

DISCUSSION PAPER - TOWARDS A STRATEGY

by Melody Kilian

PART I.

"The Pentagon announced last month that women will be admitted to Air Force ROTC programs in three universities next fall. Qualifications are identical with those for men: two years of college, x six week field training course at an Air Force base prior to the program, a written test and physical fitness. Graduates will receive commissions as second lieutenants in the Air Force."

To a woman's liberationist the above quotation from the April 5, 1969 Guardian is a horrifying example of a possibility latent in our movement: the possibility that women's ability, according to our own analysis, to do almost any work in the technology of industrial North America will be recognized by the capitalist class who will grant to women equality of access to places in production crucial to the present military-industrial economy.

Facking, like all advanced economies, a shortage of highly-skilled technical labour, capitalism could begin to see the waste to itself of potential manpower resources caused by discrimination against women. Already, bourgeois books such as THE HIGH COST (to Capitalism) OF KEEPING WOMEN DOWN are being written. Recent so-called feminist articles include "The Case for Drafting All Boys--and Girls" (Redbook, Sept. 6, by Margaret Mead), and "Let's Draft Women Too" (Saturday Evening Post, June 1966 Carolyn Bird).

One of the largest women's groups in North America is the National Organisation for Woman (NOW). Organized in 1966 by Betty Friedan, it will "take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society." NOW's demands include legalization of abortion, defined as a civil right, equality of employment (NOW has attacked sex segregation in Help*wanted ads) Its manifesto affirms "the right of an individual to equality of opportunity in education, employment, and housing shall not be denied because of sex, pregnancy, marital status, or parenthood."

The fact that this group's members have no revolutionary or socialist consciousness and yet that their demands and issues do not differ from ours is significant.

Many men in the North American movement have stated that they do not see the political relevance of women's liberation. They have been attacked as male chauvinists. Whether or not they are chauvinists, this statement must be met with concrete arguments about the revolutionary and socialist potential of the WLM.

Accused of being essentially bourgeois as a movement, many female theorists and leaders are now turning to the problems of working-class women and their struggles for equality of wages, benefits, and conditions. It is felt that articles on these struggles of super-exploited ~~xxx~~ female workers lends class analysis and socialist content to the new feminism. We feel we are being "Marxist" and "revolutionary" by looking toward organization of working class women and planning to make alliances with them. At SFU we hope to link somehow with working women, such as secretaries and office workers, perhaps organizing them into ~~xxxx~~ caucuses and affiliating with them in a city-wide organization.

And yet it is just at this point in the WL movement, as we are gaining momentum and strength, that we must be sure that we have an overall strategy related to the forces and tensions at work in advanced capitalism. To talk about working-class women is not enough to make WL a revolutionary force that will make a significant contribution to the destruction of capitalism. Whether the WL movement is revolutionary, placing stress on the capitalist class that it cannot bear, or reformist, leading merely to the winning of ~~a~~ bettered positions in the economy for a privileged few, depends on our understanding of advanced capitalism and the strategy we develop out of it.

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Although it is true that the charges of "reformist" generally come from those antagonistic to women's organizing, the entire debate on whether or not WL is essentially reformist or revolutionary is clouded by confusion over these terms.

There are not revolutionary demands (short of the demand for full socialism now!) only revolutionary strategies. Demands in a revolutionary strategy require class action in order to implement them. The most "economist" or "reformist" seeming demands can be "revolutionary" if they move people to class action. An example is the militant rebellions aboard German ships in WW II around demands for better food. Another is the 8 demands of the ASU, mobilizing men to demand equal pay in an imperialist army - but any class action by those men would prevent that army from functioning. Just about any demand, no matter how seemingly revolutionary can be co-opted if it exists without a revolutionary strategy.

It is objectively true that women in North America are poor; so much poorer, in fact, than are men that although we are "one half of the society" we are at the same time almost a class.

White men who worked full time the year round in the U.S. in 1966 earned a median income of \$6,497; Negro men, \$4,285; white women, \$3,859; and Negro women, \$2,670. (1)

In 1966, in the U.S. half of the women working full time earned only \$4,000 or less, compared with \$7,000 for men.

= A college education has been a reliable economic elevator for all economic minority groups, but California women with 4 or more years of education beyond high school averaged \$4,151, only \$300 more than California men who had left school at the end of the 8th grade. At the same time men in California with 4 or more years of college averaged \$8,108.

In Canada, there are nearly 3 million ~~xx~~ poor women (almost half the number of women over 16) These include 55,000 on Mother's Allowances, welfare recipients, working women who as single family heads earn less than \$3,000, all single women who work for less than \$3,000 per year and elderly poor women. 50% of all working women in A Canada earn less than ~~xxx~~ \$3,000. Only 10% earn more than ~~x~~ \$5,000 a year, and 1/3 of all single women make ~~xxxx~~ \$1,700 or less. Men aged 35-44 with only elementary school earn an average of \$3,312. A woman in the same age and education bracket makes \$1,560. Average ~~x~~ salaries remain at about 1/2 for women all the way up the ladder. A woman with a university degree usually makes less than a man with a high school diploma.

Many poverty-stricken women are excluded from work because they lack any marketable skill or educational attainment and/or because women's wages are so low that babysitting, transportation, and clothing costs for a single mother wipe out her earnings. Therefore many single mothers subsist on welfare rather than work.

Of those women who do work in Canada, the highest proportion are in the low income groups. Almost half of the husbands of working wives earned less than ~~xxx~~ \$3,000 in 1961.

<u>Husband's Income</u>	<u>Proportion of Working Wives</u>
Less than \$3000	46.7
3000-5000	40.1
over 5000	3.5
unknown or not applicable	9.7

(Elkin, p. 123)

In the U.S. the picture is much the same. In 1961, in families where the husband earned less than \$3,000 over half the mothers with children aged 6-17 and one fourth with children under 6 worked. When the husband's income was \$7000 or over, the proportions dropped to about 30 and 15 percent respectively.

(1) Women are a larger percentage of the work force than blacks. Look at the problem posed to the Capitalist class ~~xx~~ by blacks, who are a smaller % of the work force. Rulers simply cannot afford more people in motion.

It is obvious that if the families of most working wives depended on the husband's income alone they would be well below the "poverty line" in both Canada and the U.S. The majority of working wives do not really earn very much, usually less than \$2000.

Each year the statistics indicate that a higher proportion of married women join the labour force. In Canada, one wife in five is working; in the U.S. the figure is one out of three.

Among the women in the Canadian labour force as a whole, the proportion married increased from just 10% in 1931 to 47% in 1961.

It is clear from the above figures that the vast majority of working women are in the labour force out of necessity rather than out of choice. Girls work to support themselves before marriage and in case of marriage breakdown, and most married women work because of economic need. The need may be caused by a period of unemployment for her husband, family illness, accumulated debts, or a large purchase involving assumption of a mortgage.

The working wife is still far outnumbered by the wife not working for pay -- in Canada, some 80% of the married women are not in the labour force.

In 1961, in Canada, out of about 6 million women of working age (1,700,000) were in the working force, or 29.5%. Women comprise 27.3% of the labour force in ~~Canada~~ Canada. In Canada today about 2/3 of the working-age women don't work.

First of all, it is clear that most women are not in the work force, but in homes either by choice or because they cannot find jobs.

Secondly, we should consider whether the organization of women who are already working around issues of wages and benefits is revolutionary. Women, black and white, are certainly the most oppressed sector of the working-class. They are super-exploited as wage earners; far less unionized than are men, restricted to menial tasks, with little job security.

Women in Canada work overwhelmingly in the service, or tertiary, sector of the economy. They are not in primary industry except as office personnel. The only secondary industry they dominate is the textile industry.

Ten Leading Female Occupations, 1961 (from Porter, Can. Soc. Str. p. 97)

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage of Female Labour Force</u>	<u>Women as % of all workers</u>
Stenographers and Typists	209,410	11.9	96.8
Clerical	165,613	9.4	51.2
Sales clerks	133,234	7.6	58.0
Maids and related service workers	120,161	6.8	88.1
School Teachers	118,594	6.7	70.7
Bookkeepers and Cashiers	98,663	5.6	62.6
Nurses	81,868	4.6	96.8
Farm Labourers	66,081	3.7	29.7
Waitresses	61,802	3.5	78.6
Sewers and Sewing Machine Operators	50,592	2.9	90.5
Total 10 Occupations	1,106,018	62.7	66.3
Total Female Labour Force	1,763,862	100.0	27.5

Women are not related to primary industry but work nearly entirely in the tertiary sector. (Hypothesis: Perhaps white families will become matriarchal for a time as have ~~XXXXX~~ negro families as jobs in tertiary sector continue to be available after many unskilled men have lost jobs to automation. Women's service jobs will begin, however, to fall to men.)

One area in which advanced capitalism has nearly resolved of its contradictions is that of wages. "Because the surplus at the disposal of the modern corporation system is so vast, no realistically conceivable proletarian demand for higher wages or for any other quantifiable goal is likely to raise the spectre of revolution. Struggles over wages and conditions may be fought quite bitterly, but there is little probability that anything more than bitterness will emerge from them." (Nicolaus, Contradictions of Advanced Capitalist Society and its Resolution).

It will be possible for employers to lower certain barriers to women because the employment patterns are changing. The debate in the U.S. over the enactment of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Bill, which outlawed discrimination on the basis of sex, indicated some of the tensions at work. Following the passing of Title VII, women in some States began to lobby for the repeal of laws limited the number of hours women can work. They claimed that these laws discriminated against them. Women who lobbied for repeal were highly skilled and professional women who argued that employers use hours laws as an excuse to deny skilled women lucrative overtime work and also deny ambitious professional women the right to put in an ~~xxxxx~~ executive day to get ahead. The hours laws were passed in the first place to stop exploitation of unorganized women working in smaller factories which employ the lowest paid unskilled women. Mothers working to support their children have to get home on time. Without an hours law, employers will be able to fire those who would not stay on after hours at little or no extra pay. But such enterprises and this type of exploitation are on the way out. In 1966 a female electronics and electrical assembler in a California Aviation plant sued for the right to work overtime under Title VII. In response to the suit, the California Legislature rushed through a bill extending the hours women could work. Women's professional and business groups had campaigned for the law. Support for the old laws came from unorganized and unskilled women and also from male union leaders who wanted to keep the highly paid overtime-rich defense jobs for men.

As the new Technical-scientific proletariat forms in North America, women will have to compete for places in it. Many new non-sextyped jobs are being created. As the creation of highly skilled manpower lags behind the need for it, opportunities in some fields will be temporarily opened to women, while others who had worked in the traditional work force will be automated out, or pushed into unemployment by white men as competition for those job increases. Men will begin to be waiters, etc. in order to work at all.

As some traditionally female occupations are upgraded by the needs of the technology, inroads into them are often made by men. A good example is the library science field. As long as a librarian was the nice little lady with her dusty volumes working for a pittance, it was a totally female occupation. But information retrieval is now crucial to industrial expansion, and library science now involves complicated data-storing systems. A librarian can work for Shell Oil, for example, keeping up-to-date information at the fingertips of research scientists. Salaries are rising and there is a shortage of some 100,000 librarians now in the U.S. Between 1950 and 1960 the percentage of male librarians increased from 11% to 14%.

As education, at all levels, becomes more important to the economy, this will also be true of the teaching field. In Canada in 1961, while 15.3% of women in the work force were professional and technical workers as compared to 7.5% of men in the work force, 46.3% of women professionals were teachers. Between 1950 and 1960 the percentage of male secondary teachers increased from 43% to 51% in the U.S.

While there is still a great deal of unevenness in the developing trends in female employment, the major tendencies seem to be: a temporary opening of opportunities in the highly specialized and advanced skill technological fields because of a shortage of trained people; men taking over traditionally female-dominated semi-professional fields; greatly increased unemployment at the lowest and semi-skilled levels. These jobs are being claimed by men who have been forced into almost permanent unemployment. Women at these levels will be forced back into the home and on to the welfare rolls.

Part II

The development of a strategy inimical to advanced capitalism depends on our ability to ~~XXXXXX~~ raise demands and to begin to move people in a direction that ~~ix~~ threatens a crucial and fragile point in the economy. We must raise demands that the capitalist class is incapable of granting because of this weakness.

One of the crucial problems of advanced capitalism, at this stage, is the absorption of surplus, including surplus manpower. As James O'Connor has written,

"It is a system which has produced a large and growing stratum of unskilled, untrained workers, many of them black and/or female who had never had industrial work experience and never will. This "post-industrial" proletariat does not constitute a reserve army of the unemployed because it does not compete with the technical scientific proletariat. Unemployed, under-employed and employed in menial jobs in the the private and state sectors of the economy, these workers, particularly the younger ones, have become increasingly politicized. In black organizations, poor peoples associations, unions and welfare ~~fix~~ rights leagues, this group is politically in motion and constitutes a "social problem" of the first order for the corporation state." (Leviathan, March '69)

The problem of ~~xxx~~ surplus manpower is being "solved" by the corporate elite by various means: the elongation of schooling time and the transformation of educational institutions into holding places for youth, (witness the lengthening of the school year in Ontario and the ~~xxx~~ raising of job qualifications which forces people to become over-qualified for busy-work jobs, etc.) The draft and the military in the U.S. take up much of the slack. Canada, lacking a large military, simply tolerates a far higher unemployment level, which is close to 7-8%. In both countries youth employment is rising, often as high as 15-20%, and officials in both are becoming more and more preoccupied with "law and order". Social sciences are being commissioned increasingly to investigate problems of "social stability" and "social control".

The largest holding institution of surplus manpower is the home. Most women, far from being a "surplus labour pool" are a hidden part of the pool of unemployables. While it is true, as Myrna Wood wrote in a recent Guardian article on women's labour, that the white male worker does not get higher pay because women and blacks get less, it still does not alter the fact that he does tend to get a job because of the oppression of blacks and women.

In the occupations crucial to capitalism at this point, the realities are such that management cannot in fact threaten to hire lower paid women and blacks because these people lack the skills useful to the advanced economy.

The antipathy of white males to ADC mothers and ghetto blacks come more from the fact that part of his wages are paying for their welfare cheques than from fear that they might take his job. ("reserve labour pool" applied to women is an example of the simplistic nature of much "Marxist" analysis ~~xxxx~~ coming from the ~~xxxx~~ women's movement.)

Another contradiction of advanced capitalism - and the main one at the root of the rise of the W.L.M. - is the pressure ~~xx~~ that has been put on the home has caused women to rebel against their traditional roles and to want to get out of the home. This contradiction is the capitalization of women's labour while she remains in the home.

As a part of the vital role that the conjugal home plays in surplus absorption as a unit of consumption, inroads are being made on women's traditional use - private value production. In addition to the "labour-saving devices", women's labour is being capitalized in the sense that one can order such services as delivered food, or diaper services, and one is encouraged to do so by the media. The expansion of the service sector to create jobs for unemployable men will increasingly undermine women's home labour, leaving her with essentially nothing to do. Housewives who vigorously claim that they are busy all day should see Betty Friedan's discussion of the law of expanding "work".

At the same time, it is vital to the needs of the economy that the woman stay in the home, first to perform the consumer functions useful to the market and industrial economy, but more importantly, so as not to deepen the surplus manpower crisis any further. This contradiction runs through every bourgeois and working class women's magazine: ~~xx~~ buy and consume, but stay at home or your children will be warped.

Besides the nearly universal disaffection with the emptiness and boredom of homelife, there are several pressures caused by manpower trends and economic measures being taken by the capitalists that will increasingly force women out of the home and into the job market.

First, the fact that over 50% of males between the ages of 10 and 24 in the U.S. are either unemployed, in educational institutions, or in the military, coupled with the ~~xxx~~ dropping marriage ages, (In Canada at about 23 for men, 20 for women) means that the burden of financial support for all of these young families will fall on the other half of that 50% of young men who are non wage earners. These women will join the labour force, or at least the official rolls of the unemployed, or put even further pressure on the welfare and social control agencies.

There are numerous other pressures that will tend to force women out of the home. One is the growing tax burden of the North American working class. The corporate state is trying to make the workers bear the burden of paying for the increased social services and the wars that are necessary for the maintenance of the social relations of capitalism everywhere in the world.

The debt level of the working and middle class families is reaching the breaking point. In order to ~~xxxx~~ participate in the consumer-orientated society the working class has got itself into great debt. This household debt has increased from 35 million in ~~xx~~ 1946 to some \$387 million in 1968 in the U.S. - an increase of over 1000%

Both of these pressures will force large number of women into the pool of job-seekers.

Other pressures which will increasingly propel women into the work force ~~xx~~ derive mainly from the pathology of the family in advanced capitalist society: the rising divorce rate, the rising rate of "illegitimate" births and the increasing numbers of young people who are disaffected with the bankruptcy of marriage and intend to never marry.

One very important contribution that the women's liberation movement will make to increasing the pace of the ~~xxxx~~ women's exodus from the home will be to undermine the bourgeois ideology that keeps many dissatisfied middle class women in the home and cause them to seek work out of choice. It is just this defection from the home that could place crucial pressure on the manpower absorption and social control problems of the corporate state.

"Radical social ideas are radical not because they express the demand for some imagined desirable society, but because they protest ~~xxxxxxx~~ against some inequity of the present order...but because they express the repressed potential of the present social order, (because they) point to the possibilities which the status quo negates."

(Martine Nicolaous, Contradictions, p.7)

This demand is revolutionary because, as stated above, 1) it speaks to a repressed possibility of the system and also accelerates trends already underway. 2) it threatens an already weakened point in the structure of advanced capitalism 3) it cannot be granted by the capitalist class.

There are other reasons. The conjugal family serves several important functions in monopoly capitalism besides that of holding institution for women's labour power.

The conjugal, or nuclearized, family as we know it today is in the first place a ~~xxx~~ recent product of industrialization. In all ~~xxx~~ parts of the world, as industrialization has taken place, whatever form the family began in, it has moved toward the fragmented, isolated, mama-papa-baby consumer unit common in North America.

This type of arrangement was the best to relate to the organization of production in industrial centres; it is mobile, it provides the emotionality and affectionate relationships ~~xxxxx~~ almost totally lacking at the workplace, it provided free an enormous quantity of women's labour for feeding, clothing and cleaning the work force and the free socialization of a submissive work force.

As the importance of worker's consumption increased with the integration of the organized core of the working class into the system as consumers and ideologically conditioned members of society, the conjugal family became the main consumer unit and socializing agent, with women mainly engaged in both activities.

This is a very brief overview of the origins of the nuclear family, but there is much evidence for this historical development. One is that the kinship network has remained more extensive toward the upper strata, among people who relate to production as owners.

The overall strategy of the revolutionary women's liberation movement should be to attempt to move large numbers of women out of the home. Tactics of the movement should follow out of this strategy.

Demands for educational equality, for birth control and abortion, for equality in wages and benefits and the demand to end sex-linked occupations should be seen as tactics to aid in enticing women out of the home, making work possible and more worthwhile to them. Main organizing should perhaps be done in high schools, mostly to undermine bourgeois "love and dating" ideology that channels girls into the home.

The main stumbling block to the creation of massive demands for work is the ideology that children need women at home, and must be raised in nuclear homes by their biological mothers. It is this guilt and fear that has maintained the home this long. This ideology - the motherhood mystique - must be undermined. It is one of the most powerful of our culture. As a way to attack this, the demand for day-care should be very widely raised. This demand would speak to the 3/4 of mothers with pre-school children in the U.S. who do not work. In Canada, the percentage of mothers who work is relatively low in families with young children. 60% of the continuous women workers have never had a child. (Elkin, p.125)

In Canada, the following arrangements, in order of importance, are made for the pre-school children of working mothers: the grandmother, the husband, neighbours or friends, nursery school. Baby sitting is less common because of the cost (from \$10 - \$12 per week)

The day care demand holds within it the seeds of the new, extended relationships between people that will replace the conjugal, paternalistic family. New, extended communal forms of living and socializing children must be at the base of the new society if women are to be free.

Too many times, in the Soviet Union, Cuba, and even in China, feudalism or capitalism has been replaced by forms of socialism without this basic change in the paternal family structure. (In the last two, however, changes in this direction are occurring.)

Day-care can be organized communally, forming nuclei for the creation of socialist values and commitments. Anti-authoritarian socialization of children can be undertaken now as is being done in Germany by the S.D.S.

It may well be that it is around this issue (and others) - one that women of all classes share - that women can build class alliances, perhaps more successfully than can men. It is clear that women of different classes share common problems more than do men and women of the same class.

The tendencies in the economy of advanced capitalism described in this paper point to the growth of a large new feminist movement in North America whether radicals call for or effect it or not. This movement can be threatening to corporate power in itself, but, like all other radicals, we cannot simply stand around waiting for the system to collapse under its own weight. Radical women must lend leadership and anti-capitalist politics to this movement and spur it on by organizing other women.

This is one reason why we must have equality within the movement, developing women leaders and organizers. Men cannot lead the new feminist movement.

This strategy is an attempt to carry out what we have said elsewhere many times: that women's liberation cannot wait for "after the revolution" but must proceed now. What we are proposing is not a utopian vision but is in itself revolutionary.

The exodus from the home crucial to this strategy requires the undermining of the conjugal family and the male supremacy that controls it. It is this demand, on which the uplifting of women depends, that has caused the tension between men and women within the movement itself. This challenge to the ownership and power of men is threatening and it is the opposition of radical men that has caused some women's groups to separate from the larger movement completely and to "go their own way".

The destruction of capitalism and the seizing of state power is only the beginning of the revolution. The emergence of the women's movement in North America, drawing on the experience of the revolutions that have gone before us, is the beginning of a movement towards true communism. The demand for the destruction of the monogamous nuclear family is the ultimate revolutionary demand.

PART III

POINTS ABOUT FULL MARXISM

- economist demands by women lead almost automatically to quality and role definition issues therefore to control and alienation of labour demands.
- development of whole counter-union structure to undermine AFL-CIO. Old trade union bureaucracy crumbles.
- stress reaction to imperialism - hassle capitalism - stress domestic imperialism
- demand for meaningful WORK UNDERMINES LIBERAL IDEOLOGY ABOUT work. Work out of choice.
- put in freedom from housework, evening child care, etc. explicitly.