropologists view the behavior of modern primates as a data-base for speculative reconstructions of early hominid behavior. Chimpanzee and baboon behavior, in particular, are often the focus of such speculative attempts—the former because chimpanzees are, genetically speaking, man's closest relatives in the animal world; the latter because certain types of baboons live in an ecological setting—savannah environment—similar to that which has been inferred from archeological evidence to be that of early hominids.

In her most recent essay on primatology, Reed appears to systematically omit evidence of cooperative behavior among male primates. In her discussion of the potentiality of "bonding" in primates, for example, she quotes an anthropologist who argues that among baboons "friendships" exist mainly between females and sometimes between a male and a female, but never between adult males; however, she neglects to mention Jane Goodall's observations on the same theme even though she cites Goodall's study, *In the Shadow of Man*, throughout the article. Although Goodall's descriptions are often heavily anthropomorphic, she does identify what appear to be "friendships" (for lack of a better word) between male chimps. These so-called friendships can go on for many years and appear to be mainly between sibling pairs—although this is not always the case. Goodall cites, for example, what appears to have been the impact of "Gregor's" death upon his "friend," "Humphrey," who returned for six months again and again to the place where Gregor died.

Overall, Reed minimizes role variability among primates—both within and between species. Working from a model of an "idealized" primate, she paints a portrait of pronounced segregation of the sexes, as well

as assigning an invariable sex role to the male.

While it is true that among some species of primates the sexes are somewhat segregated, one finds everything from male-female pair-centered groups to extremely varied forms of social organization. According to anthropologist Lila Leibowitz, chimp groupings include "troop-like arrangements, semi-stable nursery groups of mothers and children, mixed adolescent groups, all-male groups and general assemblages; all of these are essentially fluid."

Social organization and other behavioral traits vary for both chimps and baboons in terms of specific environmental settings; for instance, dominance is less defined among forest-fringe dwelling baboons than it is among savannah baboons. For chimps, it is less defined among forest dwellers than it is among forest-fringe dwellers.

Indeed, one finds "nurturant" behavior among males. In Goodall's study, she discovered that upon the death of their mother, an adolescent male chimp "adopted"—that is, took charge of—a younger female sibling. One also finds among baboons situations in which the females set the direction of troop movement and situations in which the males do; situations in which the males act as protectors of the females and

"While men were hunters, women were the food gatherers and cultivators of the soil; they were the cooks and preservers and storers of food for future use. Their industries included all the crafts from basketry and leather-making to pot-making and architecture, etc. In the course of their work they developed the rudiments of science, medicine, art, and language. They domesticated plants and animals and built settlements without which cultural life could not have existed. They were the first ambassadors and peace-makers.... All this is unambiguous evidence of the priority of the matriarchy."

—E. Reed

young and situations in which, at the first sign of danger, they are the first ones up the trees.

In general, primates exhibit a behavioral capacity for role-flexibility, although the degree to which this occurs varies from species to species. This behavioral plasticity does not at all dovetail with the reactionary social theory codified as "nature's blind rule." Rather, as anthropologist Kay Martin argues:

"Higher primates have the ability to adjust their social behaviors to meet the survival requirements of different environments. The basis of this ability is the fact that much of the social behavior of monkeys and apes is learned, and not simply the result of genetic programming."

And it is an increasing capacity for learned behavior that distinguishes the course of hominid evolution from that of other primates.

Survival in "nature" is not necessarily competitive or individualistic. One finds species in which the male is ferocious and ones in which the female is. There are some species which might be considered competitive

as well as some species that have symbiotic relationships with other species; e.g., baboons and zebras. There are some species in which individual members are extremely competitive with one another and others, such as wolves and certain species of primates, whose members tend to exhibit gregarious and/or cooperative behavior. In all, animal behavior is extremely varied.

If one then approaches the question of survival in nature without the Social Darwinist myth of universal competition and individualism, Reed's argument begins to dissolve. Her vegetable-eating, peace-

"As Engels demonstrated, it was through productive activities that mankind arose out of the animal world. More concretely, then it was the female half of humanity who initiated and led in these productive activities and who must therefore be credited with the major share in this great act of creation and elevation of humanity."—E. Reed

making, civilizing "feminid" culture heroine loses her "natural biological edge." And it becomes apparent why "nature red in tooth and claw" carries so much importance for Reed—it was from this approach that she derived her "biological edge" in the first place.

Reed assures us that we need not worry about "nature red in tooth and claw," for as man leaves the animal world in the process of becoming human (she means this literally; i.e., woman left before him), he is leaving behind "nature's blind law." She thus attempts to distance herself from her Social Darwinist props.

Feminist Mythology Parading as Science

Reed—the Lysenko of the SWP—is a laughingstock not only among serious anthropologists, but even among her own comrades, who have a hard time swallowing these feminist fantasies paraded before them as the results of "scientific research." Stephanie Coontz, formerly Associate Editor of the SWP's *International Socialist Review (ISR)*, attempts in her polemic with Reed (*ISR*, February 1978) to save feminism from the threat of Reed's obsession with biological determinism. However, in blunting her attack on her political co-thinker and keeping her criticism "positive," Coontz allows Reed to side-step her argument. To Coontz's weak protest that "neither historical materialism nor feminism has any need of a theory of matriarchy," Reed responds: "By rejecting the priority of the matriarchy, Coontz rejects the scientific and historical facts needed to convince women that their biology does not consign them to an inferior position."

The trivial differences do not begin to touch their fundamental shared commitment to feminism and to reformism in general. They also share an openly expressed willingness to make their "scientific" findings fit whatever political conclusion is currently desired.

Far more devastating are the polemics of another of Reed's comrades, Robert Des Verney (R. Vernon), who engaged in a series of exchanges with her in the *SWP Discussion Bulletin* between 1973 and 1975: Des Verney pillories her contention that only men engaged in cannibalism with example after example of anthropological data to the contrary, one of which follows:

"... The following morning the prisoner was dragged to the plaza by some old women.... Old women painted black and red, with necklaces of human teeth darted out of their huts carrying newly painted vases to receive the victim's blood and entrails.... The prisoner's wife shed a few tears over his body and then joined in the cannibalistic banquet. Old women rushed to drink the warm blood, and children were invited to dip their hands in it. Mothers would smear their nipples with blood so that even babies could have a taste of it. The body, cut into quarters, was roasted on a barbeque, and the old women, who were the most eager for human flesh, licked the grease running along the sticks...."

—A. Metraux, *Handbook of South American Indians*, quoted in R. Des Verney, "Some Data on Female Cannibalism," *SWP Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 33, No. 9, July 1975

Des Verney comments:

"This textual material, restoring women to their rightful place among our cannibal ancestors; and recovering part of the 'Hidden History' covered up or ignored by Reed, makes grisly and gruesome reading. But nowhere near as gruesome as encouraging the party to make an ass of itself in public by espousing utopian antiscientific fantasy systems that can be blown apart with great ease...."

"Still less permissible is it for the party to engage in activities typical of a lunatic-fringe nut cult, with comrades who are ignorant not only of the science in question but of scientific methodology in general running around badgering scientists for not giving their stamp of approval to this pseudoscientific fad, implying that any and all scientists who are not impressed by this pseudo-anthropology are part of a conspiracy against women, 'evolution,' Morgan-Marx-Engels, 'theory' [!], and Evelyn Reed."

—R. Des Verney, *ibid.*

Reed herself is anything but modest in assessing her contribution to anthropology. "My book," she writes, "takes up where Engels left off." But her claim to be the continuator of Engels' historical-materialist method in

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WORKERS VANGUARD

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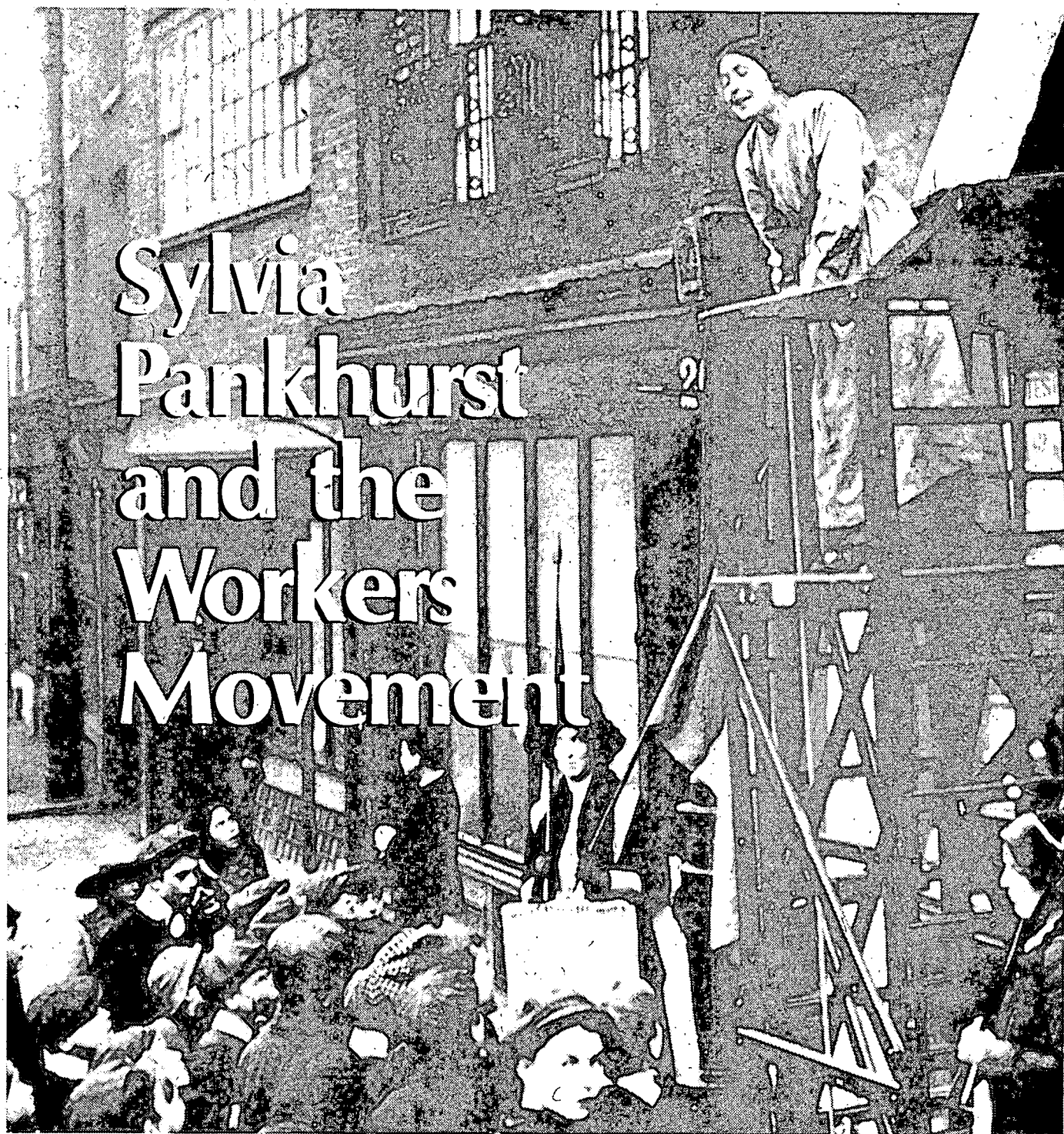
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Sylvia Pankhurst addresses rally in the East End of London.

The development of the 1960's New Left women's movement brought with it a renewal of interest in the history of the women's suffrage movement. For contemporary feminists, the British suffrage movement prior to World War I represents one of the high points of women's struggles, which brought women out on the streets in large numbers for militant and even heroic actions. And for Britain's contemporary "socialist-feminists," the special heroine is Sylvia Pankhurst, who worried about the miserable status of poor and working women in London's East End while

her sister Christabel dallied with princesses in Paris.

Sylvia Pankhurst's autobiographical account, *The Suffrage Movement* (1931), has recently been republished by Virago, a British left-feminist publisher. It begins appropriately with a description of her father. Dr. Richard Marsden Pankhurst was an outstanding nineteenth-century radical pacifist; a man of great principle; a campaigner for home rule for Ireland, votes for women and the nationalization of the land and mines. He was also a founder of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). Sylvia's politics were formed in this

mold and, during the period covered by the book, she did not move significantly beyond them.

Dr. Pankhurst died in 1897. In 1903 his widow Emmeline and their daughters invited other ILP women to found the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) as a male-exclusionist pressure group to campaign for a single democratic right: votes for women. Thus was born the organization which eventually led thousands of supporters in an impassioned crescendo of protest, from marches and speeches to arson and martyrdom. To win this single parliamentary reform, women suffered beating, imprisonment and even death.

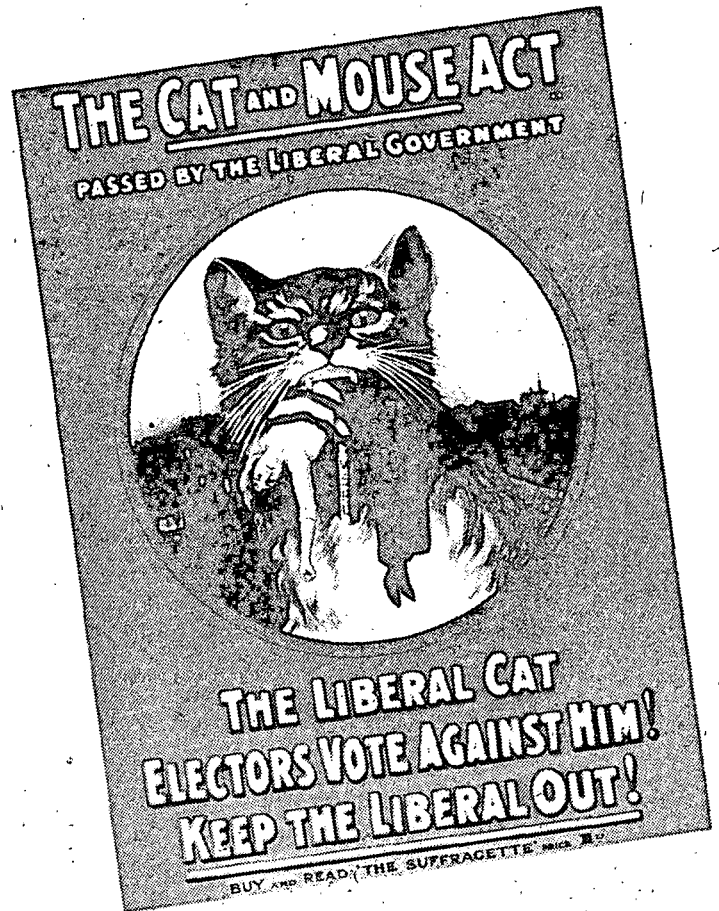
The ensuing ten years were marked by enormous social and political upheavals which threw the single-issue women's movement to the right repeatedly in reaction to such issues as the Irish crisis and the great strike wave beginning in 1912. During this period Sylvia remained a silent, loyal left-winger, brooding over her mother's and sister's rightward trajectory but unwilling to break with them. (Later, Sylvia recalled her distrust of Christabel's "incipient Toryism.")

The WSPU finally declared itself boldly "independent" of any political party. The blazing energy of its leadership and the adventurism of its tactics quickly tore its members away from the Macdonalds and Snowdons. But its feminist parochialism also tore it away from class politics. As Sylvia put it: "The dislike which Macdonald had for the militants was abundantly returned by them, above all by Christabel, who regarded all Socialists, Labourists and Liberals as arrant humbugs unless they were prepared to place Votes for Women before all other issues." Christabel feared above all a close association between the Labour Party and the WSPU. This "independence" was a foreshadowing of the "autonomy" which is now fought for by "socialist-feminists." All class questions were to be held in abeyance. WSPU members were forbidden to work for the Labour Party many of them had built until the one demand could be won through Christabel's brand of class collaboration.

Christabel's early speeches had focused almost entirely on the industrial status of women. But a movement based on a single democratic demand, divorced from a socialist program, acting as a pressure group on the parliamentary parties had a logic of its own that carried Emmeline, Christabel and a reluctant Sylvia into the arms of the bourgeoisie. Christabel and Emmeline sought a parliamentary balance of forces which could be cajoled, threatened, driven or bribed into conceding the vote to middle-class women. The two of them dictated the WSPU's policies. Indeed, one of the reasons Sylvia could resist the organization's rightward motion while remaining in the WSPU was that she was never allowed to formulate policy, but only to pursue her artistic endeavors, paint scenery for pageants, make speeches and go to jail.

Militant Means—Minimal Ends

Christabel had two methods of persuasion: she first twisted the tail of the bourgeois politicians and then



The cover of WSPU's The Suffragette dramatizes vicious "Cat and Mouse Act," when women were repeatedly arrested.

whispered in their ears. While the WSPU tactics escalated to window-breaking sprees, burning mail boxes and buildings, slashing paintings in galleries and the like, the larger National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies was insisting that women wanted only the vote; if granted that right they would no longer terrorize the state but would strengthen it against its other foes. As Emmeline Pankhurst, on trial, said from the dock in 1908: "We are not here as law breakers, but in an effort to become law makers."

As British society was rent by the unrest of the pre-war decade, Christabel spelled out the kind of laws she wanted to make. In 1912 troops were sent to break the great London docks strike. Strike leaders were jailed for appealing to the soldiers not to shoot their fellow workers. The WSPU railed that "this offense was more serious than any committed by the suffragettes and should have been more seriously punished." Later Christabel wrote: "We would ask the Government if they propose to make the organisation of strikes punishable by law."

The WSPU conception of militancy was a hollow one: to force open the doors of Parliament it was necessary to use militant tactics, but to squeeze through the crack it was essential to shed the bulk of other political concerns and "unacceptable" allies. The movement had become truly "independent" of the working class

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Pankhursts...

and its parties in order to become slavishly dependent on the bourgeoisie.

The impotence of this policy was soon revealed. When the king died in 1910 the WSPU paper *Votes for Women*, black-bordered in mourning, "vied with the conservative organs in [its] expression of devotion to the throne." A truce was called for the funeral and, under the table, Christabel offered an olive branch to the Tories. A conciliation committee of members of Parliament from all parties was set up to devise a suffrage bill acceptable to all. In June it announced its decision to propose the first Conciliation Bill to enfranchise women householders and occupiers of business premises—one million middle- and upper-class women. The WSPU, the other suffrage societies and even the ILP and the Fabian Society rushed to accept the deal, ditching, "for the time being," the rights of twelve out of every thirteen adult women in the country. But having drawn up a sellout, they couldn't find a buyer. It was more opportune for



Keir Hardie, Independent Labour Party member of Parliament, championing women's suffrage at Trafalgar Square meeting in 1913.

Christabel to betray 12 million women than it was for Liberal Party head Asquith. The one million proposed voters could be counted on to vote Tory. The bill was defeated.

Sylvia's Working-Class Refuge

Sylvia's decision to found the East London Federation (ELF) in 1912, affiliated with the WSPU but based on the poor and working-class constituency of East London, was made against Christabel's wishes. In December 1913, following her appearance at Albert Hall in support of imprisoned Irish leader Jim Larkin, Sylvia was summoned to Paris, where Christabel was living in exile, and expelled. She made no fight and allowed Christabel to offer the only public explanations for the split:

"The W.S.P.U. programme and policy we framed and the word of command is given by Mrs. Pankhurst and myself...consequently those who wish to give an independent lead or to carry out either a programme or a

policy which differs from those laid down by the W.S.P.U. must necessarily have an independent organisation of their own."

And Christabel considered a working-class base a liability. Working women were "the weakest portion of the sex." "Surely it is a mistake to use the weakest for the struggle."

Now Sylvia had an organization of her own, but it was separated from the rest of the WSPU not so much by distinctness of program or policy as by its class composition and class sympathy. The ELF built up massive support among working-class women, with a branch in almost every street in the East End (the Bow Branch alone had more than a thousand members). There, Sylvia campaigned for universal adult suffrage (20 percent of the men still had no vote), supported strikes and toyed with ideas of a broader reformist program: "I had dreams of a great rehousing of the East End population, not an impossibility given a raising of the public conscience, though a costly project it must be admitted."

But while Sylvia rejected Christabel's contempt for working women, the difference between the Pankhurst sisters rested largely on moral grounds. Sylvia never attempted to split the WSPU along class lines, contenting herself with founding a sort of proletarian auxiliary to a bourgeois movement.

In fact, the WSPU had always had a substantial working-class base, located mainly in London and Lancashire. As early as 1906 one of its demonstrations included delegations of weavers, winders, reelers, shirtmakers, chairmakers, iron workers, cigar makers, bookbinders and match girls. The social composition reflected the intersection in this period between the question of women's suffrage and the trade unions' drive to seek independent labor representation in Parliament. Many of these unions were in "women's trades," and it made little sense for their members to work to build a party they couldn't vote for. Of course, the nascent Labour Party, not based on a revolutionary program, was the political extension of a union leadership far less committed to struggling on behalf of the most oppressed strata of the working masses than to seeking a liaison with the Liberal Party in the interest of electoral success. Within the Labour Party, the fight for the women's suffrage plank was led by Keir Hardie with the occasional support of Sylvia and her followers.

Despite her own rather muddle-headed pro-socialist sympathies—which led her to become an early supporter of the Bolshevik Revolution—Sylvia never fought to win her proletarian supporters to a class-struggle perspective. The ELF never broke from the middle-class protest tactics which characterized the WSPU. In 1912, during the height of the window-smashing and mailbox-burning campaigns, Emmeline Pankhurst proclaimed that property would be "as gravely endangered by the Suffragettes as by the Chartists of old." The middle-class feminist militants of the WSPU were incapable of understanding the significance of the Chartist movement. Unlike their Luddite forerunners—the displaced artisans whose political program was confined to destroying the machines which had made them superfluous—the



WSPU leaders in 1906. From left to right: Christabel Pankhurst, Jessie Kenny, Mrs. Martel, Emmeline Pankhurst and Charlotte Despard.

Chartists were based on the new industrial-proletariat. Their power lay in their ability to stop the wheels of production, thus threatening not simply property but profit. Emmeline's window-smashing campaigns were as impotent as the Luddites' desperate machine-smashing rampages. By contrast, Sylvia's membership, drawn from the sweatshops of the East End, with husbands who worked on the London docks, was potentially a bridge to the industrial working class. But Sylvia still thought in terms of middle-class protest tactics: hunger strikes, prayers and deputations to Parliament.

In 1914, when the king called a conference on Ireland, the ELF marched outside Buckingham Palace demanding he call a conference on women's suffrage. On Mothering Sunday they marched to Westminster Abbey to pray for the vote. And when a deputation from the ELF was finally received by Asquith, they told him: "...we know that there are some who belittle representative government and declare the vote useless, but we cannot think that you, sir, as Prime Minister of this country, will assent to that view."

Imperialist War

In the wake of the split with the WSPU and in the atmosphere of working-class militancy which preceded the outbreak of World War I, the polarization deepened. Police attacks on East End meetings and demonstrations prompted Sylvia to appeal for men with military experience to come forward and drill a "People's Army" to defend them. When war finally came, Sylvia was not swept up in the orgy of national chauvinism which split the European working-class movement.

Meanwhile, no organization outdid the WSPU in patriotism, racism or militarism. All suffrage agitation

was suspended indefinitely in the interests of driving working men from the factories to the trenches and driving their wives and daughters into the factories—unprotected by union agreements—to fuel the war machine, jack up the surplus of war profiteers and break the working-class organizations. When the miners struck in South Wales, WSPU leaders rushed to the scene to denounce "Bolshevism." And in early 1917, terrified that Russia might withdraw from the war, Emmeline hastened to Moscow, on behalf of "patriotic English women" and Lloyd George, to support Kerensky against the Bolsheviks.

As jingoism gained momentum, many of the equivocators were swept along. Sylvia stood firm. Her close collaboration with Keir Hardie made her loyal to the pacifism which he upheld until his death in 1915. But more importantly, her base among the East End women provided a firm bulwark, for the immediate effect of the war was to force these women to the brink of starvation. With their husbands at the front, pitiful separation allowances paid irregularly and prices skyrocketing, there was little flagwaving among this section of the population. These women turned to Sylvia for help and the ELF took on the role of a trade union, a family solicitor and a relief agency. The ELF's strength was that it tied the question of wartime working conditions to a campaign against the war itself, while most working-class organizations (for instance, the Clyde Shop Stewards) were persuaded to split the two when offered concessions on the liquidation of pre-war union agreements.

In April 1915 the ELF called a conference of labor and suffrage organizations to fight for women to refuse to register for war work "as a protest against war and conscription" or to work only for equal pay and

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Lesbian Mother Deprived of Custody

Defend Margareth Miller

On February 23 the Oakland County Circuit Court in Ann Arbor, Michigan deprived Margareth Miller of custody of her 12-year-old daughter Jillian. Judge Frederick Ziem had denied Miller the custody of her child last June, but the Michigan Court of Appeals sent her case back to him for reconsideration. Miller's ex-husband, who already has custody of their 14-year-old son, had dragged her into court to gain custody of Jillian, whom she alone had supported for five years, on the grounds that her "lifestyle" did not provide stability in the home. What the self-righteous guardians of bourgeois propriety actually find so objectionable is that Margareth Miller is a lesbian.

The charge that Miller is an unfit mother was forcefully contested in court: by her child, who has stated that she would prefer to live with her mother; by her child's teacher; by a court-appointed psychologist and by two "Friend of the Court" witnesses, one of whom testified: "Here is a single parent doing a phenomenal job with her daughter."

Ziem has admitted that his original ruling last June was based on the issue of lesbianism. At that time he cited a press account describing Jimmy Carter's disapproval of homosexuality and raved about the "threat of a lesbian environment" to the well-being of the child. But this proved too embarrassing for the Michigan Court of Appeals, which sent the case back to Ziem to enable him to strengthen the legal pretexts of his decision.

This kind of harassment by the state, which has forced a number of lesbian mothers into expensive and often harrowing lawsuits, is one small part of the campaign against homosexuals touched off by the reactionary moralizing hypocrisy of Jimmy Carter and spearheaded by right wingers such as Anita Bryant. And this campaign is not confined to the bible belt.

Ann Arbor, which has a reputation for liberalism, actually has a sordid history of particularly vicious

persecution of homosexuals. In the early sixties the University of Michigan administration conspired with the Ann Arbor police to "booby trap" the men's rest rooms with plain-clothes cops on the lookout for "anything homosexual." In 1959, 1960 and 1962 up to 30 students and faculty were arrested on charges of "gross indecency" and "attempted gross indecency." As a result, faculty members were forced to resign their posts, students were expelled from school and one student committed suicide rather than face the long humiliating trial procedure. One of the men who engineered and ran these despicable harassment campaigns was police captain Krasney. He is now Ann Arbor's chief of police.

The seriousness of the current right-wing offensive in Michigan was underscored last November when 50 members of the Michigan State Assembly "symbolically" put forward a resolution—never voted upon—which expressed their "deepest gratitude, support and congratulations" to Anita Bryant for her "moral conviction" and "righteous campaign" to suppress the democratic rights of homosexuals.

The Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth League vigorously opposes any infringement of the democratic rights of homosexuals. We call upon the left, the labor movement and all those concerned with democratic rights to defend the victims of the state's vicious anti-homosexual persecution.

The Partisan Defense Committee has sent a contribution to Margareth Miller, who is once again seeking to appeal her case, and we urge our readers to do the same. Contributions may be sent to:

Margareth and Jillian Defense Committee
c/o Daniel Tsang, Gay Academic Union
3707 Michigan Union
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109

Pankhursts...

conditions. But the organization remained within a pacifist perspective, under the slogan "peace without victory." Sylvia could devise no programmatic step forward for her movement.

When the Bolsheviks took power in Russia, they demonstrated to workers throughout the world that there is only one way to end imperialist war and defend the international working class: by turning the war into a civil war, by "turning the guns" against the enemy at home. Sylvia Pankhurst was able to see this, and for a

brief period she attempted to lead her movement toward the politics of the Third International. This effort is not recorded in her book; nor is her subsequent sad career as a radical mystic in Haile Selassie's Ethiopia. The book ends with the winning of the vote in 1917-18. It documents the history of a women's movement which straddled classes and split along class lines. And that split—which took place not simply over "women's issues" but most definitively over the overriding question of imperialist war—was an intimation of the irreconcilability of interests between bourgeois feminism and a communist women's movement. ■

Vatican Attacks New Italian Abortion Reform

On May 18 Italy enacted one of the most liberal abortion laws in Western Europe. The new law permits free, state-subsidized abortions during the first 90 days of pregnancy for "economic, social, family or psychological" reasons.

Abortion has been an explosive issue in the homeland of papal reaction. Two years ago the controversy over abortion sparked a political crisis which brought down the government of Aldo Moro, the former prime minister recently executed by the anarcho-terrorist Red Brigades.

At first glance passage of the new law appears anomalous in the repressive climate of post-Moro "unity" between the Vatican-backed Christian Democracy (DC) and the Stalinist Communist Party of Italy (PCI). In fact, the law was the result of a PCI/DC maneuver to head off a June 11 referendum sponsored by the bourgeois Radicals, feminist groupings and the "far left" to repeal the 1930 fascist law which defined abortion as "a crime against the race." Such a referendum would have threatened the popular-front bloc between the Communists and Christian Democrats, as did a similar referendum on divorce in 1974, which resulted in a major defeat for the ruling DC. At that time Italian women, who were expected to vote to repeal a three-year-old law permitting divorce, voted by a margin of three to two to retain the law. The vote was a major defeat for the Christian Democrats and a source of great embarrassment to the CP, which was forced into a reluctant opposition to the bourgeois party after wooing it for years in the hope of working out a deal in order to enter a coalition government (see "Papal/Fascist Anti-Divorce Drive Defeated in Italy," WV No. 45, 24 May 1974).

While the Christian Democrats took only a half-hearted stand against the reform, tacking on amendments to bolster husband/parental control, raising the minimum age from 16 to 18 and requiring consultation with the partner unless a woman explicitly objects, the Catholic hierarchy has gone all out to undermine the legislation which it was unable to prevent. Catholic physicians have been warned that performing an abortion is punishable by excommunication and instructed to utilize the law's "conscientious objector" clause, inserted as a result of church pressure. It has also been announced that nuns and other members of religious orders serving as medical personnel would be withdrawn from state and private hospitals performing abortions under the new law. This will undoubtedly place severe limits on the law's effectiveness, since Italian hospitals are heavily dependent on church medical workers. Nearly 900 Catholic nuns serve as nurses in Rome alone, and the city has 31 hospitals run by religious institutions.

The Italian Communist Party has traditionally bowed

to the Vatican on the issue of abortion. At the 1973 conference of the PCI women's organization, the Union of Italian Women (UDI), PCI deputy Leonilde Iotti—the widow of Italian Stalinist patriarch Palmiro Togliatti—publicly opposed legalizing abortion, moralizing over how traumatic it was for a woman to "rid



Italian women demonstrate in favor of abortion reform (July 1975).

herself of the fruits of love." But under pressure from the UDI, the Communists backed the reform bill, while voting for the DC amendments which watered it down.

Abortion Reforms Must Be Linked to Class Struggle

In the U.S. during the heyday of the women's liberation movement, the reformists of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) sought to build a class-collaborationist coalition—the Women's Abortion Action Coalition (WONAAC)—around the single reformist issue of repealing anti-abortion laws. Capitulating to feminist fears of male contamination, the SWP "socialist-feminists" systematically excluded men who wished to participate in the fight to legalize abortion. Capitulating to bourgeois fears of communism, the SWP tried to silence those who opposed class collaboration and single-issuism and were fighting for the slogan "free abortion on demand" as part of a revolutionary program to eliminate the material basis

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As World Congress Approaches

USec Wracked by Internal Struggles Over Women's Caucuses

"The impact of women's liberation on the revolutionary left has laid the basis for feminism in the IMG [International Marxist Group]... it is vital that women are allowed to organise in caucuses to discuss how to challenge sexism and male domination inside the IMG."

—"IMG Pre-Conference Bulletin No. 15," 1978

"On women's caucuses. They are neither good or normal! But neither is the situation of women in the organization...."

"Women's caucuses, under the control of the leadership... can be a means for women comrades to discuss their personal situation in the organization, which they won't do in a mixed meeting precisely because the oppression of women also exists within the organization."

—"Excerpt from Minutes of United Secretariat Meeting, March 31, April 1-2 1978"

Since the inception of the "women's liberation movement" in the late 1960's, the question of what orientation to take toward the emergence of a significant petty-bourgeois feminist current has confronted the entirety of the ostensibly Marxist movement. In the case of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat of the "Fourth International" (USec), the feminist upsurge in the U.S. and later in Europe was to be hailed as the women's path to socialism. In the U.S. the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)—the USec's on-again/off-again fraternal partner—proclaimed that socialists were simply consistent feminists and tried to dress up the Friedans/Steinems/Abzugs in the colors of the workers movement.

The USec sent its comrades into the ranks of the feminist "sisters," not in order to intervene against feminism with a Marxist program but in order to become the "best builders" of anti-Marxist feminism and its bourgeois program. And they did become the "best builders" of feminism—not least of all within the USec itself! Today the USec finds itself in the throes of a heated battle over the "right" of women to organize their own caucuses within the party and over their "sexual immunity" from any sort of organizational discipline. What a dilemma for the cynical USec tailists! Having built a "methodology" out of heralding the parochialism of every sector of the oppressed, how can they stomp on their female comrades who want to "do their own thing" unencumbered by the tiresome rules and regulations of the rest of the organization?

With the approach of its "Eleventh World Congress of the Fourth International," the USec is facing a deep cleavage as section after section is consumed by the specter of feminism which has been nurtured and

encouraged within its own ranks. Moreover, the USec's home-grown feminists, not content with merely being sideline cheerleaders, are deserting in droves for the greener pastures of the "movement" playing field. The ultra-feminist document "Women's Caucuses and the IMG—A Fresh Approach" summarizes the predicament of the British USec and other sections as well:

"It has to be admitted that for many women, the WLM [Women's Liberation Movement] is a far more congenial milieu for their particular activity and personal development than the IMG. This means that several leading women comrades have in the past few years chosen to concentrate their political energies in the WLM rather than the IMG. A drift of feminists out of the IMG is inevitable while the organization continues to ignore the impact of the WLM upon these women, and refuses to accept women's need to organise separately."

Castles Built on "Sand"

The demand for male-exclusionist and autonomous women's caucuses within the various sections has been the battle cry of the feminist revolt in the USec. Distrustful (not without reason) of the USec's commitment to struggle against the oppression of women and victimized by the European leadership's penchant for the swaggering macho image, this growing feminist wave feels it can rely only upon male-exclusionist "watch-dog" caucuses to protect women from their own comrades. Wary of any attempt to suppress their "self-awareness," the USec feminists readily point to the precedents for women's caucuses sanctioned (if not initiated) by the leadership itself.

At its founding national conference in 1974, the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), the USec's pace-setter, created the "groupes Sand"—male-exclusionist internal groupings. The LCR leadership's repeated reminders that these formations were intended to be "informal" and not a parallel internal structure were ignored. Eventually the LCR central committee felt compelled to vote a motion admonishing the "groupes Sand" that it was improper to slander comrades behind their backs.

Rather than stemming the tide, the attempts of the "male higher-ups" to dissolve the caucuses resulted in a further eruption of feminist revolt. At the LCR's second national congress, held last January, a "woman's boycott" was threatened if these "for women only" groupings were not allowed to elect their own delegates—independent, of course, of the formal party structure. And at the congress itself a resolution was put

forward condemning the central committee for refusing to grant the caucuses "tendency" status.

The LCR congress quickly degenerated into what *Workers Vanguard* accurately portrayed as a three-ring circus (see WV No. 146, 25 February 1977) with the feminists right smack in the middle. One female comrade, asked to identify herself to the congress, passionately declared: "I am a woman!"

In Britain the mid-April conference of the IMG this year was overwhelmingly dominated by the question of autonomous women's caucuses. Here the central leadership headed by John Ross and Brian Grogan did not challenge the right of women to form caucuses but argued only over the question of *control*: who would determine the agendas and what information would be reported back to the organization as a whole.

Ross and Grogan argued that women's caucuses should exist but only on an occasional, non-autonomous basis. This was rejected by 70 percent of the delegates (!), who followed the argumentation of a minority tendency, claiming that women's internal groupings must be totally independent of any form of control by the IMG. The IMG has thus codified its rejection of any semblance of Leninist norms on the question of *democratic centralism of a Bolshevik party*, which alone can lead the consistent battle against oppression. (Whereupon a black feminist took up the demand for white-exclusionist black caucuses— after all, are not the IMG's 25 black members as deserving of the "right" to autonomy as women?)

The Logic of Capitulation

The opponents of autonomous women's groupings at the IMG conference were hard-pressed to explain why feminist organizational forms were unwelcome within the IMG when they are encouraged everywhere else. After all, if the overcoming of women's oppression is the task of trans-class sexual unity, why should a vanguard party be any different?

The leadership in turn argued that in the "mass movement" it is okay to subordinate drawing a sharp

class line to catering to popular feminist demands, but that only goes for *outside* the organization. A document submitted for the upcoming "World Congress" by SWP honcho Mary Alice Waters, "Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women's Liberation," lays out this perspective:

"In the mass movement we support and fight for the right of women to form such caucuses. Our position flows from the fact that other organizations are not based on a revolutionary Marxist program that represents the historical interests of women and the working class. "...in a revolutionary Marxist party, whatever its shortcomings and weaknesses may be, there is no inherent contradiction between program, leadership, and ranks. Thus the organization of women-only caucuses stands in contradiction to the political character of the party and our democratic-centralist organizational principles, which flow from our program."

—SWP *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*,
No. 4; May 1978

But neither the membership of USec organizations nor a substantial chunk of the leadership believes that "there is no inherent contradiction between program, leadership, and ranks." Five of the 21 votes cast at the March 31, April 1-2 USec meeting were for an amendment to the "Socialist Revolution..." draft resolution which advocated:

"b) conscious measures of cadre development which can integrate women comrades and overcome sexist habits and attitudes. Until such measures are more or less fully implemented, women's caucuses can play a positive role in identifying such problems and raising the debate as to their solution."

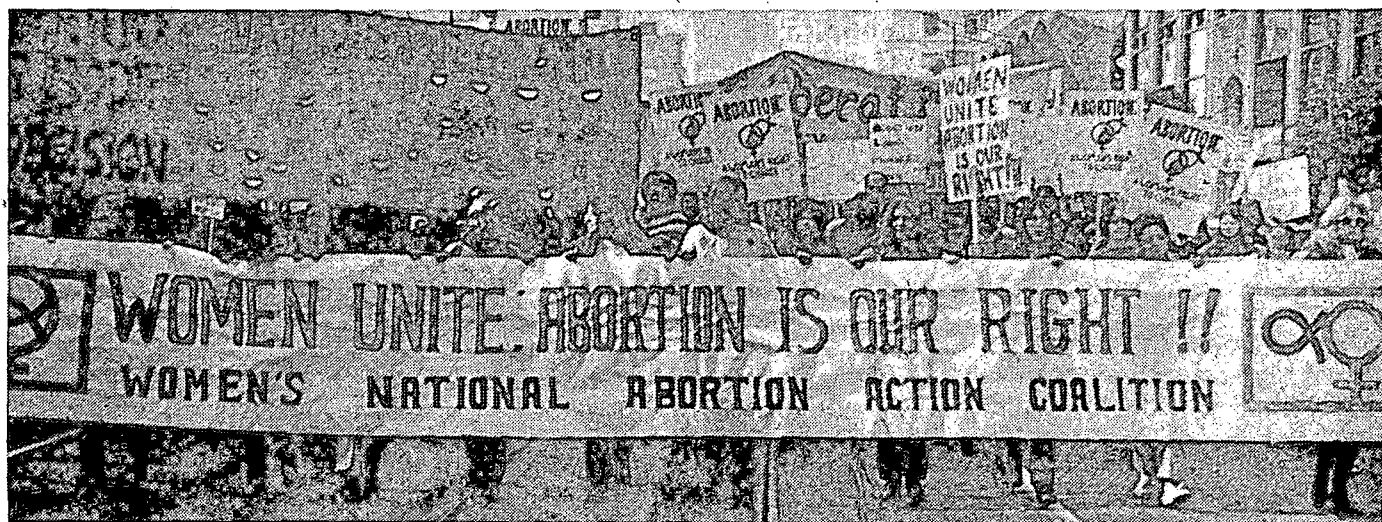
But coming from the party tops, this amendment added the proviso:

"As such, however, such caucuses must be convened under the direction of the leadership at all levels and the discussions be fully reported back to the collective structures of the organization."

Brotherly Love in the USec

The "Eleventh World Congress" is the first since the initiation of the current "unity" drive between the

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Roger Lubin

SWP's WONAAC illustrates USec strategy of single-issue reformism unencumbered by Marxist politics at San Francisco demonstration in 1971.

USec...

perpetual factional antagonists which make up the United Secretariat. No less than other issues, the woman question was an ongoing bone of contention between the SWP-dominated reformist minority wing—the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction (LTF)—and the centrist LCR-spearheaded International Majority Tendency (IMT), both now formally dissolved. While the shared abject capitulation to feminism provides a basis for patchwork “unity” on this issue, differences persist.

The above-mentioned resolution states that the SWP “supports and helps build such all-female groups and organizations which are an indispensable component of the mass feminist movement we strive for.” As is well known the “mass feminist movement” which is the apple of the SWP’s eye, is none other than the National Organization for Women (NOW), the bourgeois-feminist auxiliary to the Democratic Party. The report of women’s work to the last SWP national conference stated outright: “We should deepen our work to build NOW, the most important single organization in which we are active.”

Unfortunately for the SWP, the aspiring bourgeois politicians in NOW fear that even the presence of tame social democrats such as the SWP might give them a bad name, and at the last NOW conference in April 1977 these “sisters” launched a vicious red-baiting attack on the SWP. Stung by the attack and looking for a sop to throw the way of the more left-wing ex-IMT, the SWP’s document now pays lip service to the desirability of an “anti-capitalist” orientation for the women’s movement.

The first draft of the IMT’s response to the Waters document termed it a “deadly digest of the lowest common denominator of women’s oppression,” and added that the SWP had “called into question the fundamental principles drawn up at the first four congresses of the Communist International, which in our opinion represent the essential basis on which to correctly deal with the new problems posed today” (*SWP Internal Discussion Bulletin*, December 1976).

But this was before brotherly love came to the USec and, equally significant, before the full emergence of a mass feminist current in its European base—so the IMT could still wax orthodox on the “Marxist class-struggle approach to work in the women’s movement.” Today, while the main document of the former IMT still contains digs at the SWP such as labeling NOW a “bourgeois feminist current,” the answer to Waters (“For an Intervention by Sections of the Fourth International Against the Oppression of Women”) states early on, “The authors of the two documents do not consider them to contain counterposed political lines.”

The IMT’s history of capitulating to guerrillism, popular frontism, student vanguardism, etc., makes clear that the long-standing differences were not based on any “Marxist class-struggle approach.” Rather what was at stake was the question of whom to capitulate to, as can be clearly seen on the question of abortion rights. Since the feminist current in Europe evolved along the lines of petty-bourgeois radicalism, the IMT

readily demanded not only the right to abortions but that they be free as well.

The SWP, on the other hand, looking for allies among mainstream Democratic Party liberals, long opposed the demand for free abortions for fear it would “alienate” the bourgeois feminists of NOW. In a major polemic against the Spartacist League (SL), former SL member Bob Pearlman attempts to alibi the social democrats of the SWP on this score by dismissing the demand for free abortions as “a good proposition that simply was not the issue at the time.” Writes Pearlman:

“In a country such as the United States, since the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, this has meant that abortion costs are covered by government social insurance and welfare programs and by many of the private medical plans that most [!] U.S. workers and their families possess. This is not exactly free [!!!] and there are currently reactionary attempts to eliminate abortions from Medicaid coverage, but legalization was a tremendous gain, nonetheless.”

—*Intercontinental Press*, 13 June 1977

Only a week after this unfortunate polemic was printed the Supreme Court ruled that states had the right to prohibit Medicaid abortions, thereby placing poor women once again at the mercy of back-alley butchers—apparently with no effect on the SWP reformists. One would search in vain in the SWP’s response to the Court ruling (*Militant*, 1 July 1977) to find the call for free abortion on demand.

From Lenin to Montseny

While these old family squabbles have been quietly locked away in the new era of reunification, the USec cannot escape the fact that championing feminism necessarily entails a departure from Leninism and the revolutionary heritage of the first four congresses of the Communist International. These renegades from Trotskyism are confronted with the unequivocal position of the Bolsheviks on the question of trans-class women’s movements not linked to the revolutionary proletariat: “Any link between women workers and bourgeois feminism, like any support by them for the half-measure tactics and open betrayals of the social-coalitionists and opportunists, can only weaken the forces of the proletariat.”

Thus in “re-evaluating”, its earlier opposition to Waters’ document as “extremely propagandistic in hindsight,” the former IMT finds the root of the problem in the Bolshevik position on the woman question.

“Underestimation of the subjective factor and of the specific oppression of women in the family (parallel to the reticence of many of them toward the movement of communes and the search for different lifestyles among the youth during the 1920s) certainly had its effects on the non commitment of broad layers of women who later stood by passively as the bureaucratic counterrevolution developed.”

In this way these phony Trotskyists attempt to make the Bolsheviks at least partially responsible for the massive bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet workers state under Stalin.

As opposed to the “stodgy” Bolsheviks, who apparently had reservations about promoting “alterna-

tive lifestyles," the IMT holds up as a model the work among women of the "swinging" Spanish anarchists during the Civil War. In particular, the organization Mujeres Libres (Free Women) is characterized as "to our knowledge the most advanced historical example of a women's movement."

What the IMT conveniently ignores is the criminal role of the anarchists in addressing the oppression of women and the backward attitudes toward women which were prevalent among Spanish workers. The anarchist labor federation, the CNT, did nothing to organize industries where women workers were concentrated, refused to raise partial demands against the legal enslavement of women such as equal pay for equal work, free legal abortion, child care centers and health care and left women at the mercy of the Catholic church as the sole provider of social welfare.

With the entry of the Spanish anarchists into the popular front government came the question of social services and protective legislation within the framework of administering a capitalist state. The Mujeres Libres were transformed from a small group mainly dedicated to carrying on educational work into a mass women's auxiliary of the popular front. They became a source of cheap, primitive labor carrying on such tasks as washing and ironing at the front.

One of the anarchist leaders of Mujeres Libres, Federica Montseny, became minister of health and social services during the Civil War. While she implemented certain minimal reforms, she will go down in history as one of the anarchist leaders who rushed from Valencia to Barcelona during the May Days of 1937 to counsel the insurgent proletariat to surrender. One only need compare the "uptight" Lenin, who led the Russian workers to power against a government of class collaboration, to the now heralded Montseny who tried to turn back the valiant defense of the independent workers organizations against the onslaught of the popular front.

The Mirror Image of Oppression

The USec is reaping the results of its deliberate policy of capitulation, opportunism and hypocrisy. A revolutionary international cannot be built on the basis of tailing every popular "movement" and dressing it up with some rousing rhetoric so as to lure in a few new members. The political acceptance of the feminist movement as the legitimate expression of the battle against women's oppression must have its repercussions within the organization as well.

The argument that women in a Bolshevik organization require their own protective enclave to ward off male domination is at bottom an insult to women communists. Presumably unable to function as communists, women are to be insulated from the political activity of the vanguard party and given the equivalent of "women's work" both internally and externally. And what are the tasks of such women's caucuses? Obviously not to handle the intervention of the party into trade unions, campus work, international questions, education or anything else beyond the narrow scope of "women's matters."

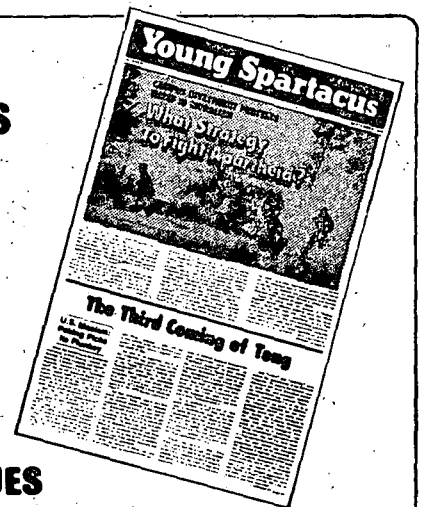
A genuine Bolshevik party must be able to serve as what Lenin termed "a tribune of the people," able to address and combat the special oppression of broad sections of the population. Women who come to political life through the rejection of their oppression as women must be won to the banner of the proletarian revolution as the sole avenue for genuine women's liberation.

The Bolshevik party of Lenin and Trotsky, whose work among women the USec finds itself compelled to slander, led the only successful proletarian revolution to date. The social measures which followed the Russian Revolution held open the hope for the emancipation of women from the enslavement of class society. While the USec "re-evaluates" what was "possible" within the bounds of the bourgeois popular front in Spain, the international Spartacist tendency looks to the revolutionary tradition of the Bolshevik Revolution and the first four congresses of the Comintern to point the road forward to the full emancipation of women under socialism.

Forward to the Rebirth of the Fourth International!

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Letters

Artists and the Revolutionary Party

June 28, 1977

To the Editor:

In the politically barren soil of this period of the degenerated Fourth International where there again exists no revolutionary world party, the SL has recognized the necessity of constructing in nuclei the forms that would correspond to the diverse activities of such an international qualitatively larger than the international Spartacist tendency. So that, today, there being no anti-sectarian class-struggle defense organization, the SL has had to foster the Partisan Defense Committee; similarly, certainly one of the reasons for the SL's Women's Commission and *W & R* is the current total lack of any revolutionary and proletarian women's group in the Left of any country. It has been the necessity of showing how these things can and must be done which has caused the SL to support them and perhaps sooner than in terms of your organization's size you would have preferred.

Does the SL, the Women's Commission in particular, indulge in discussions of possible, perhaps far-off, plans for an agitational cultural commission or section? What ideas as to the nature of such a commission or section and its work exist historically or within the body of Marxist theory? One can certainly imagine an *Art & Revolution a la W & R*. What else?

Backing up a few steps: What does the SL see as the political value of art? While surely one cannot doubt the political power of a Victor Jara (who was subsequently murdered by the Chilean junta), can folksinging, for example, be agitational in the U.S. at this time?

Would there not be a purpose (given the resources) for creating a class-struggle, proletarian acting troupe, say, to help counteract the proliferation of petit-bourgeois program spawned up by such groups as the San Francisco Mime Troupe (whose influence on the working class, admittedly, is nil)? Perhaps that is the question, how to bring agitational material in a revolutionary way to the class? One could quite easily imagine *Harlan County* being shown at a local meeting during a strike (over the cries of the union bureaucracy). While *Harlan County* does not really go beyond the limits of strong trade unionism (it does not point to the need for a Trotskyist vanguard party) it would not be far-fetched to imagine a documentary on the events of the Lisnave Shipyards in Portugal of a few years ago which, if correctly done, would have illustrated the need for such a party. A communist fraction involved in a militant strike could probably get such a movie screened for the locals involved as well as the public.

Without a visualization of how to act no one can act. That is why the histories of struggles are so crucial to preserve. Much of the class has never seen struggle, need I say, especially political struggle. Imagine if every American worker were completely knowledgeable of

the actors and events of the Russian Revolution, if they were to see how soviets came about and operated?

Films, folksongs, novels and murals can do more than bring the past to life. They can describe a future which is still only a possibility. Marxism provides the vision, the utilization of which allows an artist to "predict" how a conflict he is presenting may have been resolved under slightly different circumstances. For example, the San Francisco City Workers strike of 1976 at points threatened to break out of the control of the conservative union bureaucracy and, had it gone into the hands of militants, spread into a general strike. It didn't happen, but it is important for workers to know what the steps and mechanisms would have been as well as the nature of the inevitable bourgeois counterattack.

I realize that this is a long question, but it seems an important one which I have not seen addressed before in your publications. Trotskyism is the only ostensibly revolutionary current which can be of any attraction to artists who have realized freedom of thought and truth are prerequisites of creativity. Historically, Trotskyism has found many friends among artists. How can this potential be used in a revolutionary way?

Fraternally,
John Albert

Women & Revolution replies: The questions raised by Comrade Albert's letter on the relationship between art and politics and whether and how revolutionists might utilize cultural tendencies to extend the influence of socialist ideas are certainly of great interest to Marxists; in fact, there is a rich tradition of Marxist literary and aesthetic criticism and theory on these questions.

As Comrade Albert points out, there have been periods of considerable interaction between artists and revolutionists, periods during which certain artistic tendencies self-consciously attempted to integrate their work with revolutionary aims. But art which is consciously linked to social struggle is not something we can simply will into existence. The relationship between art and politics is a fluctuating one, dependent upon the social situation. Interaction between artists and revolutionists tends to arise when social conditions impel broad recognition of the possibility of revolutionary change. The Marxist theoretician Georgi Plekhanov expressed the conditions of this general relationship succinctly:

"The tendency of artists, and of those who have a lively interest in art, toward art for art's sake, arises when they are in hopeless disaccord with the social environment in which they live.... the inclination to attribute to works of art the significance of judgment on the phenomena of life, and its constant accompaniment of glad readiness to participate in social struggles, arises and becomes

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“Shopworn” Slanders

The following letter appeared in *Gay Community News*, a journal published in Boston, on 20 May 1978 under the title “Spartacist Falsehoods”:

To the Editor:

The *Speaking Out* column of May 6 supplied by the Spartacist League is a remarkable catalogue of falsehoods. The SL writers claim that Marxism “at its very inception championed the rights of homosexuals.” The Paris Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto (1848), though they do treat of sexual matters, contain not one word in defense of homosexuals. We must wait in fact until 1884 when Engels in his *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* denounced “the abominable practice of sodomy” among Greek men. Isn’t it about time that gay Marxists acknowledged the presence of this bigoted outburst in one of their cherished “classics”?

Particularly shocking is the SL citation of J.B. (not J.F.) von Schweitzer as a gay beneficiary of Marxism. In fact, as Hubert Kennedy has shown, Schweitzer was the target of some particularly vicious fag-baiting from the pen of Karl Marx himself. In Germany towards the end of the 19th century it is true that such figures as Bebel and Bernstein did lend support to the cause of gay rights. However, they were Social Democrats, a tendency that today’s “vanguard” Marxist grouplets usually dismiss as Revisionist. In no sense can German Social Democracy be counted as an ancestor of any type of contemporary institutional Marxism.

In the case of Soviet Russia the writers once more trot out the shopworn passage by Batkis, a minor functionary. Why don’t they cite pro-gay statements by Lenin and Trotsky? Of course there are none.

After a parade of errors and selective evidence the piece trails off into a murky series of quibbles about the merits of sexual freedom—as if the dogmatic SL obsession with “correct political analysis” had any real meaning for gay people. All in all this piece of sophistry concocted by the Spartacist League is so pathetic that one might almost suspect that it had been supplied by the FBI in an effort to discredit the group. More likely it is part of a desperate attempt to replenish shrinking membership rolls after the halcyon days of the ‘sixties. Few will be taken in by such a clumsy effort at cooptation.

Sincerely,
Wayne Dynes
New York City

Women and Revolution replies: Wayne Dynes must be pretty well read if he can offhandedly dismiss our quote from “minor functionary Batkis” as “shopworn.” How naive of us to imagine that this statement on the Bolsheviks’ official policy of full democratic rights for homosexuals might be sufficiently interesting to offset



Women and Revolution

SL contingent at Detroit gay rights demonstration early this year.

our readers’ boredom with this apparently famous figure.

More fundamentally, Dynes’ insinuation about FBI “sources” is so gratuitously malicious that it destroys his credibility. The FBI, CIA, NSA, IRS and that whole crew of lying, thieving, murdering bureaucrats, bagmen, torturers, assassins and creepy informing sneaks are the sworn enemies of our class and—we would remind Dynes—of homosexuals, lesbians, blacks, Latins, women, the poor, the dispossessed and, in fact, anybody who deviates from the miserable American capitalist norm and its repressive social underpinnings.

So we’re frankly not too enthusiastic about launching into a lengthy historical, philosophical exposition of the Marxist attitude toward human sexuality and its intransigent and unequivocal defense of homosexuals against the vicious repression of bourgeois society in order to reply to such a slimy, crude (one might even say “shopworn”) and outrageous slander.

Of course, we could point out that *program* and not personal sexual preference is decisive in determining social policy. We could reiterate the theme of our original article (see *Women & Revolution*, No. 16, Winter 1977-78), reprinted in an abridged form in *Gay Community News*—that the communist overthrow of

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Art and Revolution...

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stronger whenever a mutual sympathy exists between the individuals more or less actively interested in artistic creation and some considerable part of society."

—G. Plekhanov, *Art and Social Life*

In other words, lively and real collaboration between artists and revolutionists arises when artists perceive a connection between their art and aspirations and the possibility of revolutionary social change.

At present this is simply not the case. Even a cursory look at contemporary American cultural tendencies reveals a general atmosphere of nostalgia, disengagement from social activism and a preoccupation with private life and pleasures. The more sentimental and morbid products of the Victorian salons are the current favorites in art auction houses and classy galleries. Meanwhile, all those artists who defined "modern" art are dead—and contemporary artistic tendencies remain sunk in iconoclasm, irony or deeply personal and private visions. The popularity of fantasy, escapist fiction, the glorification of insanity as the only legitimate response to a crazy world, back-to-the-earth how-to books, religious and sexual panaceas and "be-your-own-best-friend" (and screw everybody else)-type tracts among the "sixties-generation" and their generally socially passive heirs on today's college campuses has been widely remarked. Obviously, this is not a period in which one can expect keen interest in revolutionary Trotskyism among the intelligentsia and literati. Even the current interest in "women's art" represents essentially a movement away from politics.

We very much want to extend our influence into broader layers of the population. Our primary aim of becoming the political leadership of the working class also involves winning support among intellectuals, artists, etc.

Yes, we can conceive of an *Art and Revolution* journal at a time when we have the weight to attract cultural

tendencies into our orbit, but as long as artists and intellectuals in general can see neither the possibility of revolutionary change nor the Trotskyist vanguard as the agent of that change, it is not likely to come into existence.

Comrade Albert also asks whether it would not be a good idea to create "a class-struggle, proletarian acting troupe" to counteract petty-bourgeois ideology. The New Left was fond of this kind of "people's culture" experimentation. New Left "street theater" devotees took as their model the work of the partisan-guerrilla forces of Chinese and Vietnamese peasant-based societies, for whom such theater was an effective form of propaganda; almost invariably, these attempts at "people's culture" in the U.S. were patronizing and sterile both culturally and politically. The movie *Harlan County*, on the other hand, is an effective and powerful documentary. We would like very much to see more movies like this, expressing the dynamics of the class struggle in vivid and popularly-accessible form; even though, as Comrade Albert points out, Barbara Kopple does not draw the political lessons of the bloody miners' strike, because she isn't a Trotskyist. When we are able to lead such strikes, drawing those lessons in practice, we will also be able to influence talented film makers.

But while we share Comrade Albert's enthusiasm for a fruitful collaboration between artists and revolutionists, it is necessary to note some inherent limitations. In the first place—the Stalinist glorification of "socialist realism" notwithstanding—the revolutionary party does not take a position on the relative worth of particular artistic schools or questions of taste. Political doctrine and art exist in different dimensions of human consciousness, albeit with shifting and elusive points of intersection. All genuinely innovative art seeks to extend the perception of reality and imaginative possibilities, and thus is often difficult to understand at first—particularly for those (like the bulk of the working class) who are not familiar with the world of art generally. The idea of a party bureaucrat dictating the "party line" to artists is alien to Marxism.

What this implies for the Spartacist League's future collaboration with cultural tendencies is that the form of this collaboration would not be directly comparable to, for example, a women's section or a youth section—that is, a politically subordinate organization linked directly with the party—but would be a looser, more flexible and voluntary form of association. In other words, we aren't going to have an "artists' section" busily carrying out the line of the party in paint. We may want to utilize some of the skills and techniques of artists for popular propaganda, but this wouldn't create "revolutionary art," just more attractive and effective revolutionary propaganda.

At present, we must concentrate our modest forces on winning supporters for our political program and strategy in the factories, on the campuses and in radical milieus; and for this task there is no substitute for precise political analysis, generally in written form. For now, it must be the content of our propaganda—not the form—which is revolutionary. ■

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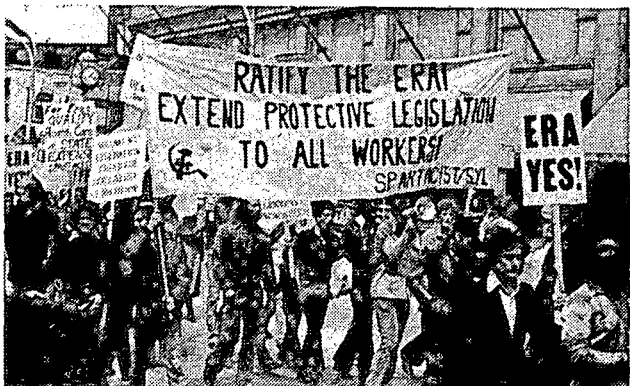
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100,000 Supporters Rally in Washington **ERA Bogged Down**



Women and Revolution

SL contingent in Chicago demonstration (July 1978):

With the Equal Rights Amendment in big trouble, the organizers of the gigantic July 9 pro-ERA march in Washington concentrated their efforts on pressuring Congress to extend the present states' ratification deadline. (It expires in March of next year, with three states' ratification still necessary.) Meanwhile, ERA opponents have introduced a bill allowing states which originally passed the amendment to rescind their votes.

The main strategy of the ERA's liberal supporters has settled into intense legislative lobbying, horse-trading deals, corridor maneuvering, threats and counterthreats of economic boycotts and lawsuits—in short, a game of "political hardball" in classic bourgeois style. Although the ERA rally (which drew 100,000 at its height) indicated popular support to the measure, the dominant attitude among the state legislators (many up for election this fall) in this period of escalating conservative backlash is that the ERA is a messy and politically dangerous issue.

Liberalism has been discredited as a dominant bourgeois ideology. Vietnam, Watergate, the continuing deterioration of the American standard of living, the decaying crime-ridden cities and spiraling inflation have led to feelings of massive helplessness and frustration—a situation ripe for exploitation by conservatives, whose appeal for a return to the good old "basic values" of "God, Home and Country" has struck a responsive chord. The ERA, a simple affirmation of women's democratic rights, has been caught up in this backlash, as state politicians—generally more conservative than those at the national level—have been influenced by a well financed, highly emotional right-wing campaign.

The Spartacist League has consistently supported the ERA, as we would any statement of democratic rights, pointing out that the protective legislation issue is one which must and will be fought out in the factories, not in the courts. Naturally, the employers and bourgeois courts will try to twist the ERA to undercut labor's gains—much as civil rights legislation was used to justify the reactionary Bakke decision.

On the national level the ERA has become a key political test of the strength of classic American liberalism—and its prospects look bad. On the social level, opposition to the ERA indicates the growing power of reactionary ideology in a period of economic depression. Thus, defeat of the ERA would be a more serious blow to women's rights than its passage would be a victory.

We want to see the ERA passed, but we have no illusions that a constitutional amendment would give women equality. To win the battle for women's equal participation in all aspects of society requires the struggle to smash class society through socialist revolution!

Italy...

(continued from page 13)

of women's oppression through united class struggle against capitalist rule.

The Italian co-thinkers of the SWP, the Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari (GCR), have substantially replicated the SWP's treacherous class collaboration. They worked actively to collect signatures for the Radical Party's referendum as part of class-collaborationist committees which included the Socialist Party, the bourgeois Radicals, feminists and the "organizations of the far left" (female members only). Although the GCR called for "free abortion on demand," they also defended male exclusion and single-issue reformism. Their justification for single-issuism was to plead Italian exceptionalism:

"The coinciding of this battle with the maturation of

feminist consciousness has been an historic occurrence for the Italian women's movement, and has meant that the struggle for abortion has assumed characteristics in Italy lacking in other European countries, and has become much more than a struggle for the attainment of a civil right, a democratic right—it has become the cornerstone on which the women's movement is being built...."

—*Bandiera Rossa*, 8 May 1978

While breaking from the bourgeois-led referendum committees, the GCR held fast to its parliamentary cretinism, raising the need for "an abortion law from the women's movement itself," as if female reformism were less a betrayal than "male" reformism! But the GCR's real appetites in leaving the referendum committees become clear in its argument for the need to:

"...overcome the sectarianism that exists in the women's movement and among its vanguard... in regard to... the

continued on next page

Italy...

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UDI.... We think that in a movement built around the central issue of free abortion on demand, a woman's right to choose, many initiatives can be built together with the rank and file of the Communist Party....

"By forging the right kinds of alliances, it is still possible to build a mass movement for free abortion on demand in Italy."

—*Intercontinental Press*, 6 February 1978

The new abortion law will be much less impressive in practice than it is on paper. It is not expected to significantly reduce the estimated one million women a year forced to undergo the hazards of illegal abortions. The "conscientious objector" clause and the wretched conditions of the overcrowded state hospitals will make

abortion a practical impossibility for many women. For women under 18; abortions will actually be more difficult to obtain than in the past, as consent of both parents is now legally required.

The masses of working women will never be liberated from oppression and exploitation through alliances with their class oppressors—male or female—or by limiting their demands to those acceptable to the bourgeois parties and their reformist allies.

The basic democratic right of free, safe abortion on demand for all women is inseparable from the need for free, quality medical care. In Italy, where the PCI-supported government austerity program has slashed social services, the struggle against women's oppression must be integrally linked to a program of international proletarian class struggle directed against the rotting capitalist "order." ■

Australia...

(continued from page 24)

"Defend the 60 Committee," a united-front defence organisation based on two demands: "Drop all Charges" and "Democratic Rights for Homosexuals." This motion was counterposed to the line of the CPA and the recently formed "Gay Solidarity Group" (GSG), which was based on five demands, including a "charter of democratic rights for gays" (yet to be written). While the meeting voted overwhelmingly for the Defend the 60 Committee, it also supported the Gay Solidarity Group.

The first shock of the mass arrests and the obvious need for immediate defence as well as SLANZ's strong presence at the courthouse rally, initially made the united-front committee popular, and supporters of the SWP and International Socialists and one of the defendants from the CPA's Sydney University group joined; as well as other unaffiliated individuals. Funds for defence and over 150 signatures were quickly collected on a petition based on the committee's two demands. However, the very next day it became clear that the CPA and perhaps also the SWP were committed to destroying the united-front defence committee in favor of the GSG.

The sectarian SWP was thrown into confusion by the Defend the 60 Committee's statement of endorsement. Some SWPers signed while others crossed their names off or refused to sign after receiving instructions from higher up.

The CPA stacked the first meeting of the Defend the 60 Committee, which took place on June 30, and turned it into a subcommittee of the GSG. At this point SLANZ walked out. The SWP voted with SLANZ but remained in the meeting.

Such petty sectarianism is extremely destructive—not for SLANZ (during its week-long existence, the Defend the 60 Committee re-established SLANZ's reputation as the principal advocate of united-front defence), although SLANZ was the intended target—but for the defendants themselves.

In the face of the current reactionary onslaught against homosexuals, the broadest possible defence of democratic rights for homosexuals is urgent. At the same time, the sadistic cop rampage of June 24 and 26 must be condemned by the entire labour movement and all defenders of democratic rights. The full power of the trade-union movement must be mobilised to demand that all charges against those arrested be dropped immediately! ■

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Shopworn Slanders...

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class society with its structured inequality, poverty and oppression will release the human personality to actualize its fullest potential and lay the groundwork for the broadest range of sexual expression. With an honest opponent, we would be happy to argue the need for proletarian revolution—for socialism, in fact—as a *precondition* for the ultimate goal of the unfettered expression of human individuality, not least in its sexual aspect.

But why bother? We are obviously dealing with a disingenuous *opponent of socialism*. Take, for example, Dynes' assertion that the German Social Democracy, which, in the pre-World War I period, ardently defended homosexuals against the state, "can in no sense... be counted as an ancestor of any type of contemporary Marxism." What rubbish! Here is a man who wants to lecture us about "selective evidence" as if he were some kind of authority, while falsifying the Trotskyist attitude toward pre-war social democracy. In fact, as Trotsky wrote "... the German Social Democracy was mother, teacher, and living example. We idolized it.... The names of Bebel and Kautsky were pronounced reverently." Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* was saturated with the understanding that the German

Social Democracy was the organized expression of Marxism whose internal factional life was of vital concern to the entire international working class.

It is quite true that the German Social Democracy, because it was a mass party and therefore both influential in and influenced by the bourgeoisie, nurtured within itself both great proletarian fighters, such as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, and those who inspired their murder.

We are afraid that Wayne Dynes has shown himself, through his out-and-out lying about the impeccable record of Marxists such as August Bebel and Eduard Bernstein in defending homosexuals against the state, and his filthy FBI-baiting, to be so implacably hostile to communism *a priori* that rational argument is irrelevant. He stands with the anti-socialist red-baiters; the "libertarians," who have never advanced the cause of human freedom one iota but have rather kept humanity chained to the oppression of the class-divided society which we are committed to overthrow.

For him it makes no difference that the Spartacist League has consistently defended sexual "deviants" against a rigid, oppressive social order. For him the program and practice of the Russian Bolsheviks are of no consequence. For him, simply, politics has no real meaning for gay people." Red baiting is his program. We have heard this kind of mud-slinging rhetoric before and we know whose class interests it serves. ■

Reed...

(continued from page 7)

this field crumbles in the face of even the most cursory examination.

Engels sought the origin of cultural evolution in the social relations of production. Reed's "contribution" to Engels consists of asserting that these social relations were entered into almost exclusively by women, since they alone were the industrial workers, farmers and teachers:

"As Engels demonstrated, it was through productive activities that mankind arose out of the animal world. More concretely, then, it was the female half of humanity who initiated and led in these productive activities and who must therefore be credited with the major share in this great act of creation and elevation of humanity."

This is Reed's fantasy, derived not from any serious attempt to evaluate archeological and anthropological data and the evidence of primate behavior, but rather from an unbridled appetite to capitulate to feminism.

However, it is not Reed alone but the SWP which both Reed and Des Verney support and which has fitted its pseudoscience to its own political ends in the most cynical fashion. For genuine Marxists this is a crime. The goal of science is to draw ever closer approximations of the truth. The SWP, on the contrary, has published a mockery of the study of the evolution of man—a subject of great interest to Marxists. Lacking both the capacity and the will to point the way forward toward the emancipation of women through international working-class revolution, the SWP has instead offered women a glorified, mythologized matriarchy. ■

Correction

In our last issue (No. 16, Winter 1977-78), in a report on a New York City demonstration against Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Joseph Califano, in which the Spartacist League participated with the slogan "Free Abortion on Demand!" we erroneously reported that Califano had appointed Dr. Mildred Jefferson of the National Right to Life Committee to head family planning services for HEW. This erroneous information had appeared in the *Village Voice* and some feminist publications. However, the *Voice* has since retracted the story, and according to the New York State Right to Life Committee, Dr. Jefferson is still the national head of that organization and has no formal connection with HEW.

WOMEN AND REVOLUTION

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Over 60 Arrested in Sydney, Australia

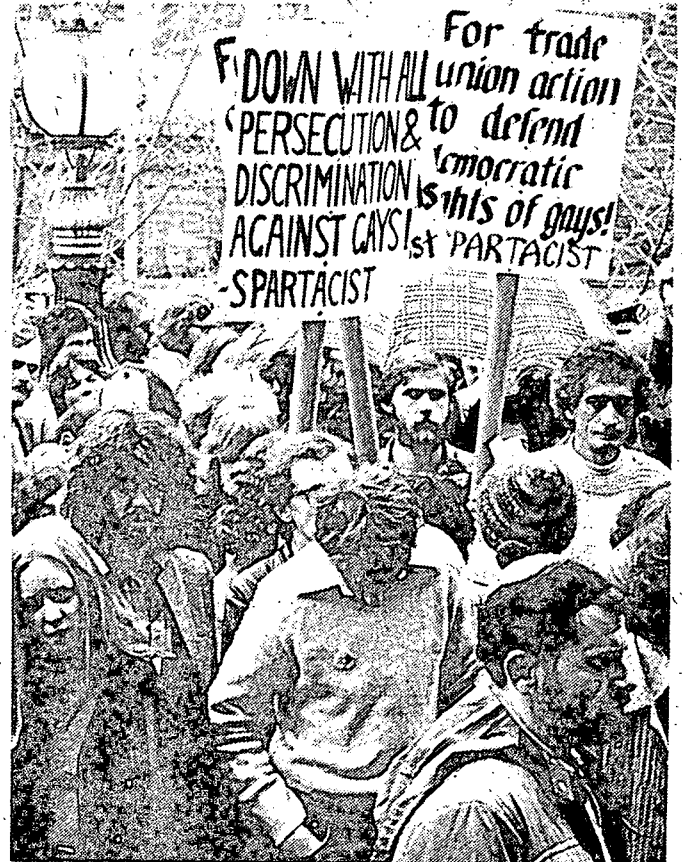
Cops Bash Gay Rights Demo

SYDNEY—Demonstrations here on June 24 marking "International Homosexual Solidarity Day" were brutally smashed by a premeditated police attack which has been termed "Sydney's ugliest demonstration in seven years" (*National Times*; 8 July). The march, rally and evening "Mardi Gras" festival had been planned in commemoration of New York City's "Stonewall Rebellion," which gay rights activists take as the starting point of their "movement."

Cops harassed the march from the beginning, although its organisers had secured a permit. The uniformed thugs seized the sound trucks and eventually blocked off streets to force the marchers into Kings Cross, the seedy "42nd Street" of Sydney. Once in Kings Cross, the cops blocked the march at both ends, took off their badges and waded menacingly into the crowd, clubbing and arresting indiscriminately. Fifty-four people were dragged off to the notorious Darlinghurst police station where 24 women were stuffed into a two-person cell and 30 men into another. Peter Murphy, a well-known supporter of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), was singled out for a backroom beating so vicious that his screams could be clearly heard by the others.

At court hearings on June 26, the cops ran wild again. Over a hundred demonstrators, illegally denied entry to the courthouse, rallied outside all day long, where they were constantly harassed by 150 police. Finally, the cops simply rioted, throwing several demonstrators head-first off the courthouse balcony. Seven more demonstrators were arrested, including a photographer for the newspaper of the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand (SLANZ).

SLANZ had participated in the protest rally outside the courthouse, where it led the crowd in the chant, "Jail Wran's Sadistic Cops!" and distributed a leaflet with the same title. As the leaflet pointed out, the cop rampage was no accident. Labor Party premier Neville Wran, who is also his own minister for police, is expected to call a state election soon, and the Australian Labor Party has been bending as far right as possible in order to secure votes. Evidently, Wran feels that a bit of "poofster bashing" ("poofster" is the derogatory term



Australasian Spartacist

Hundreds of demonstrators protest the arrest of 53 supporters of democratic rights for homosexuals outside Sydney Court of Petty Sessions (26 June 1978).

applied to male homosexuals in Australia) can only stand him in good stead. In the words of the SLANZ leaflet:

"Whatever whitewash Labor premier Neville Wran may eventually concoct, there could be no clearer evidence than Saturday night's rampage that be it a Labor or Liberal administration in office, the government is still a bosses' government and the police are paid, armed shock troops of the bourgeois social order. Brutal oppression of women, gays and blacks is the inevitable result."

The leaflet concluded with demands to drop all charges against those arrested and called for a trade-union mobilisation to defend the democratic rights of homosexuals: "Down with all persecution and discrimination against gays!"

Following the cop riot at the courthouse a mass meeting was held. A motion to exclude SLANZ was put forward by a long-time feminist, but this was overwhelmingly voted down amid shouts of "The Sparts were great today!" The fake-Trotskyist Australian Socialist Workers Party (SWP) formally defended SLANZ's democratic right to participate in the meeting while simultaneously doing everything possible to sabotage it politically. The wretched CPA abstained on the exclusion vote.

Later, SLANZ put forward a motion to create a

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