

WORKING
CLASS
WOMEN
are

Rising to lead the
Women's Movement



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INTRODUCTION

Struggle is what moves things ahead. Struggle is the agent for change. There is always a struggle between the rising forces and the dominant dying forces. Ideological struggle within revolutionary movements and organizations as well as within individuals is a never-ending process and is necessary in order to transform our world outlook from one of serving the bourgeoisie to one of serving the proletariat. Failure to understand this basic ideological principle is a serious error made by many revolutionary organizations. Ideological unity results only from ideological struggle - without ideological unity based on a proletarian world outlook, a revolutionary organization is unable to discharge its revolutionary responsibilities.

The source of revolutionary vitality is the working class. Whenever this revolutionary vitality is cut off, it is always a matter of time before the organization's death - caused by a lack of working class participation and a failure to develop working class leadership. In order to transform the dominant class content (dominant world outlook) of an organization from petty bourgeois to proletarian, a firm grasp of a basic law of development is necessary. Dialectical materialism teaches us that the internal is the basis for change and the external is the condition for change. For a revolutionary organization, this means that the internal class content is the basis

for its development and the external class base (who it serves) provides the condition for its development.

The practice of the petty bourgeois former leadership of the Twin Cities Women's Union, so called "Marxist-Leninists", clearly proves that they failed to firmly grasp this law of dialectics. They failed to recognize the necessity of internal ideological struggle as the basis for developing ideological unity and looked instead to external conditions - programmatic work among working class women to transform their own petty bourgeois organization. Because they avoided and undermined the ideological struggle being waged within their organization, what effort they put into external organizing lacked class consciousness and revolutionary thrust.

This pamphlet is an attempt to bring a proletarian interpretation of the essence of the ideological struggle that has been waged within the Twin Cities Women's Union and the women's movement for the past year.

AN EXPLANATION OF WHY THE WOMEN'S UNION COLLAPSED

TWIN CITIES WOMEN'S UNION COLLAPSE:

TWO VIEWS

by Judy Sayad
Pan Costain
Mary Brandl

(taken from the SCOOP newspaper—
October–November, 1976)

Those of us who have been in the women's movement for years have a lot to be proud of -- the women's movement has made significant changes in the lives of the majority of women in this country. Many jobs previously closed to women are now opening up. We no longer have to go to some filthy crook for an abortion. Rape is looked upon as a crime against women. For the first time, there are childcare centers in a peacetime economy. No longer can a boss fire us when we look pregnant. The word "lesbian" is being spoken above a whisper. That is a lot in less than ten years!

But the women's movement is under grave attack at this time. The government has finally realized the mass character of the movement and has responded with infiltration and grand juries, in addition to organized attempts to turn back social and economic gains women have fought for. The rightwing,

such as the John Birch Society, is sinking thousands and thousands of dollars into defeating the ERA and outlawing abortion. Public opinion polls show that the majority of women support both of these, but that majority is virtually invisible. Why is this? What are we doing wrong? How can so many women agree with our ideas at the same time as many of our organizations nationally and locally are falling apart?

As I see it, the central error of most women's organizations at this time is lack of strategy. That lack of strategy was reflected in the TCWU here and is key to understanding the demise of the organization. It's more important to ask what did not happen in the TCWU than what did. While the TCWU over the years had many successful events and projects and involved large numbers of women in its work, we never had a strategy or plan of action for building a non-reformist women's movement in the Twin Cities.

All the members of the TCWU agreed, at least verbally, that we wanted the TCWU to become a "mass women's organization". In the broadest sense, that implies somewhat of a strategy for the liberation of women: it implies that the women's movement must be more than personal change; it says there is more strength in collective action than in individual struggles. Those are extremely broad statements and do not contain one hint as to HOW to go about achieving a goal like a mass women's organization. This statement however was the basis of unity that we tried to build the organization with.

An organization can only survive so long without a plan, a direction a strategy. Projects lose steam, there is no basis for deciding "what's next?", members become demoralized; criticisms have no way of getting resolved and they turn into guilt trips. Lack of strategy is a common phenomena within the women's movement. It is one of our most dominant weaknesses.

Without a strategy new project initiatives never become more than something a few individuals want and push on everyone else; evaluations of our existing work never reach a common understanding shared by all or even a majority of members.

Developing a strategy is a difficult task, requiring time, patience and a political understanding of women's position in our society. To develop that, we must take a long hard look at the condition of women in this country and strive to build organizations and fight struggles that serve the majority of women. There are four differences I see between the organized women's movement, including the TCWU, and all women: available options, family relations, class and race.

AVAILABLE OPTIONS: I find this the hardest to pinpoint. One way to pose the differences between members of the many women's unions across the country and the majority of women is that we have much more control over our lives than most women. Why is complex — youth, lifestyle, college education, ideology, our visions of ourselves, all play a role to different degrees in different people. But the unifying characteristic is that many of us are able to exert a tremendous degree of control over our lives compared to the majority of women. I think that this can be one of our greatest strengths, but it becomes a weakness when we build our organizations in such a way that we can only accommodate other women with the same characteristics, and when we fail to see as sisters all those women who agree with our ideas but who don't have the same options open to them.

FAMILY RELATIONS: Most women are part of a nuclear family. A major difference between members of women's unions and most women is this relation to the nuclear family. How does this difference affect building an organization? Women with nuclear families have less freedom, less time and different needs. They, more than many of us, need meaningful

work (not licking stamps and coalating or sitting in horribly abstract meetings) and a group to work in that breaks through their isolation. Also, many women in families want a movement for themselves and their husbands. This is not the same as "the mixed movement", but a movement that does things and has events which include men and children. This is not to deny the crucialness of all women organizations or women-only events. But many women who agree with ideas of women's liberation don't want their political development to be 100% separate from their husbands.

CLASS POSITION: I don't buy the analysis you hear a lot in the left (like from the Coop Organization) that the women's movement is only a petit-bourgeois movement. However, we do have to look at our class make-up. While it might be hard to characterize, we must recognize and rectify the fact that our organizations are not overflowing with food service workers, factory workers, housekeepers, or cabdrivers, and women who have had jobs like those for 5, 10, 20 years are virtually non-existent in our organizations. This is a serious weakness. It means that a good number of those women with the most need for, and the most to gain from, the women's movement are not a part of us. *

RACIAL MAKE-UP: And most strikingly the women's movement has remained virtually all white. We can not be an organized mass movement and be all white. Clearly there is activity among non-white women all over the country; in the New York Coalitions, fights over daycare, sterilization, welfare, education. While those involved in these activities are predominantly women and more specifically non-white women, this activity remains separate from what is known as the "women's movement". Not only are non-white women among those with the most need for, and the most to gain from the women's movement, they

* Refer to "Criticism of the Twin Cities Women's Union".

are among those with the most to teach! We will never realize our potential if we do not go through the changes necessary to unite with non-white women. **

These questions are all a part of "What happened in the Twin Cities Women's Union?" We had no strategy for overcoming these weaknesses. For those of us who left, it became apparent that the answers were not forthcoming. A combination of these factors, specific errors made and some situations totally out of our control led to the folding of the organization. I am going to focus on those specific errors which I believe some or all of us who left bear primary responsibility.

1) Make-up of the Planning Committee: Last fall the TCWU decided to have a formal leadership body. Much of the sentiment for the planning committee came from those of us who recently left the organization. While the organization agreed that a formal leadership body was necessary to develop strategy, plan discussions, and develop work projects, when push came to shove, there were only four people willing and able to assume this kind of leadership. The four had politics unrepresentative of the whole organization with significant differences. Leadership continually misjudged the capabilities, desires and politics of the rest of the organization. They slowly became more and more isolated from the rest of the membership. There were continual undercurrents of dissatisfaction with their work, but never real opposing ideas for what they should do. We now understand the error was for them to have ever constituted the planning committee. The leadership body needed to be a more diverse and representative group. If that was not possible, it would have been better not to have a planning committee. At the time it seemed clear that without a planning committee the TCWU would have fallen apart. Now we feel that if that was so, it should have happened then.

** Refer to "Stop Private Cliques and Social Clubs Within the Women's Movement".

2) We were not successful in creating the political discussions necessary for the union to make decisions and move forward. It's not that there weren't discussions, there were, they just weren't the most important ones to have. They were not clarifying. Mostly they were demoralizing and useless. We feel that those of us who left bear primary responsibility for this because we gave the impression that we could create discussions that would unite people and then weren't able to deliver.

3) While we always made the criticism that people in the Union were not involved in on-going organizing projects and mass work, we ourselves didn't do much better. I think that lack of program and mass work was one of the greatest weaknesses of the TCWU. Our error was to make that criticism and then instead of doing program work, allow ourselves to be drawn into more and more internal work (staff, the newsletter, meetings, planning committee). What we should have done was sink our teeth into one or possibly two work projects, letting the internal questions slide until there was concrete work from which to make decisions (projects such as a food stamp project, a campaign against childcare cuts, or neighborhood tenant activity, etc.).

I think that the questions posed in this article are questions that are coming up for most of the women's movement and much of the left movement. While there were many particulars that caused the situation in the TCWU to turn out as it has, all of us need to pay attention to these issues.

In closing I want to make it clear that none of us see leaving the TCWU as ending our commitment to a mass women's movement and to work among women. In all of our discussions about what we are going to do now, we talk about working with women, in work-place organizing, in tenants organizing, in the Native American Solidarity Committee, at Metro Community College. Leaving the Twin Cities Women's Union was our response to a particular situation created in part by ourselves and in part by the state of the women's movement as a whole.

A MARXIST-LENINIST'S ANALYSIS OF THE COLLAPSE OF THE WOMEN'S UNION

RESPONSE TO SCOOP ARTICLE ON WOMEN'S UNION

by Judy Long

Judy, Pam, and Mary's view of the collapse of the Women's Union is written in retrospect as women who are part of the "Marxist-Leninist" collective that developed within the Union and split from it to form a program collective. While calling themselves Marxist-Leninist, this group actually formed the base of opposition to the rising working class leadership during the months of internal struggle within the Union before its collapse. Their article takes a somewhat self-critical look at the Union and the role that they and others played as leadership, but fails to see the real essence of the errors they made.

They view the ideological errors of their practice as a kind of phenomena that they were unable to deal with, so they left to form another collective:

"These questions (family relations, class position and racial make-up) are all a part of 'What happened in the Twin Cities Women's Union?' We had no strategy for overcoming

these weaknesses. For those of us who left, it became apparent that the answers were not forthcoming. A combination of these factors, specific errors made and some situations totally out of our control led to the folding of the organization. Leaving the Twin Cities Women's Union was our response to a particular situation, a situation created in part by ourselves and in part by the state of the women's movement as a whole."

They look at the Union as part of the women's movement and lay out its weaknesses. The weaknesses as they lay them out are differences that exist between the organized women's movement and all women over the available options they have in their lives, their family relations, class background, and race. They throw these out as questions that the women's movement must deal with, but fail to recognize them as internal class contradictions within the women's movement as well as the Women's Union. Consequently they fail to see the opposing sides of these contradictions within the Union and the necessity for internal struggle to resolve them. Lacking a firm understanding of what caused the Women's Union collapse and their ideological errors as leadership, the question arises about how successful an attempt by this collective to develop a new women's program will be.

They state early in their article that lack of strategy is one of the most dominant weaknesses in the Women's Union. True, lack of strategy was a weakness of the Women's Union, but where does strategy come from? The Women's Union, like many movement organizations, used strategy as a catch-all word to mean "figuring out what to do". In the essay, "Concerning the Question of the Strategy and Tactics of the Russian Communists", Stalin explains how strategy is based on the data provided by the theory and programme of Marxism:

"From a study of the objective processes of capitalism in their development and decline, the theory of Marxism arrives at the conclusion that the fall of the bourgeoisie and seizure of power by the proletariat are inevitable, that capitalism must inevitably give way to socialism. Proletarian strategy can be called truly Marxist only when its operations are based on this fundamental conclusion of the theory of Marxism. Proceeding from the data of theory, the programme of Marxism determines the aims of the proletarian movement, which are scientifically formulated in the points of the programme. The most important function of strategy is to determine the main direction which ought to be taken by the working class movement, and along which the proletariat can most advantageously deliver the main blow at its enemy in order to achieve the aims formulated in the programme."

From Stalin's essay, we see that strategy means determining what direction to take at a given time based on an objective understanding of the contradictions within a definite stage of development of the social system and the aims that have been formulated. What would this have meant for the Women's Union? Applying the theory of Marxism would mean looking at the contradictions in capitalist society and their particular effect on women. In order to develop a Marxist programme, not only is an understanding of the contradictions necessary, but also clarity on what the primary contradiction in society is. Samora Machel, in an article entitled, "The Liberation of Women is a Fundamental Necessity For the Revolution", says:

"The exploitation of women is an aspect of the general system of exploitation of man by man. This exploitation created the conditions for the alienation of women; it

reduced them to passivity and excludes them from the sphere of decision making in society. The antagonistic contradictions which thus exist, are between women and the exploitative social order. These contradictions are between all the exploited masses in our country and in the world, and the exploiting classes. Only revolution can definitively resolve this contradiction, because it alone is the incarnation of the interests of the exploited masses; it mobilizes, organizes and unites them for the struggle; it alone can destroy the old social order."

Ideological struggle within ourselves and within organizations like the Women's Union is necessary in order to transform our world outlook from one of serving the bourgeoisie to serving the proletariat. Ideological unity in the Women's Union would only have come as a result of waging this ideological struggle, but the leadership of the Union consistently avoided it. Neither theoretical nor political unity is enough for an organization to move forward, though the Women's Union didn't even try for this much. An example of theoretical unity is unity on the national question. An example of political unity is unity around the co-op struggle. The highest level of unity that the Women's Union ever seemed to reach was some form of social unity ("good vibes").

In their article, Judy, Pam, and Mary go on to talk about the weaknesses in the women's movement based on differences that exist between most women and the women that make up the organized women's movement. As they see it, these differences are around available options women have in their lives, family relations (living in a nuclear family or as a single woman in a more communal lifestyle), class background, and race. True, these differences do exist, but what the leadership of the Women's Union failed to see is the universality of contradictions;

that is to say, there are contradictions within the women's movement, the Women's Union, and women. Viewing them as problems or weaknesses is a static, undialectical approach that leads you to look for static "answers" and to the ultimate conclusion that "answers are not forthcoming" and that nothing can be done. If you start with a dialectical and materialist view as your basis of understanding, you see that there are contradictions in all things (universality of contradiction), there is a rising and dying side to all contradictions (unity and struggle of opposites), and everything carries a dominant ideological nature: bourgeois or proletarian. Applying this to what they call weaknesses in the women's movement, we can see how these are really class contradictions that exist between the organized women's movement and working class women; within the women's movement and the Women's Union--between dominant bourgeois feminist leadership and rising working class leadership; and within each of us--between bourgeois and proletarian world outlook.

A fundamental law of dialectics is that qualitative leaps are made based on a series of quantitative struggles between the two opposing sides of a contradiction. Internal struggle between bourgeois and proletarian ideology, between the dominant bourgeois feminist leadership in the women's movement and the rising working class leadership is necessary to resolve those class contradictions. The leadership of the Women's Union viewed these contradictions as weaknesses or problems, so they looked to spontaneous answers that would fall from the sky or quantitative changes like doing outreach to working class women and Third World women through a food program. Not seeing their internal class contradictions, they failed to see the necessity of internal ideological struggle. With answers to their problems not forthcoming, they left to form a new organization.

A MARXIST-LENINIST ANALYSIS OF THE WOMEN'S UNION

CRITICISM OF THE TWIN CITIES WOMEN'S UNION

by Doris Covill
Libby White

(an abridged version)

1/17/76

INTRODUCTION

We are women who have been involved in the Women's Union for several years. Our desire is to see the Union move forward, to develop ideological clarity on who it serves and to transform the present social unity into a clear political unity. To do this, we see the necessity for the Union to take a clear working class stand not only in words but in deeds. However, for this to happen, we feel some fundamental questions should be raised and that a clear unity be established. This unity will result only out of ideological struggle, and we feel that for too long this principled struggle has been avoided. An emphasis has been placed on unity in place of struggle. It has been repeated to us many times that "the Union is changing but it's happening slowly". We do not see that change taking place. We reject the evolutionist theory of change which maintains that things develop in a gradual step by step manner. We feel that change occurs out of struggle. Why are we so afraid of struggle? If the basis of an organization is an unprincipled unity

("we are all sisters") then that unity is threatened by struggle. This is what is meant by the slogan unity-struggle-unity. The unity that is established out of this struggle will be based on more objective criteria and result in a stronger Union. We also feel that such a struggle is a fundamental preliminary step to any discussion of program.

Our analysis is based on our own experience, the experiences of women who are within the Union and conversations with women who see problems with the Union.

Following is an outline of some basic contradictions within the Union we feel should be addressed and a history of the principles of unity. Our intention is to spark a discussion of these issues to further the development of the Union.

CONTRADICTIONS WITHIN THE UNION

I. Leadership

We see the establishment of a clear leadership body as an important development of the Union. However, forms and structure alone do not provide the basic thrust of an organization. The necessary questions to be asked about leadership are: who does leadership serve and how is leadership developed? There seems to be a hesitancy on the part of the leadership to explicitly state their view of the world and how they see basic changes coming about. It should be the role of leadership to move an organization forward and to develop leadership skills in all the members. We feel that the leadership is holding back its politics from the membership. Why is this? Is it a lack of respect for the membership or a lack of contact? The membership of an organization is held back when leadership is not clear in its politics.

The unwillingness of the leadership to understand the necessity of taking a clear class stand

will only result in propping up the present system of monopoly capitalism and further disillusion the many women who come in contact with the Women's Union as to who is the real enemy.

"When a task, no matter which, has to be performed, but there is as yet no guiding line, method, plan or policy, the principal and decisive thing is to decide on a guiding line, method, plan or policy." (Mao Tse-Tung, On Contradiction)

It is especially important for the politics, the guiding principle of the leadership to be clear. Our present leadership has not yet told us what is the method, plan or policy it intends to follow. We are told in meetings and in the newsletter that they plan to figure it out sometime! It is opportunistic on the part of leadership to not be clear about their direction.

II. WHAT ARE WE UNIFIED ON IN THE UNION?

The real basis of unity within TCWU is and historically has been on a social basis. Why is it that so many women who have joined the Union feel excluded? Because the Union is built largely on social ties between women with similar organizational experiences and lifestyles, many women feel left out. The unity that is developed must be based on political, not social ties. Women who have the time and relative privilege to hang around the office or a particular friendship group can eventually be incorporated into a grouping. This leaves out those women with jobs and family commitments. We feel the essence of this contradiction is class. For many of us, the response to this contradiction has been to internalize our feelings of exclusion and to feel intimidated by our failure to meet these standards.

What are the goals and purposes of the Union? For three years this has been left vague and unclear.

Is our goal to build a mass based working class women's organization or a large mailing list?

We talk a lot about being a revolutionary organization, but ignore the prime force that will inevitably lead the revolution--the working class.

We see the oppression of women as intrinsic under the monopoly capitalist system and that in order to change this system, working class women's leadership is essential. At present, the primary task is to build and develop that leadership. The present nature and character of the Women's Union does not allow for this to happen. Much of the planning for programs are done by small cliquish groups or at parties. To illustrate this, an example is necessary. Last spring, a welfare mother was driven away from the welfare task force because she didn't understand what imperialism had to do with welfare. No answers were given to her questions. The woman left with her baby. It was then stated that it was obvious that welfare women couldn't be in our little group until we figured out in our heads what it was all about. Nobody challenged this decision.

HISTORY OF PRINCIPLES OF UNITY

One of the primary purposes of studying the development in the process of a thing is to learn from our past mistakes. The composition of the group of women who founded the Women's Union was diverse. But instead of struggling over these ideological differences to build a clear basis of unity, a set of principles were adopted that would include "something for everyone" and serve as a basis for building an organization. It must be pointed out that unless a clear basis of unity can be established at the beginning in the development of an organization, that organization will continually meet with problems that it is unable to solve.

The original principles of unity are largely idealistic in character. Though anti-capitalist, that stand is undermined by the utopian content of many of the other principles--"We believe the universe is an integrated entity. We want to improve our relationships with other women, with men, with children, with animals, with plants, with stars, with water, with the universe. Flowing." The fact that this statement was retained does not necessarily mean that the majority of the women present felt that it should have been. But because of the liberal content of the group, the desire to preserve sisterhood above ideological struggle, and the need for an organization above all else, the principles were preserved as they were--rambling, vague, with little political content.

It wasn't until 1974 that an attempt was made to rectify this situation, and to write new principles. These principles of unity identify that the basic needs and rights of people cannot be met under capitalism. However, the principles fail to elaborate on what is meant by oppression, and, more critically, fail to take a class stand. The failure to do so has been consistent throughout the history of the Union. It is clear that the struggle against capitalism cannot exist outside of an understanding of class and how it operates in this society. Without clarity on this issue an organization cannot move forward in this struggle, and the work it takes on will only lead up blind alleys, and end up being reformist instead of revolutionary.

The important thing to remember about class is not that we all should feel guilty about how our parents make a living. The important thing to realize is that our ideology, based on our life experience, is greatly influenced by our position in the social system, our class. The key to the revolutionary life of an organization lies in its class content and struggle for ideological clarity. The Women's Union has failed to do so, has failed even to struggle and has developed principles of unity

which consistently avoid this issue and are so vague as to allow the organization to be perpetually dominated by those women with petty bourgeois skills and ideology. White women with petty bourgeois backgrounds, that is, women coming from the upper middle classes have class privileges in contrast to Third World and working class women.

To be strong, to be effective, it is imperative that the Union develop principles of unity which reflect a desire to further the development of working class leadership in the struggle against capitalism.

"Work style and attitude toward the masses is above all an ideological problem. Trying to be wise without the correct world outlook will lead to paternalism and missionary mentality. The women's movement and the national movement have had too many experiences with that already." (Asian Women's Group, Dec. 1975)

A RESPONSE TO RACISM AND PETTY BOURGEOIS FEMINISM

STOP PRIVATE CLIQUES AND SOCIAL CLUBS WITHIN THE
WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

by Maggie Jones

(An unabridged paper to the leadership of the
Women's Union)

As a rising force in the revolutionary movement, I feel it is my revolutionary duty to speak to the (TWCU) Twin Cities Women's Union conference held February 7, 1976. The basis for the conference was to deal with criticism of the Union which was raised by two members of the Union in a paper titled "Criticism of the Twin Cities Women's Union". The criticisms of the Union were as follows:

- Social unity instead of political unity
- Lack of ideological clarity
- Unwillingness to struggle
- Leadership: who does it serve and how is it developed?
- Lack of clarity of purpose of the Union and lack of goals and objectives
- Small cliquish groups
- Liberalism
- Petty bourgeois feminism
- Reformist as opposed to revolutionary

It was very clear the leadership didn't want to struggle with themselves, and therefore would not provide a forum nor support the need for struggle to take place. There was a lack of commitment to take an objective look at the historical analysis of the women's movement. It is clear that without such a historical approach to the women's movement it will become a jumble of accidents and mistakes. It is absurd to think that something can be moved to another level if there isn't any understanding or respect for its process of development.

There was intense dialogue around the class issue, which was handled like a joke. This exemplified class chauvinism. Working class women have no illusions about the exploitation that is waged on us as workers. And to make light of it is an insult to our intellectual ability to understand our oppression. We do not accept the feminist view that women's problems are caused by men. We don't blame our husbands, brothers and sons for the fact that we are unemployed, underpaid and trapped on welfare. We put the blame where it belongs on government and big business - the capitalist class. Based on this reality it is necessary for women to play a decisive role as leadership of all revolutionary forces. Therefore, it is crucial that the women's movement today struggle with class conflict, support working class women as leadership and grow and change to meet the challenge faced by all people in revolutionary struggle.

There is a need for a mass women's organization - in general this was agreed upon. What was never made clear was what direction such a movement should take. It's very clear that such a movement should deal with social oppression of women, but under a revolutionary party.

Many hours of debate were waged around the above criticisms. The leadership of the Union refused to deal objectively with the criticisms. Their defensiveness and antagonism made it very clear that

leadership doesn't serve the interests of the membership. The leadership's role at the conference was destructive in the sense that it suggested that personality problems were at the basis of the struggle that was trying to be waged. The leadership also put forth that the destructive line of the CO is the root of internal contradictions of the Union. In fact the criticisms that were raised were basic and real if there is to be an effective progressive women's organization and movement. The leadership refused to put the criticism within the proper context and moved to avoid dealing with the legitimacy or non-legitimacy of the criticisms. This was a show of incorrect leadership.

The central focus of the Union emphasizes feminist consciousness raising and culture. There seems to be total agreement within the Union that all women are oppressed. But in their practice, the Union has failed to connect and build alliances with working class women of any nationality. This is petty bourgeois feminism.

The women's movement should politicize and mobilize women to take part in the revolution. And in order for a movement to move in this direction there has to be correct revolutionary 1) Ideological Thrust, 2) Organizational Form, 3) Programmatic Content.

The Union totally disregards the need for ideological thrust and organizational form, but proposes to develop programs. This has to be defined as metaphysical thinking. Without correct revolutionary ideological thrust and organizational form there is no basis for programs. And for the Union to operate at this level of backwardness is a lack of clarity of the purpose of the Union as well as goals and objectives. Which makes it all the more clear that there is a need for struggle.

The conference was white except for myself, which made it very clear that the Union did not.

actively seek out Third World women's participation, which reflects the sickness of racism.

There were attempts during the conference to deal with racism, but not seriously and in a proper context but as a tool to negate the real question. Does the Twin Cities Women's Union see itself as a progressive revolutionary women's organization, with a clear class stand? This question was not answered, in fact it was cast aside as insignificant. I charge that this attitude comes from:

- PETTY BOURGEOIS FEMINISM
- RACISM
- CLASS CHAUVINISM
- ORGANIZATIONAL OWNERSHIP
- OPPORTUNISM

A LESSON TO BE LEARNED

A SUM-UP ON THE COLLAPSE OF THE
TWIN CITIES WOMEN'S UNION

by Doris Covill
Becky Comeau
Judy Long

The political character of the principal contradiction between us (former Union members and practicing Marxist-Leninists) and the "Marxist-Leninist" collective (the petty bourgeois former leadership of the Union, led by Pam Costain), is one of an ideological character. The principal contradiction between them and us is between their talking about putting revolutionary theory into practice vs. our actually putting revolutionary theory into practice. In short, the contradiction between saying and doing. In a word, "an ounce of application is worth a ton of abstraction."

Let us now examine the political consequences of the contradiction between saying and doing.

In analyzing any political organization, the first step is to define the class composition of the organization (whether the majority of its members come from working class or petty bourgeois backgrounds) and its class content (what is the dominant world outlook of the organization--what class

is its leadership representing, and is there on-going struggle to transform the bourgeois world outlook of its members?); and the next step is to determine what class or class sector the organization is basing its political orientation on (what class interests it objectively serves).

The correct combination of these two political factors is essential to the life and vitality of a revolutionary organization. If a revolutionary organization has leadership who have not developed the proletarian world outlook of dialectical materialism, if a majority of its members are not struggling to transform their bourgeois world outlook and are not fighting for the dictatorship of the proletariat--obviously it has a majority of petty bourgeois class elements dominating the class content of the organization. The result--political stifling of the proletarian world view. The collapse of the Twin Cities Women's Union indisputably validates the correctness of this ideological principle.

The internal class content of an organization is automatically interconnected to its class base. A law of dialectical materialism states that change and development can only take place through interconnectedness; that is, the internal is the basis for change, and the external is the condition for change. What does this mean? The internal content of an organization is the basis for its development. The lack of theoretical comprehension of this law of development and change leads many political militants and many too many "Marxist-Leninists" to formulate plans, programs, etc. based on phenomena (external conditions) rather than on essence (internal contradictions). As a consequence, their plans and programs meet failure instead of success.

On the whole, a dialectical materialist diagnosis of the cause of death of revolutionary organizations is based on the contradiction between saying and doing. Furthermore, dialectical materialists

always place practice above theory, because practice is the foundation of genuine knowledge and the only criterion of truth.

The practice of a petty bourgeois revolutionary organization in preaching Marxist-Leninism -- without active efforts to transform its dominant class content from petty bourgeois to proletarian -- cuts the organization off from the source of revolutionary vitality -- the working class. Whenever the revolutionary vitality is cut off, it is always a matter of time before the organization's death -- caused by the political deficiency of working class participation and lack of development of working class leadership.

In contrast to what the Twin Cities Women's Union leadership thought, transforming the dominant class content from petty bourgeois to proletarian does not mean bringing in working class women under petty bourgeois leadership that has nowhere to take them; rather, it means waging internal ideological struggle to transform the world outlook of the people in the organization and therefore the organization overall, and developing rising proletarian leadership.

In deepening our understanding of the collapse of the Twin Cities Women's Union, attention should be focused on an ideological principle which states: petty bourgeois class content of a revolutionary organization, and petty bourgeois class orientation of an organization (weak political foundation) bring about political strangulation of both proletarian practice and world outlook.

In this regard, the ultimate responsibility for the collapse of the Women's Union resides on the shoulders of the petty bourgeois leadership of TCWU: Pam Costain, Mary Brandl, Laura Davis, & Judy Sayad. **Primarily**, had it not been for these petty bourgeois obstructionists named above, the Women's Union could have been transformed under proletarian lead-

ership, and energetic class struggle would have now been in progress in the Twin Cities women's movement.

The obstructionists knew personally and politically that they could neither take the revolutionary class struggle forward because of their class inability (bourgeois world outlook) to lead working class women, nor restructure the Women's Union so that working class women could participate in the affairs of the organization in a way that corresponds to their material reality.

Pam Costain and Greg Gaut wrote a 20-page theoretical paper entitled "Fundamental Errors of the Co-op Organization", in which they criticized the CO for: 1) CO's line not connecting to the material reality of working people, 2) confusing revolutionary forms of organization, and 3) having no political accountability to the Left. The paper is basically a political reflection of their bourgeois world view on revolutionary class theory, practice, and organization. It is significant to note that their paper was written about four months before the collapse of the TCWU.

The concrete evidence of history proves that their criticisms of the Co-op Organization should have been directed toward themselves and the Women's Union leadership. Had this been the case, the Women's Union might have corrected its fundamental ideological errors and might have been at the forefront of the proletarian women's struggle, instead of defunct and dispersed.

However, after the petty bourgeois obstructionists aided fundamentally in the political destruction of the Women's Union, they were forced by concrete evidence to admit that they could not provide proletarian leadership that was so desperately needed for the Women's Union and the local women's movement. Having admitted that they were not politically fit to give leadership, they did not step down from leadership and support rising working class

women in developing and taking on leadership. Instead, they unprincipledly and opportunistically abandoned the Women's Union and formed a closed pseudo-Marxist-Leninist collective -- this time being sure to insulate themselves from the demands of class reality, and practical application and verification of the theory which they hold so dear. Their practice is the only criterion of the truth -- the material proof of their class stand. When it came time for them to produce results in the practice of their theory, these self-proclaimed "Marxist-Leninists" jumped ship (abandoning the Women's Union) and hovered close together in their life raft -- protecting themselves from the material reality of class struggle that looks upon effects with a critical eye and demands practical results. For these opportunists to call their self-protecting, self-serving collective "Marxist-Leninist" is a profound political insult to those true Marxist-Leninists who struggle ceaselessly to strengthen the proletariat and to bring about the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In the October 1976 issue of SCOOP newspaper, Sue Nelson (former member of TCWU) lays out her thoughts on the opportunism of the pseudo-Marxist-Leninist collective:

"In July, I was called and told that a membership-only meeting of the Union--to discuss the resignation of planning committee and several others-- would be two days later. The meeting began with a reading of the history of the planning committee and some criticism-self-criticism of its structure and a statement of purpose of the departing group's newly formed Marxist-Leninist collective. Some business arrangements for the Union's resources were made. And the meeting was over. And the TCWU was over. I haven't got any conclusions about why the Women's Union ended, just a lot of questions. What are the class implications of the formation and criteria for the

Marxist-Leninist collective which left -- as one former Union member put it, 'But I'm one of the people you should be organizing! The ten active Union members who remained had no access to the decision making process which led the group who left to do so, and the new Marxist-Leninist collective which formed a leadered structure for the Union, then pulled out the leaders, left a situation which for me at least created powerlessness and chaos."

Judy Sayad, Pam Costain, and Mary Brandl were compelled to admit in the same newspaper issue, but in their own article:

"We were not successful in creating the political discussions necessary for the Union to make decisions and move forward. It's not that there weren't discussions, there were, they just weren't the most important ones to have. They were not clarifying. Mostly, they were demoralizing and useless. We feel that those of us who left bear primary responsibility for this because we gave the impression that we could create discussions that would unite people and then were'n't able to deliver."

The internal class content of an organization is automatically interconnected to its class base. A law of dialectical materialism states that change and development can only take place through interconnectedness; that is, the internal is the basis for change, and the external is the condition for change. What does this mean? The internal content of an organization is the basis for its development. The lack of theoretical comprehension of this law of development and change leads many political militants and many too many "Marxist-Leninists" to formulate plans, programs, etc. based on phenomena (external conditions) rather than on essence (internal contradictions). As a consequence, their plans and programs meet failure instead of success.

A REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE ON THE WOMAN QUESTION

THE LIBERATION OF WOMEN IS A FUNDAMENTAL NECESSITY
FOR THE REVOLUTION

Opening speech at the First Conference of Mozambican
Women, March 4, 1973. by Samora Machel

THE NEED FOR EMANCIPATION

The emancipation of women is not an act of charity, the result of a humanitarian or compassionate attitude. The liberation of women is a fundamental necessity for the Revolution, the guarantee of its continuity and the precondition for its victory. The main objective of the Revolution is to destroy the system of exploitation and build a new society which releases the potentialities of human beings, reconciling them with labour and with nature. This is the context within which the question of women's emancipation arises.

How can the Revolution triumph without the liberation of women? Will it be possible to get rid of the system of exploitation while keeping one part of society exploited? One cannot only partially wipe out exploitation and oppression, one cannot tear up only half the weeds without even stronger ones spreading out from the half that has survived.

How then can one make a revolution without mobilising women? If more than half the exploited and oppressed people consist of women, how can they be left on the fringe of the struggle? To make a revolution it is necessary to mobilise all the exploited and oppressed, and consequently women as well. If it is to be victorious, the Revolution must eliminate the whole system of exploitation and oppression, liberating all the exploited and the oppressed. Therefore it must eliminate the exploitation and oppression of women, it is forced to liberate women.

THE BASIS OF WOMEN'S ALIENATION

THE SYSTEM OF EXPLOITATION - THE STARTING POINT

To speak of the emancipation of women clearly implies that they are oppressed and exploited. It is important to understand the basis of that oppression and exploitation.

Let us begin by saying that the oppression of women is the result of their exploitation, oppression in society is always the result of imposed exploitation. Colonialism did not come to occupy our country for the purpose of arresting us, flogging us and beating us with the palmatoria. It invaded and occupied our country for the purpose of exploiting our wealth and labour. In order to exploit us, in order to quell our resistance to exploitation and prevent us from rebelling against it, it then introduced the system of oppression; physical oppression, through the courts, the police, the armed forces, imprisonment, torture and massacres; and spiritual oppression, through obscurantism, superstition and ignorance, designed to destroy the spirit of creative initiative, to kill the sense of justice and criticism to reduce the individual to passivity and make him accept his exploited and oppressed state as a normal thing. Humiliation and contempt came into being in the process, since he who exploits and oppresses tends to humiliate

and despise his victims, regarding them as inherently inferior beings. And then racism appears, the supreme form of humiliation and contempt.

The mechanism of women's alienation is identical to the mechanism of the alienation of the colonised man in colonial society, or of the worker in capitalist society.

From the moment when early man started to produce more than he consumed, the material foundations were laid for the emergence of a stratum in society which would appropriate the fruits of the majority's labour. This appropriation of the product of the masses' labour by a handful of people in society is the essence of the system of the exploitation of man by man and the crux of the antagonistic contradiction which has divided society for centuries.

As soon as the process of exploitation was unleashed, women as a whole—like men—were subjected to the domination of the privileged strata. Women are also producers, and workers but with specific characteristics. To possess women is to possess workers, unpaid workers, workers whose entire labour power can be appropriated without resistance by the husband, who is the lord and master.

But what is more important is that compared with, say, the slave, who is also a source of wealth and an unpaid worker, the woman offers her owner two added advantages. She is a source of pleasure and above all, she produces other workers, she produces new sources of wealth.

It is therefore clear that the exploitation of women and their consequent oppression starts in the system of private ownership of the means of production, in the system of exploitation of man by man.

THE NATURE OF THE ANTAGONISM

It is important to understand correctly the nature of the contradiction or contradictions involved,

for only after understanding them will we be in a position to define the target of our attack and plan the appropriate strategy and tactics for our struggle.

We have seen that the basis of the domination of women lies in the system of economic organization of society, private ownership of the means of production, which necessarily leads to the exploitation of man by man.

This means that, apart from the specific features of their situation, the contradiction between women and the social order is in essence a contradiction between women and the exploitation of man by man, between women and the private ownership of the means of production. In other words, it is the same as the contradiction between the working masses and the exploitative social order.

Let us be clear on this point. The antagonistic contradiction is not between women and men, but between women and the social order, between all exploited people, both women and men, and the social order. The fact that they are exploited explains why they are not involved in all planning and decision-making tasks in society, why they are excluded from working out the concepts which govern economic, social, cultural and political life, even when their interests are directly affected.

This is the main feature of the contradiction: their exclusion from the sphere of decision-making in society. This contradiction can only be solved by revolution, because only revolution destroys the foundations of exploitative society and rebuilds society on new foundations, freeing the initiative of women, integrating them in society as responsible members and involving them in decision-making.

Therefore, just as there can be no revolution without the liberation of women, the struggle for women's emancipation cannot succeed without the victory of the revolution.

But apart from the antagonistic contradiction

between women and the social order, other contradictions of a secondary nature also arise between women and men as a kind of reflex.

But however serious they may be, these factors do not alter the nature of the contradiction.

It is important to stress this aspect, because we now see an ideological offensive taking place particularly in the capitalist world, in the guise of a women's liberation struggle. The aim is to transform the contradiction with men into an antagonistic one, thereby dividing exploited men and women to prevent them from fighting the exploitative society. In fact, leaving aside the demagoguery which hides its true nature, this ideological offensive is an offensive by capitalism to confuse women, to divert their attention from the real target.

Men and women are products and victims of the exploitative society which has created and formed them. It is essentially against this society that men and women should fight united. Our practical experience has proved that the progress achieved in the liberation of women is the result of the successes gained in our common struggle against colonialism and imperialism, against the exploitation of man by man, and to build a new society.

STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL QUESTIONS

OUR MAIN LINES OF ACTION

The fight for women's emancipation demands, as a first step, the clarification of our ideas. Such clarification is all the more imperative in that there is a profusion of erroneous ideas about the emancipation of women.

Emancipation requires action on several essential levels.

First of all, a political line of action must be laid down. For women to emancipate themselves there must be conscious political commitment. What does

this mean in practical terms?

It means, firstly, that the line must be laid down by a revolutionary political organization which, defending the interests of the exploited masses as a whole, leads them in the fight against the old society. Only such an organization is in a position to formulate a global strategy for the fight for liberation. In our case, what this means in concrete terms is that in order to liberate themselves, women must internalize FRELIMO'S political line and live by it in a creative way. Otherwise they will throw themselves into sterile and secondary battles which will exhaust them uselessly and to no effect.

To internalize and live by our line requires involvement in the tasks laid down by the organization. Just as a plant needs to strike roots in the ground in order to grow, so does the political line take root in revolutionary practice. Revolutionary practice destroys the exploitative society, unleashes the internal struggle, demolishes our erroneous ideas and releases our critical sense and creative initiatives.

In this context women must be mobilized for internal struggle and for mass struggle, and they must be organized.