

# DETROIT REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT RECORDS

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PARTY SCHOOL REPORTS ON  
WOMENS QUESTIONS

## Party School Report on the Woman Question

The woman question, the question of women's oppression and inequality is part of the social working class question. Within the USNA state the exploitation and oppression of the working class by the capitalist class takes several different forms. One of the main forms is the division fostered among men and women workers, the more intense exploitation and oppression of women due to their position in society, and the bribery of men to aid the capitalists in their exploitation of women. This is all justified ideologically by the bourgeois ideology of male supremacy and is in essence an attack on the whole working class, both men and women workers. As the basis for women's oppression is the contradiction between labor and capital, the emancipation of women is possible only through the proletarian class struggle to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of socialism. In this struggle for socialism it is necessary for women to take a leading role, for as Lenin said, "No socialist revolution can occur until the vast section of women take part in it." (1)

Working women under capitalism are severely exploited and oppressed more so than men. Many industries won't hire women and there are very few training or apprenticeship programs which include them. The jobs working women usually find are the most menial and unskilled and the pay is extremely low. The 1971 weekly pay average for all men was \$152, while the average for all women was \$100. In most cases women do not have job security. The 1972 Statistical Abstract of the United States points out that out of the labor force of women, 34% are clerical workers, 22% are service workers, 16% are factory workers, and 6% are salesworkers. It can be seen that women are stuck with the most boring, repetitious work which in essence is brainless work. Companies are supposed to pay women the same wages as men get for the same work, but in most cases they don't. They usually assign men and women to different departments or classifications so that they can legally get away with paying women less. Another way they get out of it is by hiring only women.

The capitalists make huge profits from the exploitation of women as the low wages of women keep all workers wages down. As long as low wages are paid to women workers, men workers will also be paid lower wages and be in danger of losing their jobs. The capitalists can hire women to do the same work for less or use them as strike-breakers etc., putting men workers in a position where they can't demand more pay. And how are the capitalists able to get away with paying women lower wages than men? Through the ideology of male supremacy which has been pushed onto the working class. This bourgeois ideology promotes the belief that men are naturally superior to women and therefore have the right to dominate them, that women are weak and stupid and should be paid less, etc.. Male supremacy is deeply engrained into the society and is manifested in many different ways. We must understand that the basis for the bourgeois ideology is this capitalist system, that the division of the working class on the basis of sex weakens the class's ability to fight and strengthens the ruling class's hold and therefore is only to the benefit of the ruling class.

While all working class women are severely exploited under capitalism, national minority women are the most exploited in general. They work in the worst, lowest paying jobs such as sewing, laundries, hospitals, and domestic work and their pay is generally \$780 less per year than Anglo-American women. The 1971 average weekly wage for Anglo-American females was \$102, while that for Negro and other national minorities was \$87. These women are exploited and oppressed as workers, as women and as members of a national minority. The USNA imperialists' domination of particularly the Negro Nation, Puerto Rico, and the Southwest but also of the countries of South America and others throughout the world is justified by national chauvinism, white chauvinism being the most aggressive and brutal specific form of USNA national chauvinism. National chauvinism is the bourgeois ideology that states "that one nation is superior to others and thus maintains the domination of one nation over another." (2) The brutal imperialist domination of these nations or regions and the rotten white chauvinism which is pushed by the imperialists, accounts for the second class citizenship and super-exploitation of the national minorities in the Anglo-American working class. The imperialists push the ideas to particularly the Anglo-American workers that their fellow national minority workers are inferior, deserve less wages, benefits, housing etc.. This white chauvinism like male supremacy divides the working class and benefits only the imperialists. Thus the position of national minority women workers is that not only are they exploited and oppressed as part of the working class and as women but also because of white chauvinism.

Only 43.4% of the 76 million women over 16 years of age within the USNA are employed. This means that the majority of women are stuck in the home and are dependent on men to support them financially. In this position, women become part of the reserve army of labor. The reserve army of labor is a result of the inability of the capitalist system to provide enough jobs for everyone. The growth of the productive forces under the anarchy of production that exists in capitalist society creates an army of the unemployed - women being a constituent part of it. When there is a need by the capitalists for more labor, cheaper labor (to break strikes, in times of war, etc.) they call into action some of their reserve labor. For example, during WWII, the ruling class needed women's labor, so the number of women hired climbed by 15%. But immediately after the war the number of women in labor dropped by 12%, and many plants that hired women during the war refused to do so after. Because many women can't find jobs and also because of family responsibilities and child care, many women are forced to live off of welfare which degrades them even more. From very early ages, women are taught that they are weak and helpless and that they must live under the protection of men; that men are superior while they are inferior. They are led to believe that their place is to wait on their husbands day and night. Their role as housewives in this capitalist society is a private one and is the responsibility of individuals instead of society. As long as women are restricted to private domestic labor and are dependent on men, their position in society can only be secondary to that of men. The only way that women can become socially equal with men is by being drawn into socially productive labor. This cannot fully happen under capitalism - only socialism can eliminate the purely private responsibilities of the home and give women an important social role in production and society. As it is the total emancipation of women is possible only through communism.

In order for us to understand the position of women and men in this capitalist society and their relationship to one another, it is necessary to look at history, into the origin of the family, private property and the state.

Dialectics teaches us that things develop from lower to higher stages. As society has advanced from lower to higher stages according to the development of the productive forces, the family has correspondingly advanced from a lower to a higher form. In Dialectical and Historical Materialism Stalin states that "five main types of relations of production are known to history: primitive communal, slave, feudal, capitalist and socialist." (3) And that "whatever are the productive forces such must be the relations of production." (4) Under primitive communism, the conditions were such that there was only a division of labor between the sexes and the women, far from being oppressed, were held in high respect. At this time in history, "women were regarded as the controllers of production.....Because under the kind of production prevailing primitive agriculture, women played the principal role in production, they performed the main function, while the men roamed the forests in quest of game." (5) But as the productive forces of society developed "the predominant position in production passed to men. Why did this change take place? Because under the kind of production prevailing at that time, stock breeding, in which the principal instruments of production were the spear, the lasso and the bow and arrow, the principal role was played by men." (6) Under the primitive communal system there were group marriages which over a period of time developed into the pairing family through the continuous exclusion of first nearer then of more remote relatives and at last even of relatives by marriage which made any kind of group marriage practically impossible. Because in group marriage it was impossible to know who the father of a child was, there was the exclusive recognition of the female parent. The transition from group marriage to the pairing family (a loosely linked pair) was brought about primarily through the women. Engels describes the conditions as such:

"The more the traditional sexual relations lost the naive primitive character of forest life, owing to the development of economic conditions with consequent undermining of the old communism and growing density of population, the more oppressive and humiliating must the women have felt them to be, and the greater their longing for the right of chasity, of temporary or permanent marriage with one man only, as the way of release. This advance could not in any case have originated with the men, if only because it has never occurred to them, even to this day, to renounce the pleasures of actual group marriage." (7)

The gradual "increase of production in all branches -- cattle-raising, agriculture, domestic handicrafts -- gave human labor-power the capacity to produce a larger product than was necessary for its maintenance." (8) This increase in the productivity of labor meant an increase in wealth, the rise of private property and what naturally followed was the division of society into masters and slaves, and later between rich and poor. With the cleavage of society into classes, the state arose.

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The transition to full private property was paralleled with the transition of the pairing marriage to monogamy. Monogamy was introduced by the men, indeed for the women only. The increase in wealth gradually made the man's position in the family more important than the women's and what developed from this Engels characterized as "the world historical defeat of the female sex". The man took command in the home also, the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude, she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children." (9)

The monogamous family "is based on the supremacy of the man, the express purpose being to produce children of undisputed paternity; such paternity is demanded because these children are later to come into their father's property as his natural heirs." (10) It was the first form of the family to be based, not on natural, but on economic conditions - on the victory of private property over primitive, natural communal property -- it was not in any way the fruit of individual sex-love. But this was the case only among the ruling class in whose hands the wealth of society was concentrated. Engels said that "sex-love in the relationship with a woman becomes, and can only become, the real rule among the oppressed classes, which means today among the proletariat....here all the foundations of typical monogamy are cleared away. Here there is no property, for the preservation and inheritance of which monogamy and male supremacy were established; hence there is no incentive to make this male supremacy effective." (11)

Engels said that "the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male." (12) As society broke down into classes, there arose the general inequality between men and women, the driving of women into an inferior position in society in relationship to men. Women have basically remained in this position throughout slave, feudalist and capitalist societies though the forms of their exploitation and oppression have been different in each stage. And it is without a doubt that only the ruling classes have benefited from this -- as we see today it is only the capitalists who really benefit from the division among men and women workers, the position of women in this society and the ideology of male supremacy.

The Communist Manifesto points out that the fall of the bourgeoisie and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable. That "the communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations.....that its development involves the most radical ruptures with traditional ideas." (13) The proletariat in establishing its own dictatorship will have the power in its hands to create the conditions for doing away with all exploitation and oppression and therefore create the conditions for the total emancipation of women. The nature of the family will of course change in this process, as well as the sexual relations between men and women. The CL memorandum on Proletarian Morality pointed out that "as we approach the revolution and more so under socialism, it is sure that there is going to be a separation between love and sex-love. The dialectic is that love is going to become a social outlook. People will feel a love and responsibility for society and will express it concretely in labor and in

the militant defence of society. Then, sex will become an individual aspect of this social attitude." It "is bound to become more and more pointed to specific individuals."

But we do not claim to have all the answers, we cannot know all that lies ahead in the future. What there will be new says Engels, "will be answered when a new generation has grown up; a generation of men who never in their lives have known what it is to buy a woman's surrender with money or any other social instrument or power; a generation of women who have never known what it is to give themselves to a man from any other considerations than real love, or to refuse to give themselves to their lover from fear of the economic consequences. When these people are in the world, they will care precious little what anybody today thinks they ought to do; they will make their own practice and their corresponding public opinion about the practice of each individual -- and that will be the end of it." (14)

From this we can see that male supremacy has deep roots in society, its origin lies with the breakdown of society into classes. As it is, male supremacy is one of the principal social props of capitalist society. It serves as a foundation for the division of the working class and as the justification for the material and social bribery of the working class men--this places men in a privileged position over women and thus ties them to the ruling class. While male workers may temporarily benefit from this, we see that it is being done at the expense of the unity of the working class and holds back the revolutionary movement.

Opposed to the Marxist-Leninist position on the women question is the syndicalist, feminist line which holds that the main cause of women's oppression is men rather than capitalism, that women will only be free when they emancipate themselves from male supremacy and domination. The feminists, representing the bourgeois movement for the "emancipation of women", recognize no material base for male supremacy and ignore classes and class society. Feminism is an aspect of bourgeois ideology which serves to undermine the unity of the working class in that it makes the struggle out to be women against men instead of the working class against the imperialist ruling class. We must see that both male supremacy and feminism are pushed by the bourgeoisie to undermine class solidarity and distort the true class nature of society. We can be sure that as the class struggle intensifies the imperialists will do whatever they can to keep men and women workers of all nationalities from uniting.

As deeply rooted male supremacy is in society, it cannot help but be manifested within the Communist League. Here it serves to divide the organization, holds back the development of both female and male comrades, lays the basis for subjective errors and weakens the League by promoting privilege. Many times male supremacy is the form that a political deviation takes. For example, the ignoring of correct political leadership given by a female comrade. The form of the error comes off as male supremacy but the content is an undermining of the political line. Within the organization we have seen that many different aspects of bourgeois ideology (for example individualism and

anti-working class sentiments) have come out as attacks on women leaders, that women in leadership position are often not respected and listened to and in political discussions male comrades often cut off female comrades, maintain a condescending attitude toward them and in general pay less attention treating female comrades as second class. We are seeing more and more how deep the question of male supremacy is and how the struggle against it must be carried out not only inside the formal League structure, but also within every social relationship in which we participate, including within family relations, etc.. The struggle against male supremacy must not be seen as a thing-in-itself, isolated from the class struggle, but as an integral part of developing ourselves into real political leaders, preparing the conditions for both female and male comrades to develop into leaders and for the building of a communist party.

As it is, male supremacy is the major deviation on the woman question within the Communist League. The needs of the revolution demand that male supremacy be struggled against by both female and male comrades to advance the League as well as the class struggle forward. Often times newer female comrades are passive in struggling against male supremacy because they are not sure how to do so correctly. But the most important thing is for the struggle to go on against male supremacy politically, to bring out the political error. We see that feminism rears its head in the CL as female comrades struggle against "men" and not male supremacy - ignoring the political line. But we must remember that feminism is a secondary deviation, that male supremacy is by far the dominant and over-riding deviation.

The task which lies before the Anglo-American revolutionaries is the building of a Marxist-Leninist Communist Party in order to lead the working class in the fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat. This cannot be done without the raising and dealing with the woman question, without the bringing of masses of women into the struggle and into the leadership of the struggle. The fight for women's equality must be taken to the working class in order to draw in women and to fight for the unity of the working class.

Lenin has taught us that "the struggle for women's rights must also be linked with our principal aim - the conquest of power and the establishment of the dictatorship.....But the broad masses of working women will not feel irresistibly drawn to the struggle for state power if we harp on just this one demand, even though we may blare it forth on the trumpets of Jericho. No, a thousand times no! We must combine our appeal politically in the minds of the female masses with the sufferings, the needs and the wishes of the working women. They should all know what the proletarian dictatorship will mean to them - complete equality of rights with men, both legal and in practice, in the family, the state and in society, and that it also spells the annihilation of the power of the bourgeoisie." (15)

In conclusion, Socialist Albania provides us with a living example of how through its dictatorship of the proletariat the emancipation of women becomes a reality.

Following the triumph of the National-liberation war and the establishment of the People's Power (1944), the latter did away with the old legislation which denied to the women the most elementary rights in society, in life and in the family which sanctioned the age-long superiority of men on the women. Our people's legislation entitled women to all rights guaranteeing to them all freedoms just as to men. This was a major historic victory for us, women.

"But our Party, as a Marxist-Leninist Party, was well aware that liberation by law is only one aspect of the problem; the problem of the emancipation of women in all its complexity cannot be solved through enactment of laws alone. In order that the women may really enjoy the rights and freedoms attained, it was necessary to create also the objective conditions; all this revolutionary super-structure should rest on a powerful material basis. Of primary importance in this were the major revolutionary transformations: to build the economic basis of socialism, to do away with the source of all evil--private ownership of the means of production, which ever since it began and wherever it prevails has turned the women into private servants of their husbands, into 'inferior human beings', into 'auxiliary wage-earners'.

"The People's Power did not only free the Albanian women and girls juridically and economically but opened up for them wide opportunities to take active part in their major work of social production and in social political life which, together with the abolition of private property, constitutes the other indispensable condition for the complete emancipation of women." (16)

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Lenin, The Woman Question, International Pub., 1951, p. 42
2. Negro National Colonial Question pamphlet, p.VII
3. Stalin, Dialectical and Historical Materialism, Ten Classics of Marxism, Inter. Publishers, N.Y., p. 34
4. Ibid, p. 32
5. Stalin, Anarchism or Socialism, Foreign Language Pub. House, Moscow, 1952, p. 45
6. Ibid, p. 45
7. Engels, Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, International Pub., N.Y., 1969, pp. 46-47
8. Ibid, p. 146-147
9. Engels, op. cit., p. 50
10. Engels, op. cit., p. 55
11. Engels, op. cit., p. 63
12. Engels, op. cit., p. 58
13. Marx, Engels, Communist Manifesto, The Classics of Marxism, op. cit., p. 29
14. Engels, Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, op. cit., p. 73
15. Lenin, The Emancipation of Women, Int. Pub., 1969, p. 113
16. At the 6th Congress of the Women's Union of Albania, Tirana, 1968, p. 18-19



## Problems of Women As Organizers in Industry

This paper will attempt to present some of the main problems of female cadre as organizers in industry. Since the bourgeoisie has used the fascist ideology of male supremacy to divide the working class, this oppression and inequality that women face in general cannot help but influence and lay the basis for the problems presented here. This report will be divided into three parts: organizing in the Union, in the shop, and plant caucuses.

In the Union, (in particular U.A.W. and Steelworkers), the reactionary trade union misleaders champion the cause of male supremacy. One way they carry this out is by ignoring the question of women and creating forms of organization inside the Union designed to divert women from the mainstream of the political struggle. For example the Womens' Commission (U.A.W.) within the local of a large auto plant has no political voice and no political struggle. The role of the Womens Commission was to do the catering at the Union banquet, decorating the union hall for Christmas and other parties and other mundane tasks which reinforce the role of women in the kitchen and the nursery. This affects our work because while on the one hand, this could have been a good in-road to the trade union struggle, it offered no avenue for going deeper into the class struggle with political work.

Further, a female cadre raised the Watergate resolution, overwhelmingly united with and accepted by the rank and file as well as the union officials. At this point, the President extolled the cadre to the heights, saying how exceptional she was and that she would be an asset to the union. This tactic served to isolate her from the rank and file, it was an attempt to get her on the "President's team", to hush her up. But, on the other hand (and this is the main tactic used) when a woman cadre or advanced woman worker wants to struggle, the President of whoever is presiding will deliberately not call on her. He will call on a man even though he may raise as many struggles. A clear example of this is that since the Watergate resolution has been raised, the same female cadre is either the last to be recognized or totally ignored.

### In The Shops

One of the basic problems that has to be dealt with is the organization of forces inside the shop. Again, in making every factory our fortress the principal aspect faced by women cadre is male supremacy. Concretely the problems divide into 1) Organizing men 2) Organizing women 3) White chauvinism, particularly because the majority of the women involved are national minorities. In general while it is our specific duty to raise the political consciousness of the class as a whole, we face problems that are particular to men than those of women.

For example, in dealing with women we find that in general they aren't active in discussing political matters (current events, etc.) and because of their political backwardness they tend to shun away from being politically active. Both objectively because of ties to the domestic situation (i.e., principal supporter of the household) or subjectively because of male supremacy their political and intellectual growth is stunted.

In dealing with men also because of male supremacy the women cadre are not seen as possible political leaders and are therefore many times isolated from political discussions as a whole. (Example: Talk among themselves by male workers talking to women only about petty matters) which can lead to and has in fact leads to passivity on the part of the cadre. But on the other hand women who do struggle are faced with being branded as a "women libbers" and get comments like "you women always complain" or "you wanted womens' lib, now you got it so take the consequences." And you don't necessarily have to be talking about the oppression of women. Also in organizing men comes the problem of establishing a political relationship as the principle aspect. Even though social relationships play an important part, we have to struggle that a political relationship between a male and female doesn't end up just social. For example, one cadre had established a political contact and had been making progress but also wanted to establish a social relationship. Soon the desire for a social relationship by the contact took the principal aspect resulting in the withering away of the political struggle and constant harrassment of the cadre. Thus a split resulted and the loss of a contact.

On chauvinism, we find that in particular since the majority of the women cadre are national minorities with the exception of one, we are faced with white chauvinism which hampers the organizing of anglo-american men and women. It manifests itself concretely as privileges given to both anglo-american men and women, such as in the case of two pregnant women one afro-american and the other Negro national minority. The anglo-american woman bushed a broom and rested 4 hours out of the day while the Negro national minority women had to work standing up and bending over picking up ten pound pieces continuously. This ideology is the principal prop of USNA imperialism and a desperate struggle has to be waged to secure the leadership of the advanced section of the proletariat. You can't struggle against white chauvinism unless it is connected with the political struggle of workers in general. Only in that way will the national minorities and especially the anglo-american workers see the concrete divisions and weakening of the class from white chauvinism.

#### Organizing in Plant Caucuses

The problems of caucus work are two-fold, both ideological and practical. For the most part the struggle has to be waged against male supremacy, white chauvinism and bourgeois nationalism, not only to inject consciousness in the political struggles but to insure the cohesion of the group.

There is a tendency for some of the men to try and run the show and lay the base for the women to fall back into passivity. Also all secretarial tasks are left up to women while the men make decisions. A vast majority of the times discussion points made by women are not valid and are sometimes repeated exactly by a male member only to be held as a brilliant idea. We could go on but it would only further emphasize the need to demand recognition and leadership of the women. The need to raise the political consciousness of both men and women so both can see the need for uniting on correct political ideology.

These are some problems of organizing as women cadre in industry. The following will be a brief summation of the experiences and solutions we have acquired during the last year.

The problems of women organizing the working class in the factories both large and small is indispensible from the problems and methods of organizing in general. From this point of view it is necessary for us to redouble our education in general and in particular to master "Letter to a Comrade," Lenin "On Trade Unions" and other theoretical works by the masters.

Based on the experience we have acquired, we propose the following solutions for us in particular and all comrades in general:

(a) On the question of union work it is necessary to be honest and consistent, particularly in the use of leaflets as a prerequisite for gaining the confidence of the class.

(b) On the question of the struggle against male supremacy, white chauvinism, and for the emancipation of women, we must take the leadership, be politically active, and especially guard against passivity and fight for the unity of the class.

(c) On the question of the "left" deviation, we must unite in order to struggle and educate and ground ourselves to understand the urgent needs of the class so as not to run ahead.

In summing up, women cadre have to guard against syndicalism, organizing women just because they are women themselves, as their main strategy. This was one of our principal errors. A plan of strategy has to be worked out taking into account condition, time and place. And above all, women cadre have to take up the whole of the struggle of the class. The woman question is just a part of the class struggle. We as communists have to raise every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, violence and abuse. Only then can we raise the banner of "workers and oppressed people of the world unite," advance the cause of the proletariat, and build a multi-national independent communist party.