

FEMINISM

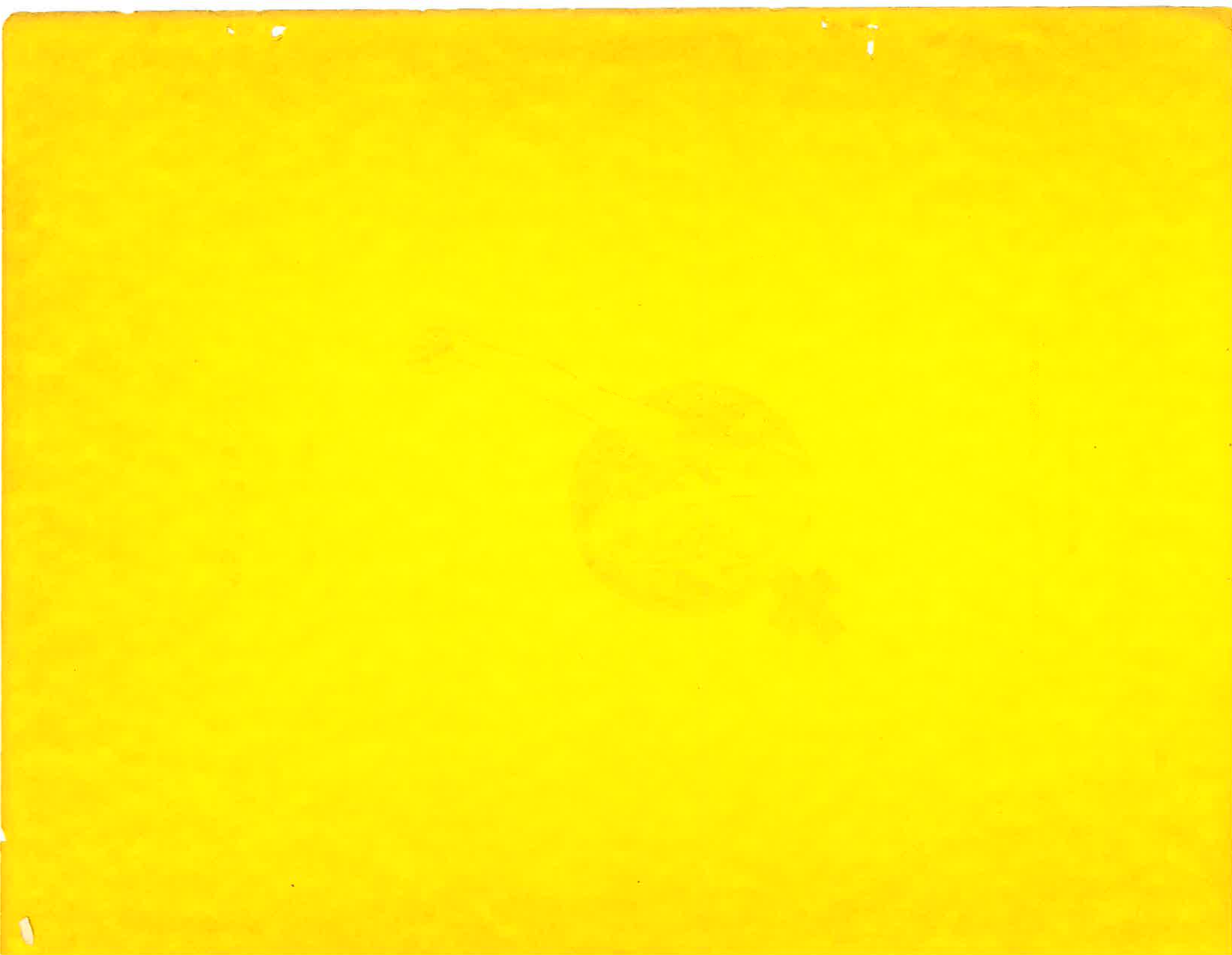
A MARXIST CRITIQUE



THE MOVEMENT FOR A REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

EUGENE, OREGON

March 1981



FEMINISM: A MARXIST CRITIQUE

The purpose of this critique is to challenge the current dominant tendency within the women's movement in order to encourage the development of a truly Marxist inspired movement for the liberation of women--a movement that can in reality realize both their general and their special liberation. While developing a critique of both Feminism and what has become the hegemonic tendency within it, the fundamental validity of the central premises of the women's movement--that there is a specific oppression of women and that the left must make the liberation of women a priority--are reaffirmed.

There is considerable confusion about the meaning of the terms "feminism" and "sexism." In recent years adherents of one particular tendency within the women's movement have claimed that they alone speak for all women. This tendency has further used the term "sexist" in a wide variety of, sometimes even contradictory, ways. Before undertaking an analysis of "feminism" it is first necessary to analyze precisely what is meant when these terms are employed. After developing a more precise vocabulary, the question of the difference between "contradictions among the people" and "antagonistic contradictions with the enemy" is taken up, a question which has become most murky in recent years. The dominant tendency within the women's movement since the demise of the New Left has claimed that "sexism" is more or less the equivalent of "racism." This assertion is examined and rejected. Over the course of the 1970s there have been many attempts to develop a theory of patriarchy which does not in the last analysis reduce to either biological or historical materialist factors. These various theories are examined and an attempt made to show that in fact only historical materialist explanations of patriarchy are substantiable. A general theory of the oppression of women in capitalist society which is class specific is outlined. The social basis of the various trends within the women's movement are examined, and the various tendencies in, and the rightward thrust of, the mainstream of the women's movement are explained in terms of its shifting base. Finally, the essential politics of a socialist movement for the liberation of women are outlined.

Words

At least four distinct usages of the term "feminist" can be identified:

(1) A commitment to eliminating male chauvinism, patriarchal structures and a conscious rejection of sexist theories which justify them. In this use of the term "feminism" men as well as women, and those that may or may not believe that "sexism" is a primary contradiction in society, as well as Marxist-Leninists can be "feminists." Such a broad use of the term "feminism" is quite recent--in fact it dates to the early 1970s. In the 1960s the New Left talked about "women's liberation," rather than "feminism." It would perhaps be best to revert to the usage of the 1960s, calling a commitment to equalitarian relations between the sexes a "commitment to the women's liberation movement."

(2) The women's movement. "Feminism" is sometimes used synonymously with the organized activity (as well as more passive and spontaneous support) of women in the struggle for women's liberation (as defined above). Thus in this sense only women engaged in an active struggle against patriarchal structures, sexist theories, and male chauvinist practices could be called "feminists." It would seem that it is best to simply speak of "the women's movement" to refer to this concept. The "women's movement" should be distinguished from the movement for women's liberation (which both men and women can be a part of).

(3) The tendency within the movement for women's liberation which adheres to the theory that the oppression of women is either the primary form of oppression (the primary contradiction) or a form of oppression (or contradiction) equal to any other, i.e., that all women regardless of their class, national status or ethnic group, have at least as much in common as any women have with any men of their same class, nation or ethnic group. "Feminist" groups so defined thus pose a primary antagonism to men. They politically organize against all men (who are all considered to be the primary beneficiaries of the oppression of women). Such "feminist" groups contrast with other tendencies in both the "women's movement" and the "movement for the liberation of women" which target capitalism, false consciousness, backwardness, etc., rather than men, as well as from those tendencies which while agreeing that men are beneficiaries do not see the oppression of woman as a primary or co-equal form of oppression. Since this use of the term "feminist" is based on a theory and a strategy rather than on the sex of its adherents, men as well as women can be "feminists" in this sense. Traditionally, especially in Marxist circles, the term "Feminism" (with a capital "F") has been reserved for this tendency within the broader women's liberation movement. For clarity in its polemics Marxists have often talked about "bourgeois feminism" or "the women's rightsters" instead of merely using the term "Feminists." Because of the gross expansion of the term "feminism" which occurred in the 1970s, it might be useful to revert to the traditional Marxist category of "bourgeois feminism" to distinguish this concept, from women's liberation or the women's movement. But given the heavy negative connotations of this phrase, perhaps the term "narrow feminism" could better serve. In this critique the terms Feminism (with a capital F) and narrow feminism will be used interchangeably.

(4) The dominant or hegemonic tendency within "narrow feminism" (as defined in #3) at any given time. Thus in the early 1970s those Feminists who stressed the centrality of day care, affirmative action for professional women, the importance of having a career, the absolute right of women to control their own bodies, etc., were hegemonic within the narrow feminist movement. But in the early 1980s the tendency which stresses violence against women by individual men (i.e., rape, battering, pornography, sexual harassment) are hegemonic. Women (and men) who disagree with the centrality of such issues (which in good part are indistinguishable from the law and order and traditional morality concerns of those around such groups as The Moral Majority or other segments of the new right) are often branded as "not feminists" even if they share an analysis of women's oppression as being at least equivalent to any other form of oppression, to say nothing of those women (and men) who are committed to woman's liberation, but disagree that women's special oppression is as serious as other forms of oppression (of women as well as men).

Just as the term "feminism" has a wide variety of usages, so do the terms "sexism" and "sexist." The term "sexism" was introduced into the English language in the late 1960s and 1970s by the women's movement. As of 1980 however, it was still not acceptable to the majority of the world's women. At the Copenhagen United Nations sponsored international women's conference, after a considerable debate between Western women and women of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Socialist world, the term was excluded from the conference's summary documents. Its use was rejected because it seemed to the majority of women to suggest a hostility to men, thus implying an analysis of the oppression of women that socialist women and women from the less developed countries could not share. Whether or not this is in fact the case, the term did originate as a parallel construction to "racism" and is thus designed to suggest that the oppression of women is qualitatively the same as the oppression of nations and people's (which are sometimes categorized as "races"). Such a connotation is offensive to many people of color, as well as objectionable to traditional Marxists who consider such an analysis scientifically imprecise. A strong case can be made for rejecting the term "sexism" altogether in favor of older, more precise and less value laden terms such as patriarchy, male chauvinism and biologism.

In its actual usage the term "sexism" is used to describe a wide range of very diverse phenomena, which in fact have very little if anything in common. At least seven qualitatively different phenomena seem to get labeled "sexist":

(1) The social and economic structures which differentially oppress women, most importantly the traditional housewife/mother function in the patriarchal family and low paid white collar/service "feminine" positions in the occupational structure. Such "sexist" structures, which in any historical materialist analysis are understood as the essence of the oppression of women, might best be labeled simply "patriarchal structures."

(2) Theories which argue that there is a biologically based difference between the sexes which produce "masculine" behavior in men and "feminine" behavior in women (i.e., which incline women to be maternal, loving, passive, etc., and men to be aggressive, outgoing, creative, etc.). The notion that biology is destiny. The term sexism should probably best be reserved for only such theories. This would parallel a precise use of the term "racism"--the theory that there is a biological difference between different people's or nations which dictate different average levels of intelligence, creativity, suitability to do mental labor, etc. Some who prefer to reject the term sexism altogether because they consider the parallel with racism imprecise, might simply prefer to label this type of theory "biologism."

(3) The behavior of individual men in relationships with individual women (lovers, friends, mothers, co-workers, etc.) which exhibits "macho," domineering, inconsiderate, "sexually exploitative" characteristics (which are not exhibited towards other males). Such behavior should probably best be called male chauvinism whether or not it occurs within patriarchal structures or is legitimated by a sexist or biological theory.

These three very different phenomena, all of which have carelessly been labeled "sexism," do share an important common element--they are all differentially oppressive of women. The first is the essential structure of male dominance, the second is the theory justifying male dominance, and the third is a manifestation in interpersonal relations of male dominance. For convenience sake these three usages will together be labeled "real sexism." The term "sexism" is often used in other ways, none of which have anything in common with "real sexism," i.e., do not describe the differential oppression of women at all. These may be categorized together as "false sexism."

(4) Behaviors, theories or structures which at least some women find offensive, oppressive or exploitative, but which do not differentially oppress women, i.e., they effect men in the same way they effect women. Here Feminism provides a vocabulary for women to express their dissatisfaction with a wide range of things that are not specially oppressive of women. For example, men who are inconsiderate, aggressive, dominating or just have a bad style of personal interaction, but who behave exactly the same way to men and women are sometimes falsely labeled as "sexist." Undemocratic or "elitist" structures and theories which effect men and women the same way are sometimes also labeled as "sexist." In some circles capitalism or imperialism are labeled as "sexist," not because they are the ultimate cause of the differential oppression of women, but simply because they are seen as directly oppressive of women. All such structures, theories and behaviors should be precisely labeled for what they are, and not obscured by falsely lumping them together as if their primary aspect was the oppression of women. Thus terms such as "elitism," "bad style of work," "insensitivity," "capitalism" and "imperialism" should be employed as appropriate.

Related to this false use of the term "sexism" is the widespread confusion between "the oppression of women" and "women's special oppression" or "real sexism." Most women of the world are oppressed in many ways: by racism, by imperialism, by their working

class position in the class structure, as well as by their special oppression as women. The vast majority of women (those who live in the less developed countries, people of color in the advanced capitalist countries, working class, sub-proletarians and peasant women throughout the world) in fact share with the men of their class, nation or ethnic group a common oppression, an oppression while it may not be experienced in exactly the same ways by men and women in every instance, is qualitatively the same for both sexes. Women's special oppression (above and beyond national, racial and class oppression) is thus only one part of women's oppression for most women on the planet. In fact for the vast majority of the world's women, their special oppression vis-à-vis men is a rather secondary part of their lives, overwhelmed by the more serious oppressions of race, nationality and class. It is only for a rather small minority of women (generally European women in the middle classes) for whom it can truly be said that "real sexism," or the special differential oppression of women vis-à-vis men in the same class/racial/national position is their primary form of oppression. A corollary of this is that for these later women, men are in fact their primary enemies (or at least appear to be), while for the vast majority of the world's women, who do not experience real sexism as their primary form of oppression, men both are, and tend to appear to be, their natural allies against racism, imperialism and capitalism.

(5) Theoretical disagreement with the premises of Feminism (or Socialist-Feminism) that maintains that the oppression of women by men is either the primary or co-equal form of oppression (or primary or co-primary contradiction) in society. Thus traditional Marxism is in some circles defined as inherently "sexist" because it sees class contradiction as primary. Those who hold that the oppression of working class women is qualitatively different from the condition of ruling class women, and that capitalism, not men, are responsible for sexual oppression are sometimes condemned for being objectively "sexist" by people who have little understanding of, or sympathy to, Marxist theory.

Closely related to this use of the term "sexist" is the notion that any man who writes or speaks on the "women question" and in any significant way differs from the hegemonic Feminist analysis is necessarily "sexist" (for arrogantly implying that women could be understood by men). Such a use of the term "sexist" is purely polemical. It is used as a weapon to attack theories, analyses and often the persons and character of their male proponents. Such argument by buzzword avoids having to utilize either data or careful argument. Such argumentation by slander would appear to be counterproductive to the women's movement and thus best avoided altogether.

It should be noted that the use of the term "sexist" to describe Marxism or Leninists seems to be especially prevalent in contemporary social democratic circles such as D.S.O.C. and the right wing of N.A.M. as well as among radical and liberal Feminists. A standard argument usually goes, Marxism (or Leninism) believes in strong leadership (rather than in semi-autonomous small groups or the rotation of all positions of responsibility, etc.) and is thus inherently "undemocratic and elitist." And since men always manage to secure themselves in leadership positions women are always oppressed by such structures, Q.E.D. A cruder version merely maintains that Marx, Engels and Lenin were men, or that Marxist theory is inherently "male," and thus incapable of understanding or appreciating the oppression of women, Q.E.D. Thus the term "sexist" is often used as an acceptable form of anti-Communism (a traditional, but since the 1950s largely discredited, part of social democratic and liberal ideology). Such a slanderous use of the term "sexist" is both dangerous for the unity of the left, and a careless substitute for a scientific scrutiny of the actual merits of Marxist theory and Leninist principles of organization. Marxism has done far too much for the liberation of women in the twentieth century, and has had far too many female leaders and adherents (Luxemburg, Zetkin, Kollontai, etc.) for it to be summarily dismissed as equivalent to Ronald Reagan or Hugh Hefner as "sexist."

(6) The practice of traditional "feminine" survival techniques or ways of manipulating men and other women is often legitimated with a new "Feminist" vocabulary, at which the term "sexist" is at the center. The term "sexism" is thus sometimes used in exactly the opposite sense from its original and surface meaning to in fact justify traditional "feminine" sex role behavior (rather than to criticize it). Thus the traditional feminine behaviors of gossiping, rumor mongering, jealousy, back biting, nagging, bitterness, manipulation, emotionalism, etc., go on, but now with a vocabulary that makes such behaviors seem appropriate, and in fact frequently lends an air of righteousness to what "Feminist" women would otherwise feel quite guilty about engaging in. Non-monogamous relationships or relationship between older men and younger women are criticized as "sexist" where traditionally simple jealousy would have been expressed. Women who don't accept the hegemonic Feminist interpretation or who have relationship with men who some women do not approve of (or in some case have relationships with men at all) are maliciously gossiped about and personally insulted in ways in which political women would once have been roundly criticized. But now the category "male dominated" often legitimates such behavior. Men are pressured, nagged at, gossiped about (e.g., "he is the biggest sexist") and manipulated through guilt, again legitimated by the charge of "sexism." The ease at which traditional "feminine" behavior can go uncriticized and is in fact reinforced by the vocabulary of "sexism" present a danger to the women's movement and especially to the task of transforming traditional sex roles. Such "sexist" use of the term "sexism" should be actively combatted.

Related to this opportunistic use of the term "sexist" is the practice of charging "sexist" in order to advance one's career, or otherwise find an easy way of getting what an individual woman wants. For example, female students have been known to argue against having to read Marx, Freud, or any other male author, since they "were all sexists," or didn't have anything of value to say about women, etc., and further to accuse male teachers of being "sexist" if they required them to do such reading. Such opportunistic use of the charge of "sexist" is self-defeating for a women's movement that badly needs to gain theoretical sophistication if it is to succeed. Whether or not Marx and Freud had the correct theories of the position of women, a great many leading female theorists and political leaders have either thought so, or have used their ideas (and the ideas of other men) as the basis for their own theories and practice. The use of "sexist" to cover one's intellectual laziness penalizes the vast majority of the world's women who never have had a chance to gain an advanced education, and who are thus largely dependent on those women lucky enough to have the opportunity to master theory and analysis to help provide them with the understandings they need. To claim that women should not bother to read Marx, Engels or Freud because they were men, or to understand Marxist or psychoanalytic theory because they are "male constructs," is exactly equivalent to arguing that a woman shouldn't use a gun to defend herself from a rapist, because guns were invented and perfected by men, and violence is a "male construct." Both guns and theories are weapons which can be used by more than their inventors.

(7) Perhaps the most pernicious use of the term "sexist" of all, is as a legitimating cover for anti-working class (and sometimes even racist) attitudes and behavior, as well as a justification for ignoring the struggles and concerns of minorities and working class people. The overwhelming white and middle class Feminist movement is thus able to not only justify their traditional privileged position and attitudes vis-à-vis minorities and the working class, but to actually celebrate their traditional attitudes and concern for their own well being at the expense of women (and men) of other ethnic groups, nations, and classes through the vocabulary of "sexism." The most common such example is in the tendency of Feminists to insist that the contradiction between all women and all men is the most important (or as important as any other contradiction) and that therefore the oppression of white middle class women is as important as the oppression of Blacks, the working class, or peasants in Central America.

The corollary of such an analysis is that political actions against their own oppression are in practice given priority over the struggles against racism, imperialism or capitalism ("We have to take care of our own problems first"). That "Take Back the Night Marches," picketing of pornographic movies, all women's cultural events, rape crisis centers, campaigns to institute Draconian punishment for rapists (which would in practice be applied as has been capital punishment mostly against poor Blacks), etc., take priority over support for strikes (even when mostly women workers are involved), protests against imperialist interventions and coups (even when nuns are raped and killed as in El Salvador, or a woman president is disposed in Bolivia) or protests in support of Black mothers (whose children have double the infant mortality rate of whites).

Cruder forms of this phenomena are manifested in anti-working class and sometimes even anti-minorities prejudices and stereotypes. White middle class women hurl accusations of "sexist" at white working class, Hispanic or Black men, when in fact what they are often criticizing is not the differentially degrading treatment of women, but rather either false stereotypes of Archie Bunker, the Mancho Latin male, of the Black Pimp, propagated by the mass media, or the actual mannerisms of workers and minority men which have little or nothing to do with the special dehumanization of women such as lack of middle class manners or politeness, forthrightness, bluntness, assertiveness, aggressiveness and a frank interest in sex.

Such common working class and minority characteristics largely developed as ways to cope with the conditions of working class life and the racism of capitalist society, and do not generally express a special oppression of women. In fact, scientific analyses of the relative position of women in middle class and working class families show that in general working class women are in a better position vis-à-vis working class men than is the case in the middle class (this is in good part because working class women, who tend to work outside of the home with a much greater probability than middle class women, have a greater economic independence of men). Because Black women are more likely to work and be "head of the family" than are white women, as well as because of the long tradition of relative economic independence from Black men of Black women, they are in an especially strong position, compared to white women. Thus, the charge of "sexism" leveled against white working class and minority men is in fact often (but not always) a legitimation for traditional stereotypes and prejudices, as well as for putting one's own selfish defense of relative privilege ahead of the legitimate demands of both the men and women of other classes, nations and ethnic groups.

Telling in this regard has been the development in the 1970s of the term "socialist-feminism" to describe those that think the struggle against sexist is as important as the struggle against capitalism (and further that sexism is not ultimately a product of capitalism). Those that call themselves "socialist-feminists" are almost exclusively white middle class and Western, and thus it never occurs to them to call themselves "socialist-anti-racists" or "socialist-anti-imperialists" or even "socialists-feminists-anti-racists-anti-imperialists." A good argument could (and has been) made that the term "socialist-feminist" is thus "objectively racist" for implying that the struggle against sexism is more important than the struggle against racism. This term is also un-Marxist, because of its eclectic assertion that women's oppression and the struggle against sexism are not an integral part of the capitalist mode of production and the struggle to transform it.

It is important to note that in practice these last four abusive usages of the term "sexism" are most often applied against the relatively least male chauvinist men and sexist organizations and theories. This is the case because such men and organizations consider themselves part of the women's liberation movement and attempt to work with Feminists, thus putting themselves in a position to be abused by those

with whom they disagree on specifics. Of course, few males have totally wiped out all vestiges of male chauvinism and Marxist organizations will continue to insist that the class contradiction is primary, but to lump active supports of the women movement who make strong commitments to engage in non-sexist relations, but who nevertheless sometimes slip up, in with rapists, wife batterers, Rockefellers and the KKK as "sexists" is both unscientific and politically dangerous.

Such polemical use of the term "sexist" is most sectarian. As is all too typical in these sorry times, the Feminist movement, has become as sectarian and abusive as the left. Like the left, the Feminists, seem to too often focus their primary energy on attacking the friends of the women's movement, rather than its enemies. Rather than attacking the KKK, Reagan, or the corporate ruling class, the most leftist and pro-women's movement men are often singled out for destructive criticism. Elementary common sense would dictate an analysis in terms of primary and secondary contradictions and contradictions with the enemy vs. contradictions among the people. Especially at a time when the women's movement is on the defensive, all must be united who can be united in order to defeat the real enemy--capitalism. Frictions and oppressions among the people must be worked out in non-antagonistic ways in order to secure the unity necessary to win. It is pure moralism as well as political suicide for those seriously concerned about sexism to focus their venom on those who are their natural allies. Such a process weakens the left and the women's movement and gives comfort only to the source of real sexism.

The Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People

The fourth usage of the term "feminist," together with the fifth usage of the term "sexist" (theoretical disagreement with the premises of Feminism that women's oppression is a primary contradiction, especially by a man) are purely polemical. Like unsubstantiated charges of "racist," "fascist," "communist," "un-American," "reductionist," "vulgar," etc., they carry considerable weight by simply being asserted. Depending on the sentiments/sympathies of those attacked with such epithets such a charge can be extremely effective in isolating the person attacked, making them feel self-doubt, back down, and mobilizing others around whatever position is held by the one making the charge. In traditional circles charges of "sexism" and "racism" carry no weight. Here the equivalent assertion of "unamerican," "pro-Communist," etc., are equally effective and serve in exactly the same way. In certain intellectual circles (of "sophisticated Marxists" or "critical theorists") such buzzwords as "reductionist" "vulgar Marxist," "undialectical," "simplicity," and "economist" work in exactly the same way. Virtually any circle left, right or center, has an effective rhetorical device of assertion and association with the most horrible thing conceivable that quite often works much better than presenting evidence or logic, that can perhaps best be described as "argument by buzzword." Unfortunately in left-liberal, radical and other circles sympathetic to the anti-racist and women's liberation movement, issues are all too often resolved by throwing the buzzwords of "racist" or "sexist" at those one merely disagrees with. Contrary arguments are all too frequently squelched and opponents wiped out by such unprincipled accusations. These abusive usages often allow the real bitterness of women generated by real sexism to be righteously expressed (but not against the real enemy).

The very serious oppression of minorities and women is debased by such casual usages. Usages which often merely advance the positions and leadership of those who want to defeat opponents without the bother of presenting superior logic or evidence, or alternatively who need to express rage caused by real sexism. Often this is done by those who don't mind advancing their careers or consolidating their leadership over the backs of most women and minorities, or by those who don't really care about the condition of women more oppressed than themselves. Such opportunist and expressive

usages of the terms thus hold back rather than advance the real anti-racist and women's liberation struggles, and thus must be considered objectively sexist (and racist). To hurl accusations designed to promote guilt and mobilize support rather than to engage in principled and comradely debate is foolish and counterproductive to the women's liberation movement which so badly needs good analysis and authentic solidarity.

There is a further danger in such polemical and opportunistic usage of the terms "sexist" (and "racist"). The prevalence of unfounded, hostile, or unreasonable charges of sexism (or racism) has unfortunately immunized many against taking such charges seriously. When faced with reasonable, comradely and substantiated charges many of us merely shrug them off saying "it's those crazies again." It is as in the child's story of the little boy who kept yelling wolf. When there really is a wolf many people who have been around for a while no longer are listening. Blunderbuss tactics are self-defeating. They do not produce the results women (and minorities) need (greater strength and allies) and they do not advance our common struggle against capitalism.

Those that do continue to respond to these charges seriously, have one of either three reactions: 1) Traditionally the most prevalent, beating one's chest in sincere public penance for one's sins, followed by political deactivation and retreat into a non-political existence. 2) Beating one's chest opportunistically to win favor with Feminists (or nationalists), while not being really moved by the accusations. 3) Refusing on principle to beat one's chest, but rather making a futile public resistance to the charges thereby isolating oneself. Although it might give feminists the illusion of satisfaction in attacking and perhaps destroying another helpless left individual, organization or activity, in very few cases does the antagonistic presentation of "the charges" accomplish positive results in advancing the struggle of women (or minorities). It is much easier to attack one's comrades who will not, or can not, effectively defend themselves precisely because they are one's comrades, and are in fact more or less sensitive to the issue of real sexism (or real racism), than it is to mobilize against the ruling class. In many circles the primary energies of many have gone into accomplishing these cheap and atavistic victories.

The women's liberation movement must have a strategy for winning its struggle. It is the craziest moralism to simply attack manifestations (real and imagined) of sexism without fitting such attacks into a strategy. If such is done it will be realized that women (or minorities) can not make a revolution by themselves. Destructive attacks on their potential allies set the struggle back by demoralizing one's friends and securing the most opportunistic as allies. The real male chauvinism (and white chauvinism) of male radicals must be dealt with in a comradely non-antagonistic fashion. While there is a role for confrontation and shock tactics at the beginning of the struggles against male chauvinism in shocking males into the recognition that such problems are real, the perpetuation of these tactics can only be destructive. The women's (and minority's) movements must very soon move beyond using tactics developed against enemies to tactics designed to further unity among friends. If they don't, they will pay the very high cost of isolation and defeat of their movements. A price worth paying perhaps by moral purists more interested in being right than in winning, but not one worth paying by the serious who are in the struggle to abolish real sexism (and real racism).

Everything must be done to build unity among progressives. Any arrangement designed to give one or another group dominance in the common struggle will of necessity produce acrimony, resentment, guilt, hostility and destroy the basis of trust and unity, and hence be objectively sexist and racist (since it hinders the abolition of sexism and racism in the society). This applies equally to male and white dominance and to female

and minority dominance. While it might be justified in some moral sense to have females and minorities have special advantages or even dominate males and whites as historical justice, such moralism has no place in serious progressive organizations. In fact any masochistic attempt at retribution within the left or women's liberation movement will cripple the unity and solidarity so necessary to win. Besides it can't be forgotten that it is not male (and white) radicals that are to blame for the historical subjugation of women and minorities, even when they may manifest personal chauvinism, but rather the capitalist system whose victims we all are. Our comrades must be helped in a sororal and fraternal fashion to transcend the chauvinism which has been unwillingly layed on them. Their intellectual and political commitment to create a society free of real sexism (and real racism) should make this task very easy in comparison to dealing both with those individuals without such commitments and with patriarchal (and racist) structures.

Sexism and Racism

The Feminist movement in all its tendencies from Socialist-Feminism to the most reactionary law and order anti-male separatism, shares the notion that "sexism" and "racism" are qualitatively similar phenomena (while usually putting primary emphasis in practice on "sexism"). Some go further and list together with racism and "sexism," "classism," anti-gay/Lesbian sentiments, and even such things as "agism" and prejudice against the handicapped, all as more or less equivalent phenomena. Such categorization reflects the most moralist subjectivism. Not only are differential oppression of women and "racism" qualitatively different from the rest in being structures of domination and exploitation, the others are merely negative attitudes, discriminations or biases against various social groups which are not structurally defined, racism and "sexism" are qualitatively different from each other.

Racism is qualitatively more oppressive than is sexism and as a result women subjected to it almost always identify with the men in their groups over any general woman's movement. Racist structures such as slavery, sharecropping and menial domestic and manual labor are far more oppressive than the patriarchal structures of housework or white collar labor for white women. This reality is manifested in such things as a considerably higher death rate, higher infant mortality rates, higher rates of drug use, higher rates of violence, higher rates of incarceration, considerably worse housing conditions, less sanitary and less safe working conditions, brutality of labor, etc., for Blacks (including Black women) than for white women.

While racism is the oppression of whole people's which is sometimes carried to the point of genocide, and which is often characterized by the most brutal and systematically oppressive treatment as a matter of design and structure, women live intimately with men, sharing love and all forms of closeness and mutual respect even within patriarchal structures. Men have mothers and daughters as well as wives and lovers. There is no systematically parallel phenomena between "races." The role of racist and patriarchal structures (and white and male chauvinist attitudes) is qualitatively different. The function of racism is to guarantee a cheap supply of menial labor for the capitalist economy while at the same time preventing unity among the various segments of the working class (majority group workers are led to think, falsely, that they have more in common with their bosses who have the same skin color than they have with their fellow workers of a different color). The function of patriarchal structures is to: (1) Secure a division of labor in the home. In the working class to reproduce labor power which is sold to the capitalists. In the middle class to share in the economic activity of the classical petty bourgeois; to reproduce the labor power of the professional/managerial man; or to be an object of conspicuous consumption (in the case where household servants do the housework and child care). (2) To provide a source of

passive, supportive (i.e., "feminine") white collar and service workers. For the most part Black men and white women do not compete for the same jobs (the textile industry and janitorial work are prominent exceptions). Further, sexism, does not serve, as does racism, to divide the working class. While racism has worked very well to prevent unionization and weaken working class solidarity, and thus leads to the deterioration of white worker's positions, such has not happened in the case of male chauvinist attitudes. White wages are the highest in states such as Michigan where the differential with Blacks is the least (and unions are the strongest) and lowest in states like Mississippi where Blacks earn the least in comparison with whites than any state (and where unions are the weakest). On the contrary, where male wages are the highest, the differential between female and male wages is the greatest (Reich, 1971; Szymanski, 1977).

Both racist and patriarchal structures are central to the functioning of capitalism. Neither is in essence a subjective attitude. Further both white and male chauvinism are central to the functioning of capitalist society. None of this is true about any of the other "isms." Being Gay/Lesbian, old people, handicapped, etc., are not structural positions, and they are not positions of exploitation. Biases, prejudices and hostility toward such groups thus have nothing in common with racism and sexism. Not only are such sentiments qualitatively different than either male or white chauvinism, but oppressive as such sentiments might be to the victims, it is socially qualitative less important than either racism or sexism. Negative feelings toward such groups serve no specific and central function for capitalist society. There is no structural reason why such prejudices could not be abolished relatively easily within capitalist society. It only serves to denigrate the importance of "sexism" and especially of racism, to equate them to these latter phenomena. To do so reflects the lack of theoretical analysis as well as an appreciation of the qualitative differences among these phenomena. It reflects a moralistic rather than a scientific approach to the development of a strategy to overcome all of them. Moralism in the sense of categorizing everything as "good" or "evil," and then condemning the bad and praising the good. An approach that is of very little help to women, minorities, old people, homosexuals, the handicapped or the working class.

Theories of Patriarchy

Feminism (narrow feminism) is distinguished by its insistence that the oppression of women by men is at least (1) as basic (nonreducible to other factors) and important (as deeply felt) as any other form of oppression. Theorists of contemporary Feminism have attempted to develop a theory of patriarchy that justifies this assertion. Such Feminists claim that the oppression of women can not be reduced to prior class, cultural, or societal factors and is in fact a basic and primordial aspect of human societies. "Sexism" is said to exist more or less equally in capitalism, socialism, feudalism, chiefdoms or bands, and further is manifested more or less equally in every class. Although there may be some minor quantitative variations, the oppression of women is a cultural universal. The strategic corollary of the theory of patriarchy is that all women, because they share a common basic oppression, are potentially allies against all men and that a cross class/cross ethnic group/cross national movement of women against all men (regardless of class, ethnic status or nationality) is both feasible and desirable. A variety of contemporary Feminism, Socialist-Feminism, is distinguished by its claim that the oppression of women and working class oppression are of essentially equal importance and that the two have autonomous (if interacting) causes, and that therefore the struggle for socialism will not in itself result in the liberation of women.

In its hardest radical Feminist (Lesbian separatist) versions, the theory of patriarchy is based in a biological analysis. Here it is claimed that there is a

genetic difference between the sexes. Women are sometimes considered to be inherently more maternal, supportive, kind, considerate, etc., while men are inherently selfish, individualist, nasty, brutal, etc. Men have an inborn tendency to want to dominate, brutalize and exploit women. Women have an inborn tendency to feel solidarity and sympathy with one another. Patriarchy is biologically rooted. The most logical outcome of such a radical feminist view of patriarchy is in fact Lesbian separatism. If men are such "pigs," there is no hope for them. Ignore them (or perhaps in the most extreme versions exterminate them, or just let them exterminate themselves).

Such a theory of biologically rooted patriarchy does not have much empirical support. The evidence of history, of comparative social and class analysis, of social psychology and socialization theory and especially of cultural anthropology demonstrates the tremendous variations in the relative position of men and women among societies, as well as the tremendous variations among classes and other social groups and among individuals in the same society. The residual constant patriarchy (or "sexism") that can not be easily explained by social variables is tiny. Societies such as the Tasaday, Bari and Iroquois have been carefully studied where there is very little if any difference in power or status between the sexes. The comparative evidence from the Yale Human Area Relations Files, as well as from detailed comparisons of societies in a similar area is overwhelming. Virtually "non-sexist" and non-patriarchal societies are quite common, and therefore patriarchy can not be the result of a "sexism" gene. Such an approach is also too suggestive of traditional sexist and racist theory which justifies the immutability of current relationship between the sexes and races as biologically inevitable and natural. If patriarchy and male chauvinism are in the genes it does not offer much hope for change (other than the isolation and perhaps enslavement or extinction of men)--neither a very reasonable nor very possible program for women's liberation.

The 1970s saw many Feminist theorists attempt to develop a theory of patriarchy that was neither reducible to genetic differences or to the logic of the mode of production. All of these failed, either by in fact implicitly explaining patriarchy in the last instance in terms of the logic of the mode of production or biology or by simply leaving patriarchy unexplained.*

Zillah Eisenstein (1979) argues that patriarchy is rooted in the sexist stereotypes men put on the biological differences between the sexes which then become institutionalized in the family and in female socialization. But she does not give an autonomous reason why men are in a position to enable them to define women's role. She argues that patriarchy performs a number of important functions for capitalism (it provides cheap labor, facilitates consumption, reproduces labor power, etc.). Thus her argument reduces to the historical materialist premise that the logic of the mode of production produces patriarchal structures.

Christine Delphy (1977) argues that the "family mode of production" is autonomous of, and equal in importance to, the "capitalist mode of production." While the latter operates by appropriating the labor of the working class, the former operates by men appropriating the labor of women. Her basing of patriarchy in a separate and parallel mode of production ignores the strong historical relations between the general mode of production and housework/family relations. It also generalizes the separation of the capitalist family from the economy to all modes of production. In feudal and tribal societies there was no distinction between the economic processes which occurred among family members and those which occurred outside. Such a sharp dichotomization into two

spheres (housework and wage labor) is a distinctive mark of only the contemporary mode of production.

Heidi Hartmann (1976) bases her analysis of patriarchy in men's control over women's labor power which results in women being denied access to economic resources as well as to restrictions on her sexuality. Unlike Delphy, Hartmann does not see patriarchy as a universal structure, nor does she emphasize the family at the expense of women's wage work. But her theory is based on the subjectivist notion of a conspiracy among men being responsible for patriarchy. It is men's conscious actions and decisions to exclude women from high paying jobs in order to insure their dependence within the family that is the heart of patriarchy. Such a subjective account fails to account for patriarchal structures (just as explanations of capitalism in terms of greedy or evil businessmen, fails to account for capitalist structures). Her categorization of a conspiratorial alliance between male workers and male capitalists in the nineteenth century being behind the attempt to exclude women from many industrial occupations so as working class men could themselves exploit women is a fiction. The movement for a family wage and for protective legislation was supported by and benefited women of the working class (Humphries, 1977).

Both Hartmann's and Delphy's explanations of patriarchy are ahistorical and static and tend to reify the patriarchal relations existent in the mid-twentieth century Western family to all societies through all times, while ignoring the immense historical variations in the relations between the sexes.

Hartmann and Delphy's insistence that the husband's control over the labor power of their wife's is equal to that of the capitalists over workers, and persists through time, is untenable. First, working women have considerably more economic independence, manifested in real independence, from their husbands than do long time housewives. Housework, and with it individual male control over individual women, is declining as women are increasingly pulled into full time wage labor. Second, the notion that while capitalist logic undermines the master-slave relation, peasantry, serfdom, tribal societies, etc., transforming all into wage labor relation between capital and labor, but does not undermine the separate family mode of production, is not credible. Capitalism at various points entered into an alliance with slave owners (in fact it was responsible for their recreation), with feudal owners of serfs (in fact east of the Elbe it was responsible for serfdom's generation) and with tribal chiefs in Africa, all in order to increase profits. But in all cases, increasing profits and reducing costs eventually implied the destruction of all non-capitalist modes of production. While it was also true that at one point capitalism required (and in fact reproduced) the patriarchal family with the wife as a full time housewife as the most profitable and cheapest way of reproducing labor power, it is clear that the rapid mechanization and socialization of housework and childcare, which has resulted in a radical reduction in the socially necessary labor time to reproduce labor power together with the great demand of the corporations for cheap and relatively docile female labor has radically transformed women's economic role. From being firmly ensconced in the "household mode of production" she has been placed firmly (along with men of the working class) directly in the capitalist mode of production. Delphy and Hartmann, thus base their case for an autonomous patriarchy on a myth. Whether one examines the historically specific role of housework in pre- mid-twentieth century capitalist society or the rapid decline in its role in the determination of women's position since the mid-twentieth century one would seem to be led to historical materialist accounts which bring the analysis back to the logic of the mode of production (and the contradictions and transformations of that logic).

Rosilyn McDonough and Rachel Harrison (1978) attempt to argue that patriarchy is based in the control of female fertility and sexuality by men. They argue that in the

bourgeois family such control is maintained through differential access to property, while in the proletarian family through differential access to the wage. In the former class male dominance is shaped by the need for legitimate male heirs, in the latter by the process of reproducing labor power. Claude Meillassoux (1975) makes a similar argument in maintaining that the origins of patriarchy lie in the control male elders had over the regulation of the fertility of women. Itself required by the necessity of social control over the reproduction of labor power. Both these arguments fail to provide an answer to how it is that men came to be the controllers of women's reproductive power, i.e., it leaves the ultimate cause of patriarchy unexplained. Either men came to be in such a position because they control property, bring home the wage, etc. (i.e., the argument reduces to that of historical materialism) or it simply hangs in the air.

Julieta Mitchell (1974) adopting the ideas of the non-Marxist structuralist Levi-Straus argues that the symbolic exchange of women by men, the fundamental principle of kinship organization, is the basis for the subordination of women within the relationships of human reproduction (patriarchy). Mitchell also adapts the classical Freudian notions of Electra and Oedipal complexes to account for the reproduction of the subordination of women. The incorporation of the ahistorical Levi-Strausian and Freudian notions as the basis for patriarchy has the fatal flaw of implying that patriarchy is universal and unchanging over time, and without significant variation among nations and classes. She also shares with the theories of Meillassoux and McDonough, and Harrison the problem of accounting for how it came to be that men exchange women and not vice-versa, or why girls feel "penis envy" rather than little boys "vagina" or "womb envy." Mitchell's account of patriarchy runs against the comparative evidence. Further, like most attempts to establish an autonomous basis for patriarchy, it is theoretically inadequate (in that it never really does offer an explanation for male dominance). It merely pushes the question back a step or two.

All attempts to establish an autonomous basis for patriarchy that is based neither in genetic factors or in the logic of the mode of production within which the family occurs, fail. In spite of considerable intelligence and even genius applied in the attempt to develop a theory for Feminist politics, Feminist theorists have failed. The attempt to root patriarchy and male chauvinism in biology has the insuperable problem of being incompatible with the evidence of comparative, national and class variation in these phenomena as well as offering radical Lesbian separatism (a not very realistic alternative) as the only consistent politics. Aware of the problems of attempting to establish patriarchy on a biological basis and recoiling from resorting to classical historical materialist explanations (for personal and political reasons) the theorists of an autonomous patriarchy are left with incomplete arguments and hence present inadequate theoretical accounts. The inability of biological reductionist arguments to account for the tremendous variation in patriarchal structures suggests that historical materialist arguments are the best candidate for the correct accounts of patriarchy. But this can not be conclusively demonstrated however, until other non-biologically reductionist accounts such as that of Marvin Harris (1977) are refuted and sufficient positive evidence is presented in favor of a specific historical materialist account.

Marvin Harris (1977) suggests that patriarchy is a result of primitive peoples need to reduce population to keep in equilibrium with their environment in order to secure a reasonably high living standard. He argues that warfare among primitives is a principle way in which population is kept down. War fare accomplishes its purpose, not by producing high casualty rates, but rather in producing a high social evaluation of men (as soldiers) and a low evaluation of women (as non-soldiers). On the one hand a high evaluation of soldiers results in boy babies getting special and preferential care, and in female babies being subjected to either conscious or unconscious female infanticide; on the other, in women rewards for male soldier's heroic deeds in battle. The reduction in the number of girls this process results in, lowers the reproductive rate of the society. Further women becoming rewards for male warriors. Both of these processes, the overvaluation of men as soldiers and the use of women as a reward for men are theoretically adequate materialist

accounts of how patriarchal structures could have arisen. Harris's theory thus goes beyond such Feminist theorists as McDonough, Harrison, Mitchell and Meillassoux without relying on explanations in terms of the logic of the mode of production. However, Harris's theory has some serious empirical problems. First, it is based on the notion that warfare is a central part of the life of primitive peoples. Such is not the case. Most all hunting and gathering peoples before the intrusion of imperialism, were peaceful. If such simple people's came up against a more advanced and warlike society, their typical response was to leave (see Lenski, 1978). Secondly, the differential female/male ratios that he reports from recorded primitive societies (something like 50% more young men than women) are insufficient to significantly slow down the rate of population increase of a society to keep it in harmony with its environment. The implicit step in Harris's logic is that tribes that fail to reduce the number of females through overvaluing males as soldiers would have faced Malthusian pressures from the scarcity of resources and thus apparently be so weakened that they would perish through starvation, disease or military conquest or be so burdened with tedious labor as to modify their institutions. It seems unlikely that primitive societies generally hit on the institution of unconscious female infanticide (which merely reduced the female/male ratio slightly) as the primary way to maintain a high living standard. It would seem that more likely courses of action would have been migration or intensification. In any event the evidence that unconscious female infanticide really did play an important role in keeping up a high living standard is shakey. Thirdly, the bulk of contemporary anthropological evidence shows that women's position in hunting and gathering, and simple horticultural societies was generally qualitatively better than in class societies. Thus the amount of patriarchy that a theory like that of Harris's, that traces patriarchy back to the logic of primitive social life, fails to account for the greater bulk of patriarchal structures that came into being with the decline of primitive societies. Lastly, Harris offers no substantial argument as to why patriarchal institutions that came into being 1000's of years ago in order to secure ecological balance in very different conditions of both availability of resources and warfare have continued to be reproduced. In sum, although a brilliant attempt to offer a non-historical materialist, but formally complete, theory of patriarchy that does not resort to biological reductionism, Harris's theory fails.

It is difficult to conceive of what a theoretical solid theory of patriarchy that at least roughly corresponds to the presently available evidence would look like if it did not in the last instance resort to historical materialist explanations. The most logical candidate would seem to be a theory that argued that there was some inherent logic of the family or sexual relations that varied over time and among different populations. While it is true that there is a certain "relative autonomy" of the family from the logic of the mode of production, this logic is ahistorical, not a variable like that of the mode of production. Regardless of the logic of the mode of production women bear children; only women can breast feed, men have greater capacity for violence; a considerable amount of time, care and love are necessary to rear healthy children; certain socialization techniques are more effective in producing given results, etc. Such factors operate totally autonomously from the logic of the mode of production and are not reducible to its logic. However, their actual effect on specific institutions and the degree of their effectivity are very much a product of the variable logic of the mode of production. In this sense, they are very much like the legitimation functions of the state, or the demands that an ideology be logically consistent. However, all a constant can explain is another constant. While such factors in interaction with the variables of productive relations may well produce the concrete structures of patriarchy and relations between the sexes they can have no effect on the tremendous variation in such structures. Only a variable, such as the mode of production, can in the last instance actually account for variation. It would seem that all concrete historical, anthropological and sociological accounts of concrete patriarchal structures can adequately be explained in terms of historical materialism.

In the late 1960s most attempts to offer an explanation of male chauvinism and patriarchal structures within the mainstream of the women's movement attempted to relate "sexism" to the logic of capitalism. Thus such classical articles as those by Margaret

Benston (1969), the Rowntrees (1970), Marilyn Goldberg (1972), and Michael Reich and Margery Davis (1972) were most influential. But by the late 1970s the (sometimes crude) insights into the nature of "sexism" which the women's movement understood at its birth had largely been lost, replaced by a combination of moralism, anti-male sentiments and incomplete theories of patriarchy. The rejection of explanations in terms of the logic of capitalism was a necessary corollary of the rightward drift of the Feminist movement made all the more necessary by the desire of its social basis "to deal with our own oppression" and to "make the personal political." The substitution of rather superficial articles for the insightful pieces by Goldberg and by Reich and Davies in the second edition of The Capitalist System (Edwards, ed.) is illustrative of the general trend.

As Marxian modes of analysis and concepts declined in the women's movement they were replaced by concepts, methods and modes of analysis reminiscent of both subjectivism/moralism and of traditional academic ("bourgeois") social science. When theoretical analyses and research has increasingly been done it has largely been done within the categories and framework of traditional academic social science. A whole new field of social science centered within sociology, the sociology of women/women's studies, developed with its own journals, professional organizations and "old boy" network to facilitate getting jobs, recommendations, grants, promotions, articles published, etc. An examination of the extensive literature generated by academic women in this area since the early 1970s demonstrates (1) a rather crude moralism, e.g., this or that theory or individual or concept is "sexist" mode of argument. (2) The use of traditional methods of survey research supplemented by some field work, if there is any hard data at all. (3) the increasing use of traditional academic and idealist concepts such as "roles," "socialization," and "norms," together with the declining usage of concepts such as "class," "imperialism," and "capitalism" as the vocabulary of analysis. (4) Incomplete theoretical arguments, such as the various cases for a "non-reductionist" theory of patriarchy, which sometimes become transparent as justifications for an autonomous women's movement. A distinct set of institutions and a literature designed to advance the careers of professional women have been created.

An Outline of an Historical Materialist Theory of Patriarchy

There are, of course, a variety of historical materialist explanations of patriarchy, of which the classical model laid out by Engles in his Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State is only one (and a theoretically elegant one at that). Nevertheless, there are many problems with Engles' specific account, largely problems having to do with the incomplete or inadequate anthropological data he utilized. For example, Engles made two assumptions about human biology that are probably wrong: (1) that women are more inherently monogamous than men, and thus feel oppressed by promiscuous sexual relations more than do men, and (2) that the incest taboo and the expansion of the circle of ineligible mates was primarily caused by the biological danger of inbreeding. The first assumption is unnecessary for his basic argument, the second has been replaced in most contemporary Marxian accounts, such as that of Leslie White, by the more compelling argument that the widening incest taboo occurred in order to create wide ranging networks of intermarrying bands and kin groups that could cooperate in economic production (and also militarily, i.e., incest evolved because of its survival value in assisting getting a living). Engles is also weak in maintaining that the father's primary motive to abolish mother right and to subordinate women was their desire to insure the paternity of their sons, sons who they wanted to pass on their property. First, it would seem that the motive of the sons to want to inherit the animals and other property that they had helped their mother's husband care for up until his death should be just as important a motive as that of the fathers. If the sons knew they would inherit the property they worked, they would take better care of it, thus increasing society's productivity. Second, why should the father care who the actual biological father of his son was (assuming that, as Engles does, there is no inherent jealousy). Why not be happy with the rule of the Napoleonic code. "The husband of the mother is the father of the child?" It

would seem that this is an unjustified leap in Engles argument. It would be better to simply analyze the changed economic position of women from independent hunters and gathers and horticulturalists who brought in at least as much food as the men (and who thus were economically independent, and consequently socially and politically equal to the men) to becoming processors of the foods and other material secured by the men (a process that occurred with domestication, agriculture and the accumulation of wealth). The changing economic role of the sexes, with men becoming the primary food getters at once gives them the means (food) and the motive (the need for food processors and eventually status objects) to subordinate women.

Engels' arguments about matrilinearity being the original state of primitive societies appears to be wrong, as well as unnecessary to his argument. The majority of the most primitive societies known are in fact patrilineal and it appears that there is a pressure to change to matrilinearity and matrilocality for military and economic reasons with the development of primitive societies (this because unrelated men are in a position to cooperate better, living in the same village married to blood sisters) than they would be in a patrilinear society. But in any event the change is in the direction Engles argued with the rise of classes. Matrilinearity and matrilocality are under strong pressure to be replaced by both patrilinearity and patrilocality at the point at which the female sex is qualitatively subordinated to men (at the origins of class society). In any event although women are somewhat better off under matrilineal and matrilocal arrangements (they live with and are primarily related to their sisters, while men are strangers) this factor is generally overwhelmed by women's relationship to the economy. It is on women's relation to production that any updating of Engles' classical historical materialist theory of the origins of patriarchy must focus.

Regardless of whether or not the question of the origins of patriarchy is addressed (or whether or not the historical development of the structures of patriarchy is considered to be an important problem) an adequate historical materialist theory of patriarchy must: (1) Account for the reproduction of patriarchal structures in terms of their role in the contemporary mode of production, both in terms of (a) their functions for that mode, and (b) why the particular forms of patriarchy best, or most conveniently, fulfill those functions. (2) Account for the contemporary variations in the structures of patriarchy in terms of class factors and positions within the world capitalist system. (3) Account for the changes in patriarchal structures in terms of the underlying logic and transformations in the capitalist mode of production. (4) Be sensitive to the possibility of contradictions between the inherent logic of the family (only women can bear children, a certain amount of time, care and energy is necessary to rear children, certain socialization techniques are more effective than others, etc.) and the requirements of the mode of production. Negative action from patriarchal structures on the capitalist mode of production could perhaps be a source of destabilization or even revolutionary energy.

During the early period of capitalism, women predominantly performed the role of housewives/mothers whose contribution to the capitalist mode of production varied qualitatively by class. In the working class, even if women worked in a mill before they were married, or if they were widowed or never married, most women were full time housewives, working perhaps 90-100 hours a week tending a garden, canning food, chopping wood, washing clothes, cleaning the house, looking after the children, making and mending clothes, cooking, washing up, providing emotional support to children and the working man, etc.

Working class women functioned to reproduce the labor power of their husbands who sold his labor power directly to the capitalists, as well as to bring up another generation of male workers (and female wife-mothers). Her labor power was paid for by the capitalist. It was incorporated into the value of the labor power of her husband and sons. But it was paid for in the form of a wage paid to them, and not to her. There was nothing inherently more demeaning, menial or brutal about doing housework in comparison to working 12 hours a day in the mills or mines as a manual laborer. However, the fact that the male got the family wage, and not the wife, gave the working class man a position

of power over the woman, a position that was used to secure a degree of subordination (wives, largely excluded from industry, were economically dependent).

In the capitalist class women were considerably better off--they had servants and nursemaids to do the housework and childcare, i.e., working class women performed these functions in the capitalist class family. Such women were largely excluded from economic functions, being restricted to performing social functions (not at all an irrelevant activity for maintaining capitalist class solidarity) and engaging in leisure in good part as conspicuous consumption by capitalist class men. But, such women traditionally (e.g., before women had the right to own or inherit property) were clearly subordinate to their men. Conditions in the classical petty bourgeois family, were very much like those in the capitalist class family (only at a substantially lower standard of living). Such families (say through the end of the nineteenth century) typically had a live-in servant that did the bulk of the housework and much of the childcare largely releasing the petty bourgeois woman for social and leisure activities, or in the case of shopkeepers and farmers, to assist the husband in the small family business.

The course of the twentieth century, especially in the post-1950 period, saw the radical transformation of the position of women in all classes, especially in the working class. As the socially necessary labor time to reproduce labor power of husbands and children radically decreased, women for the first time became available for wage labor outside the home. At the same time the demand of the corporations for more cheap and docile white collar and service workers greatly increased. Wives/mothers were pulled out of the home and pulled into the offices and salesrooms. This process, which is not yet completed, has meant the undermining of the traditional economic position of the working class husband who no longer exclusively brings home the wage. Working class women's economic security is considerable. Hence dependence on a man is considerably reduced and the material basis for more equalitarian non-patriarchal relationships in the family is laid.

In the course of the mid- and late-nineteenth century upper and middle class women came to acquire most of the legal rights (other than the vote) that their husbands had. Women were granted the right to own and inherit property, barriers to their admissions into professional schools (such as law and medicine) came down, etc. Even before the franchise, these two classes of women were largely granted formally equal status and equality of opportunity with the men of their class (they were allowed to more fully share in their class's privileges). Such rights as the right to inherit property or the opening of professional schools meant nothing to working class women whose relatives had no property to pass on to her, nor the education and money to attend professional schools. Women of the capitalist class who were now able to own property on their own utilized this right (realized through the inheritance of father's fortunes as well as the possibility of large alimony settlements) to in good part equalize their economic power with the men of their class, even while they continued to be excluded from most managerial positions. As the traditional petty bourgeois went bankrupt and family businesses in which the woman worked were replaced by the salaried professions and administration as the primarily economic basis of the middle class, petty bourgeois women found themselves without a direct relationship to the economy. At the same time the cost of servants and housing went up, most middle class women could no longer afford to hire a live-in servant to do the bulk of the housework/childcare (this was especially oppressive because of the "high" petty bourgeois standards of household and childcare) unless they themselves worked. Both the number of children going to college and the costs of higher education increased, further putting pressure on petty bourgeois women to work. A bit later the divorce rate increased and the prevalence of single professional women increased. The increasing need for a second (or an independent income) in this class provided the pressure to bring down the barriers to petty bourgeois careers. Women thus increasingly entered the professions. It should be noted that the petty bourgeois women's entry into salaried labor followed that of the working class women's entry into wage labor (mostly, at first young unmarried women, widows, and the most economically desperate of married working class women).

A far higher percentage of married women in the working class engage in wage labor, than women in the petty bourgeoisie, indicating that the motivation for work outside of the home is primarily economic need. Even though working women continue to do the bulk of the housework (the total amount of time spent by women who work full time on housework, commuting and wage labor averages about five hours more a week than does her husband's), distinctively "sexist" oppression is probably greatest for petty bourgeois housewives. Without an income of their own they are economically dependent on their husbands. Without the means to secure a middle class livelihood on their own, moreover, separation from their husband would probably plunge them quickly into the working class with a drastic decline in their living standards (this is magnified by the fact that they usually get custody of the children). Thus, their economic security (and hence dependence on and typically subordination to) their husband is greater than in the working class where wives mostly work and where if the husband leaves women generally suffer rather less of a decline in living standards than would middle class women.

The fact that most working class women work at clerical, sales and service jobs and thereby bring home an independent wage, although it establishes an economic basis for relatively equalitarian relationships in the family, by no means results in the undermining of sexist relationships. Working class women overwhelmingly go into occupations in which the typically "feminine" characteristic, of docility, passivity, warmth, supportiveness, emotionalism, etc., are selected for and reproduced. The continuation of employment as well as promotion prospects for a secretary, file clerk, sales clerk, waitress, airline stewardess, etc., are very much a product of the extent to which "feminine" as opposed to "masculine" behavior is exhibited. Traditional sex roles are thus reproduced on the job. The last half of the twentieth century is thus experiencing a socialization of patriarchal structures, with the reproduction of women's traditional subordinate and "feminine" roles increasingly occurring within the corporations, rather than in the patriarchal family.

Working class women have been rapidly drawn into wage labor in the post-World War II period because of (a) the corporation's radically increased their need for cheap and docile white collar (clerical and sales) labor; (b) the radical reduction in the socially necessary labor time necessary to reproduce male labor power in the home (due to the mechanization of housework, the increasing production of goods formally produced by women in the home as commodities outside of the home, and the significant reduction in the number of years devoted to child bearing and rearing; and (c) the increasing difficulty of meeting the socially defined minimum living standard with just one wage (in part because children rather than bringing in supplemental income from the beginning of their teens are increasingly a major financial burden until they complete college or at least high school.

Women are preferred in the rapidly expanding white collar sector because (a) their socialization in the patriarchal family tends to make them more docile workers and tends to orient them to the role of "housewife/mother" even while they are working full time (thus making them more amenable to manipulation and less likely to organize); (b) they generally will work for less than the value of their labor power, because part of the costs of the reproduction of their labor power is typically borne either by their husbands if married, or by their parents if they are single. Because women's wage is set on this basis, unmarried working class women living alone are typically reduced to poverty. Women's greater docility and non-career orientation makes them especially useful in occupations which are being "deskilled" and subject to qualitatively greater management control. In good part their introduction to office work as a result of the process of the evolution of management (male) and clerical work (female) occupations out of the traditional eighteenth and nineteenth century male head clerks and accountants. The mechanization and reorganization of office work was made far easier by bringing in young women than it would have been had the men who had traditionally been the highly skilled clerks been forcibly reduced to the new office proletariat. Native born women were, of

course, preferable to the new working class of European immigrants (female or male), who were flooding into manual jobs at the same time as the office proletariat was created, because they were literate in English (a requisite of office labor, but not of physical labor).

Petty bourgeois women with professional or managerial careers have benefitted enormously by the affirmative action programs of the 1970s (even while they have not yet caught up with men). It appears that the bulk of remaining discrimination here is a result of past practices as well as the voluntary decision of many women to take time off from their careers to have children, rather than a result of contemporary discrimination in either admissions to schools, hiring, or promotion policies of the state or private corporations.

Thus the two forms of patriarchy which are felt as the most oppressive tend to be the oppression experienced by petty bourgeois housewives as housewives and the oppression of working class women primarily as wage workers. It would be very difficult to make a case that the women in the capitalist class, most of whom own significant amounts of property (or have a legal right to a fat alimony) and who employee working class women both to do their household labor and to generate the fortunes on which they base their life of luxury are in any important sense oppressed, or are in any meaningful sense the "sisters" of those they exploit. Petty bourgeois women in the professions have for the most part both very good and rather well paying jobs and for the most part promotional opportunities the equivalent of men's. They seem to have become pretty much full participants in the relative privileges of the salaried petty bourgeoisie. While they have not yet achieved full equality with the men of their class, they would seem to be significantly less oppressed than petty bourgeois housewives and qualitatively less oppressed than either working class housewives or working class wage working women. The most oppressed section of women (as well as the biggest) both by patriarchal structures (reproduced outside of the family) as well as by capitalist and racial/national oppression would appear to be working class women. It would still seem to be the case that petty bourgeois housewives and perhaps unmarried white collar women still suffer more from the patriarchal structures of the family (or the lack of security the family provides) and from the male chauvinism of individual men.

Patriarchal structures are both the essential way women are specially oppressed and the cause of the other manifestations of women's special oppression--male chauvinism and sexist ideology. While women of the capitalist class are not oppressed in any significant sense by patriarchal structures, and while there are qualitative differences between the petty bourgeoisie and the working class and between women who are primarily housewives (in both of these classes) and women who primarily work outside of the home, male chauvinism and sexist ideology would seem to be pretty much constant (although of course, there is considerable individual variation in male chauvinist behavior as well as in the way it is expressed (and what class of women it primarily effects)).

Sexist ideology is propagated in the schools, in the mass media, in military training and in virtually all the central institutions of capitalist society because of the role of patriarchy in capitalism. Sexist ideology is the theoretical justification for the patriarchal family (which reproduces male labor power, provides female workers who work for less than the value of their labor--because part of the costs of the reproduction of their labor is borne by their family, and assists in the reproduction of traditional "feminine" sex role characteristics that the corporations find so convenient in its service and white collar workers). Sexist ideology also operates to legitimate the lower pay and greater docility of the female labor force. Sexist ideology also has other functions for monopoly capitalism, not the least of which is to reinforce authoritarian and militaristic sentiments especially in soldiers, as well as to promote consumption of such goods as cosmetics, sports cars, clothing, stereo's, etc.

All women then tend to be subject to sexist ideology because of its usefulness for

the reproduction of capitalist institutions. It is no accident that the major media corporations, the general staff of the military or the boards that run education (all of which are led by individuals at or close to the center of the capitalist institutions which profit from patriarchal structures) institute policies that result in the propagation and reproduction of sexist ideas. Such theories both benefit them economically, and perhaps even more importantly, correspond to their daily experiences in relating to women (as secretaries, clerks, servants, etc., within the leading patriarchal institutions of capitalist society).

It might well be the case that the need for capitalism to reproduce sexist ideology in order to legitimate both the continuance of the patriarchal family and patriarchal job structures (as well as because of its military and consumption functions) leads the corporations to following hiring policies which do not appear economically rational in the immediate sense. Just as the slave lords of the ante-bellum South did not always act to maximize their profits because of the logic of the master slave relationship and the paternalistic and aristocratic ideology it generated, it might well be the case that the imperatives of the maintenance of sexist ideology results in not hiring women for certain categories of jobs where their employment in competition with men would result in the general lowering of wages and consequently in an increased rate of profit (but where as a result the credibility of sexist ideology would be undermined). There might well be a parallel here with the reluctance of slave lords to use slaves in industry, especially in skilled positions. The use of slaves for such labor, while economically profitable, tended to undermine the racist myths about the inherent stupidity and laziness of Blacks, a myth on which the vitally important master-slave relationship depended.

Although all women are equally caricatured by sexist ideology, not all women suffer equally from its effects. The women most oppressed by it are those that internalize the ideal of being a "good mother" and "good wife" and who thus desire to provide her family with all the conveniences and support the ideal family requires. For a working class or lower petty bourgeois women to accomplish this ideal two things are necessary: (1) she work more or less full time outside of the house to secure enough money to buy the appliances, goods, services and education that the ideal dictates; and (2) she strive to also be the full time mother and wife the ideal requires. The impossibility of doing both well, puts incredible pressure on women of these classes, a pressure that can well lead to emotional breakdowns, alcoholism, etc., as well as be the energy which can be mobilized by the women's liberation movement.

Male chauvinism, the behavior of individual men in their relationships with women, is a product of both men's position within patriarchal structures (as fathers, husbands, supervisors, owners, etc.) and a result of the internalization of sexist ideology (in the family, on the job, in the military, from the media, in school, etc.). Even in the absence of the reproduction of such behavior in patriarchal structures and exposure to sexist ideology, male chauvinism is reproduced because of its role in giving men, especially men of the working class, a feeling of solidarity and false dignity (e.g., as bad as job conditions are, at least we are superior to the women, at least we have skills or perform better than women would, at least we earn more, or are more important than women, etc.). A similar effect operates within both the working class and the petty bourgeois family, especially where the woman is performing the unwaged labor of housewife. Wives are often brutalized, much more often in subtle ways than through actual physical battering, as a compensation for the oppressive conditions of the husband, either as a manual laborer or as a small businessman. The aggression built up on the job, which can not be directly taken out on the boss, or on customers, suppliers and competitors, can relatively safely (i.e., without retribution) be taken out against an economically dependent wife. It would seem that such manifestations of male chauvinism are most characteristic of traditional petty bourgeois and working class families, rather than of new petty bourgeois families with working wives or of capitalist class families. Capitalist class men, for example, have many subordinates (both men and women) on which to take out

their aggressions. Further, their work is inherently more enjoyable than that of other classes of men, and their wives are more often not economically dependent on them, thus (a) they have less aggression to displace on to wives, and (b) the wives are less likely to put up with it. Working class women (in the office or factory), rather than the wives of men of the capitalist class, are more likely to bear the brunt of their male chauvinism. It must be emphasized that the cause of all forms of male chauvinism is ultimately to be located within the logic of capitalism: either in its generation of patriarchal structures, in the internalization of its sexist ideology, or as a compensation for the daily oppressions of working class or petty bourgeois life.

The Social Basis of the Women's Movement

The very different experiences of the women of different classes (and subgroups within the various classes) means that women experience very different forms and degrees of oppression. And further the degree and form of oppression both varies over time and by position within the world capitalist system as a result of the logic of the capitalist mode of production. The different degrees and forms of oppression in turn tend to result in very different issues raised by various types of women--there is not, nor can there be, an above class women's movement. The class and national variations in women's oppression have too little in common, and the women of various classes have too much in common with the men in the same position in comparison with the women of other classes (and nations) for a unified woman's movement to exist that does not have a specific class orientation. Such was the case during the early Feminist movement especially from the 1880s to 1920 as well as in the 1970s.

As Marxist women's critiques of the original Feminist movement pointed out there is not a single "woman question," but rather at least four separate "women's questions." The attempt of narrow feminism to appropriate the legitimacy of speaking for all women is based on their false claim that all women share an essentially common oppression. This false claim that there is really only one women's question is a generalization of the felt oppression of only one set of women, white middle class women, that have been the primary social bases of the narrow feminist tendency in the women's movement.

The separate women's questions are: (1) the condition of capitalist class women; (2) the condition of petty bourgeois (a) housewives, (b) ex-housewives non-professionals, and (c) petty bourgeois professionals; (3) the condition of working class women; and (4) the condition of women's especially oppressed by their national or ethnic group status. Each of these four groups puts forth different demands reflecting their qualitatively different social structural position. Capitalist class women, as fully integrated members of their class, put forth the demands of that class, increased exploitation, increased productivity, support for imperialist wars, cutback in social welfare programs for the poor and minorities, etc. It can not be forgotten that the extreme wealth and privilege of these women is a result of the exploitation and oppression of their working class sisters. Petty bourgeois professional women have tended to stress affirmative action for petty bourgeois women, which facilitates their entry into professional schools, the professions and management as well as their promotion within these fields. Petty bourgeois housewives (and ex-housewives) tend to stress issues of power and "exploitation" within the family. Younger unmarried professionals and pre-professionals (as well as many younger white collar single women) tend to stress issues which most oppress them: the threat of rape, sexual exploitation by individual men, the lack of emotional security from relationships, a woman's right to control her body (sexual preference, reproduction rights, etc.). Working class women tend to stress issues of improving working conditions (including protective legislation), higher pay, job safety, the availability of quality, convenient and reliable day care, control over their jobs, unionization, equal pay for equal work, access to better paying jobs, etc.

Petty bourgeois professional women tend to demand their full share in the privileges of the petty bourgeoisie (rather than the equalization of the condition of working class

and middle class women). They in fact defend the privileges of the petty bourgeoisie against equalization. The limited number of petty bourgeois positions, and the individual nature of petty bourgeois work and promotional prospects dictate that there will be a stiff competition with men for scarce resources. If a woman gets a tenured job or a executive advancement, that means a man doesn't (very much unlike the working class where the principle of unionization is all go ahead together, and attempts to get ahead as an individual loose). Thus the special conditions of the competitive nature of the petty bourgeoisie tends to generate an anti-male consciousness and anti-male ideology (e.g., attacks on individual male competitors for being "sexist") among the upwardly striving women, and a counter anti-feminist sentiment among the petty bourgeois men attempting to hang on to increasingly scarce privileges. The generation of such sentiments closely parallels the generation of anti-semitism in equivalent strata, i.e., upwardly mobile middle class people tend to be more anti-semitic than the average because of perceived increased competition with Jews.

Middle class housewives, ex-housewives/non-professionals, and young unmarried pre-professionals, professionals and many young unmarried white collar workers tend to stress psychological oppression by individual men, while downplaying both patriarchal structures outside the family and economic exploitation. Such women have been brutalized more by individual men (lovers, ex-husbands, rapists, etc.) than they have suffered hunger, racism, or severe economic exploitation. Such women have generated the slogans of "organize around your own oppression," and "the personal is the political." Their emphasis on male chauvinism rather than on exploitation results in the privatizing of what are really structural contradictions, instead of the politicalization of them as part of the general struggle against the capitalist system and the patriarchal structures it generates.

The condition of working class women is very different. Women who work can't get ahead, as can women of the petty bourgeoisie, over the backs of their brothers and husbands. Both white and minority women in this class are oppressed primarily as workers. Thus their brothers and husbands of the same class and ethnic group, who share their most essential oppression, are their natural allies. "Equal rights" for such women, mostly means equality in domination and exploitation with their men. The daily experience of such women on the job tends to make it clear, especially to blue collar women, and perhaps women in the larger offices, than it is the boss/capitalist not their husbands and brothers who are the enemy. The working class women's movement, unlike either segment of the petty bourgeois women's movement, thus tends to focus on exploitation and related issues class specific to their condition, including racism and national oppression. The anti-male, anti-family sentiments of so much of the petty bourgeois women's movement makes no sense in this class. Not only are working class men the natural allies of working women, but the working class family, even with all of its problems, is, and is strongly perceived to be, a source of at least minimal economic and emotional security. Being a single mother working in the office or mill is not looked on favorably by many women of this class as the ideal. The demand for not only equal pay for equal work but for equal access to higher paying jobs is important, especially to establish the basis for economic equality and hence personal equality in the working class family. But it should be noted that if equal pay with working class men results in a pay reduction for male workers to pay for a raise for female workers, then the average income of the working family, and hence the living standards of working class women, remain unchanged.

The most important impact that the demand for equal pay could have for most working class women is that the funding for equal pay come out of profits, not out of men's pay-checks. That women could succeed in such a demand would seem to depend in their working together with men, in a solidified class movement against capital. Further, a misdirected attempt to achieve equal pay with working class men at the expense of the decline in male wages, would undoubtedly result: (1) in many housewives and working wives opposing such a divisive demand (because it would mean their living standards would go down), and (2) driving male workers into opposition to the women's demands (for the same reason). The

struggle against patriarchal structures in the working class must be part of the overall struggle for improvement in working class conditions and eventually the achievement of socialism. Because men are, and are generally perceived by working class women to be, allies of women in this struggle (rather than antagonists as in the petty bourgeoisie), manifestations of male chauvinism among men must be dealt with in a comradely and educational manner appropriate to consolidating and mobilizing friends. In the middle class the struggle against male chauvinism, in contrast, can be and usually is treated as an antagonistic contradiction and the tactics developed for dealing with it become weapons in the general battle for scarce privilege against the men of this class (rather than serious attempts to educate).

The appropriation of "feminism" by professional women allows them to easily use the charge of sexism to advance their own careers and positions; to substitute moralistic criticism of "male chauvinism" for the theory and analysis so desperately needed and to ignore or downplay the world wide anti-imperialist, anti-racist and working-class struggles to advance their own narrow interests. The appropriation of "feminism" and the opportunist charge of "sexism" legitimates their narrow self-interested and careerist politics and neglect of the far more serious oppression of women (and men) of other class positions and nationalities, while at the same time intimidating and confusing both women and men who do not accept their claims.

Narrow feminism offers nothing to the vast majority of the women in the world. This is underlined again and again by its lack of appeal to the women of the oppressed nations, to minority women in the U.S. or for that matter to most white working class women in the U.S. It is not surprising that each International Women's Conference ends up in a split between North American/Western European women and women from the rest of the world or that there is a growing pro-family movement among working class women in the U.S. For the vast majority it is patently obvious that their hopes for improvement in their lives lie in solidarity with the men of their class and nationality not in attacking them, and that problems within male-female relationships must be worked out in the process of both sexes struggling together against a far greater enemy. This reflects the fact that working class, minority and most women in the less developed countries are oppressed primarily by their class position, by their minority status or by the imperial domination of their countries, not because they are women. The women who today in Bolivia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Korea, Palestine, e.g., who are being tortured, starved and murdered because of their class and politics know well that men are not their primary or co-equal enemies. And that they have far more in common with men in their same position than they do with professional white women in North America. A serious women's movement understands the primary nature of the oppressor of most of the women of the world and develops its allies and enemies accordingly.

The strategy of the narrow feminism based among white professional women is however by no means irrational from the point of view of its social base. Their targeting of men as the primary enemies (rather than capitalism or imperialism), or in the case of "Socialist-Feminism" men as co-equal enemies with capitalism (but it seems still the primary enemy in practice), makes considerable sense. With limited privileged jobs (in management, university positions, tenure, etc.), especially in a contracting economy what middle class men don't get, women will.

In a typically petty-bourgeois fight over scarce resources, fully analogous to the competitive struggle among small shopkeepers over limited customers, success is only obtained by destroying one's competitors. Solidarity here does not make sense.

Middle class white women in the wealthiest societies of the world are free from the oppressions and concerns that face most of the world's women: hunger, malnourished infants, lack of medical care for their families, racism, police terror, refugee status, etc. At the same time they are plagued by new problems which are distinctively a product of affluent capitalist societies such as high rates of rape, sexual harassment, divorce, etc. It is not at all surprising that people who are oppressed in different ways develop

different responses. While most women are led by their position to develop anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist politics, materially well off women who are in fact primarily oppressed in their daily interactions with men, quite naturally develop a politics which focuses on men as the enemy.

It would be too easy (and in many leftist circles it is done too easily) to dismiss the primary concerns of white middle class North American women as irrelevant and to guilt trip them and their movements into renouncing their "privileges" and ignoring their very real concerns. But nevertheless a responsible leftist movement must put these concerns in proper perspective, and for two reasons: (1) The greater oppression of the greater number of women lies elsewhere; and, (2) the real concerns of these women will never be resolved within the framework of attacks on men. Elimination of both the issues of rape, sexual harassment, decent creative work, etc., raised by the middle class women's movement are really only going to be resolved in the process of a socialist revolution against capitalism. A revolution whose main force will be working class and nationally oppressed women and men (working together) to transform the system that gives rise to the oppression of both classes.

The Politics of Feminism

The main stream of the Feminist movement over the course of the 1970s has the evolved from being part of the left to becoming essentially part of the new right. This development parallels the course of the earlier Feminist movement in the last half of the nineteenth century. Both movements were spun off of the support movement for the liberation of Black people. The first movement originated as part of the abolitionist movement in the pre-Civil War period, and the second, originated in good part as a part of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Both times white female participants in these movements began to see parallels between the condition of Blacks and their own situation, and as result began to put increasing energy into fighting their own battles rather than those of Blacks. Because of the class basis of both movements, the increasingly compelling argument that women were as oppressed as Blacks justified a gradual reorientation away from the issues which primarily concerned minority and poorer women toward the issues of primary concern to the middle and upper middle classes.

Before the 1880s an important mainstream of the early women's movement (the National Woman Suffrage Association) did involve itself in issues of central concern to minority and working class women. But in the 1880s the Feminist movement came to focus exclusively on middle and upper class white women's concerns. The depoliticalization of the women's movement was represented by a new united organization formed in 1890, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (with Elizabeth Cady Stanton as president) and the new dedication to a sole issue--gaining the right to vote. From the mid-1880s the rhetoric of the Feminist movement became racist (both against Blacks and the new European immigrants), anti-working class and anti-Socialist. The general middle and upper class fear of the new immigrants and the revolutionary potential they brought with them became very much a part of the Feminist movement--its origins in the support of the abolition of slavery were totally forgotten. Black women were explicitly excluded from participation in the movement and working class women were discouraged. The movement accepted the prevailing racism of the era that Black women should be permanently confined to agricultural and domestic work because of their biological inferiority. It also shared in the prevalent racist views about the inherent intellectual inferiority of the new Jewish, Italian and Slavic immigrants. After 1890 one of the principle arguments of the NAWSA was that granting the native born white women the vote (together with a literacy requirement to preclude male and female foreign born from voting) would protect America against the dangerous influence of the new working class. The organization opposed the Homestead Steal Strike of 1892 (its leaders asked, "why didn't the workers go out and start their own business if they objected to working conditions?") and opposed doing anything about the new Jim Crow system in the South. A resolution passed at the 1893 convention of the NAWSA read:

. . . we call attention to the significant facts that in every state there are more women who can read and write than all negro voters; more American women who can read and write than all foreign voters, so that the enfranchisement of such women would settle the vexed question of rule by illiteracy, whether of homegrown or foreign born production (cited in Sachs, 1976).

Emma Goldman, a prominent American anarchist said of the Feminist movement: ". . . valiant fighters for a wretched little bill which will benefit a handful of propertied ladies, with absolutely no provision for the vast majority of working women" (cited in Sachs, 1976).

In spite of their total adherence to mainstream conservative and capitalist values the NASWA was unable to convince upper class men to grant them the franchise until the post-World War I Red Scare. In the face of the Bolshevik revolution and unrest in the wake of World War I in the U.S. the 19th amendment granting women the right to vote was rushed through Congress and ratified within a year. Compare this schedule to what has happened to the equal rights amendment. The rush to give white native born women the vote occurred in the midst of the worse political repression the U.S. has ever seen. The notorious Palmer raids occurred on January 2, 1920. Thousands of socialists Communists and Industrial Workers of the World were given lengthy jail terms. The presidential candidate of the Socialist Party, Eugene Debs, received a million votes for president while in the federal penitentiary in Atlanta in November 1920. With their goal, the franchise, achieved, the Feminist movement collapsed, not to be awoken again until the revival of the Black movement in the 1960s.

It should be noted that the dominant Feminist tendency in the 1880s through 1920 period was not the only trend in the women's movement--there were others, i.e., the working class women's movement that focused on organizing trade unions, increasing wages and improving working conditions (especially in fighting for protective legislation) and the Black women's movement that focuses on combating Jim Crow and the lynching of Blacks. Women were in the forefront and leadership of the trade union movement from the 1840s. From the 1850s immigrant women were employed in large numbers in unskilled and labor intensive industries (especially textiles and garments). Unlike the mainstream Feminist movement, the working class women's movement saw the employers (rather than the liquor interests) as their enemy. In 1903 a group of middle class women formed the National Women's Trade Union League to support the struggles of working class women. In the 1909-1912 period there was a tremendous surge of working class women's activity, the most famous strike of which has been commemorated throughout the world as International Women's Day (March 8th). The mainstream Feminist movement had nothing to do with such events. Unlike the middle class women's movement, the working class women's movement did not die in 1920, but continued in the 1920s and 1930s in the campaigns to organize women textile and tobacco workers (see Sachs, 1976).

The contrast between the middle/upper class mainstream Feminist movement and the Marxist working class women's movement in the pre-World War I period was stronger in Europe (especially Germany and Russia) than in the U.S. Here Clara Zetkin in Germany and Alexandra Kollontai in Russia carried on a relentless battle against what Marxist women sometimes referred to as "the enemy sisters" Kollontai wrote a 400 page polemic, On the Social Basis of the Women's Movement, arguing that working class and middle class woman had nothing in common. Kollontai argued:

The feminists see men as the main enemy, for men have unjustly seized all rights and privileges for themselves, leaving women only chains and duties. For them a victory is won when a prerogative previously enjoyed exclusively by the male sex is conceded to the "fair sex." Proletarian women have a different attitude. They do not see men as the enemy and the oppressor; on the contrary, they think of men as their comrades, who share with them the drudgery of the daily round and fight with them for a better future. . . .

Where, then, is that general "woman question?" Where is that unity of tasks and aspirations about which the feminists have so much to say? A sober glance at reality shows that such unity does not and cannot exist. In vain the feminists try to assure themselves that the "woman question" has nothing to do with that of the political party and that "its solution is possible only with the participation of all parties and all women." . . .

. . . once the barrier is down and the bourgeois women have received access to political activity, the recent defenders of the "rights of all women" become enthusiastic defenders of the privileges of their class, content to leave their younger sisters with no rights at all. Thus, when the feminists talk to working women about the need for a common struggle to realize some "general women's" principle, women of the working class are naturally distrustful (from Kollontai, 58-73).

Reflecting their class basis the principle issues raised by the hegemonic tendency within the mainstream Feminist movement of the early 1980s are virtually indistinguishable from those raised by the Moral Majority, the Libertarian Party or other segments of the New Right. The mainstream of the women's movement has thus moved from its late 1960s association with radical critiques of capitalism, as well as support for anti-imperialist and anti-racist struggles. It has been caught up in the general right drift of American politics. Freed of its original ties to movements of the oppressed at home and abroad, the distinctively middle class social basis of narrow feminism has produced politics parallel to those produced in much of the rest of the middle class.

Increasingly the anti-rape, anti-battering, anti-pornography and sexual harassment issues have become central and taken the form of traditional law and order politics that people like Ronald Reagan and the local police are quite happy with, while anti-Communism (expressed as anti-Leninism) has gained in currency. Professional women concerned about their careers and professional advancement have increasingly appropriated the legitimacy of the women's movement to advance their narrow careerist interest at the expense of working class and minorities (including the women in these latter categories). Charges of "sexism" are increasingly used in defense of both traditional law and order politics and to advance professional careers. Further the emphasis on a woman's absolute right to control her body (abortion, contraception, divorce, sexual preference, etc.) without transcending social obligations, is a manifestation of classical liberalism (parallel to Milton Freidman's economics or Ayn Rand's morality). The progressive socialist oriented women's movement of the late 1960s and 1970s is virtually dead. Militant socialist women are increasingly renouncing feminism (but not women's issues) while the mainstream of even "Socialist Feminism" is increasingly emphasizing narrow feminism (and issues related primarily to middle class American women), while forgetting (especially in practice) about socialism and imperialism.

In fact the outstanding differences between the hegemonic Feminist tendency and that of those around groups like the Moral Majority are issues in which the hegemonic Feminist tendency defends classical liberal positions against pre-liberal protraditional family notions of the Moral Majority (issues of socialism do not enter in, the battle between them is in terms of eighteenth century politics). The hegemonic Feminist tendency insists vehemently on the right of the individual woman to control her body (and that this right is as important as, if not prior to, any collective obligations or rights society or others may have in a woman's body). The Moral Majority on the other hand opposes such rights. It argues that the rights of the unborn infant are superior to the right of a woman to terminate a pregnancy. Further, it argues against the right to pre-marital or extra-marital sex or to have lesbian relationships and perhaps even the right to practice contraception. The Libertarian Party, which takes classical liberalism to its economic and moral extremes, is in 100 percent concurrence with the mainstream of the Feminist movement on all moral questions of reproductive rights and sexual preference (while most libertarians would have difficulty with the law and order politics which are

the corollary of the focus on individual male violence against women). The politics of the mainstream of the Feminist movement by 1980 became an amalgam of the two principle tendencies of the New Right: the traditionalist anti-crime pro-law and order, anti-pornography Moral Majority and the extreme individualism of the Libertarian Party.

Further, a strong strain of this dominant tendency, shares the Moral Majority belief in the traditional monogamous family (albeit one in which the woman is truly equal to the man, and, it sometimes seems, one in which the woman, but not the man, is free to leave). It is not uncommon for heterosexual women (both married and divorced) to accuse those who engage in non-monogamous relationships, as well as men who break off relationships with women for other women as, "sexists."

Libertarians, further, would have no difficulty supporting women's equal access to all occupations (although they, unlike the traditionalists around groups like the Moral Majority would have difficulty with state enforced programs designed to accomplish this end). While Moral Majority people oppose affirmative action it is not on the grounds that they oppose strong state intervention (e.g., they support a ban on abortions for example and tougher laws against muggers and rapists). It is rather because they support traditional patriarchal structures and want to use state power in their defense, rather than to break them down.

A distinctively socialist women's movement takes a very different approach to the oppression of women than does the dominant tendencies within feminism in either the 1970s or the 1980s. The middle class liberalism, careerism, and law and order politics which have been hegemonic since the decline of the New Left (and its associated anti-racist and anti-imperialist) movements have nothing in common with a socialist analysis or program.

Rape, battering and sexual harassment as well as mugging, murder and the generally rising rates of violent crime in Western capitalist society is in fact a very serious (and growing) problem that is especially oppressive for minorities (of both sexes), for working class people (both of which tend to live in the highest crime areas), as well as for women of the middle class. Violence is most oppressive for working class and minority women who suffer most from real sexist violence, even while their class and ethnic oppressions are greater. As real and growing problems for these groups they must be addressed by both the socialist and the women's movement. However, there are two fundamental differences in the way the left (both socialist and progressive liberal) and the right (now including the hegemonic Feminist tendency) addresses these questions: (1) the relative priority given such concerns as mugging and rape versus such concerns as war, racism and poverty and (2) the approach taken to dealing with these questions (transforming the structures that produce such behavior as opposed to harsher penalties and stricter enforcement).

A whole new approach to crime, both what it is and how to deal with those traditionally defined as criminals, emerged out of the left movement of the 1960s. Radical criminology came to redefine crime not as what bourgeois parliaments and courts declared to be criminal (e.g., violations of individual property rights, offenses against individuals) but rather as those things that most oppressed most people (i.e., racism, imperialism, war, sexism, and capitalism). After all it can easily be shown that war, racism, poverty, and national oppression in fact cause far more deaths than what the capitalist criminal justice system labels as "murder." They further went on to recommend anti-racist, anti-imperialism, anti-sexist, and socialist movements as the best solution for such real crime, while also pointing out that traditional crime (which was much less important than real crime) would be in good part eliminated with a fundamental reorganization of the system of private property and classes.

The existing criminal justice system was analyzed as inherently racist (over half of all those executed in the U.S. in the twentieth century were Black) and designed to function in the interests of the capitalist system against working people and people of

color. Prisons were criticized as being both inhumane and ineffective. Radical new approaches that would in good part eliminate classical incarceration were proposed substituting instead programs of a radical attack on the racism and class structure that produced the behavior labeled as "crime" and more humane and effective ways for dealing with violence prone or sociopathic individuals. This was truly a socialist approach.

Countering this socialist tendency, there occurred a reassertion of traditional law and order politics based on the classical liberal assumption of free will and individual responsibility. The reactionary position maintained that mugging, murder, rape, etc., were the real crimes, not racism, war, or capitalism; and that further the real criminals were individually responsible for their actions, not racism or the class structure. To counter the socialist argument that the reason crime rates are higher in poor and minority areas is in good part because hungry people who are brutalized by the society strike back, the traditionalists said, "But what about the majority of Blacks or poor that don't murder, mug, rape or steal?" Thus, if individual criminals, and not social structures are responsible for criminal actions, punishment, and more important the threat of punishment makes good sense. If a prospective mugger, murderer, rapist or thief knew there was a very high probability of being caught and severely punished for their actions, this would greatly deter crime. Thus the traditionalist reaction came to press for more policing, fewer rights for the accused, harsher penalties and less "coddling" of criminals (i.e., the undoing of all the progressive reforms and proposals of the liberals and those to their left).

The currently hegemonic tendency among feminists to make the issue of violence against women central fully shares in the traditional reactionary position on crime. It first generally blames individual men not social conditions, and thus considers individual men (not society) to be criminal and responsible for their actions. It further shares with the rest of the traditionalist law and order reaction the belief in stricter policing, harsher penalties (e.g., "castrate rapists"), and less "coddling" (no parole for rapists). This position shares with the rest of the law and order tradition the refusal to attempt to understand either the subjective motivation of the "criminal" or the social forces which produce the "crime," substituting instead a moral indignation and condemnation, which while it may legitimate capital punishment and castration, in fact does nothing to actually reduce murder, mugging, robbery or rape.

A primary problem with the traditional liberal law and order approach to crime is that it is ineffective (another is that it focuses concern on the secondary criminals). The Draconian criminal legislation of 18th century England eliminated neither murder nor the stealing of bread. Neither did capital punishment (applied mostly against Blacks) lower the murder or rape rates. In fact, crime is a social product. To eliminate crime it is necessary to alleviate the conditions that produce it. "Criminals" as well as those they prey on are in fact both victims of capitalist society. Until this is understood the prevalence of crime (both violent and non-violent) will continue to go unabated. Just as it is necessary to understand both the consciousness of the murders and the even more importantly the social conditions that result in the act, if effective measures are to be taken to reduce its incidence, it is also necessary to understand both the consciousness of a rapist and the social conditions that result in high rates of rape, if we are serious about reducing its incidence. Moralistic and righteous law and order rhetoric prevents our understanding of what really motivates murders and rapes and allows the conditions that generate murder and rape to go on unalleviated.

The opposition to "pornography" that has become a central concern of the dominant tendency within the Feminist movement is of course another point of agreement with the traditionalists of the new right. While those sharing the perspective of the Moral Majority oppose pornography because it celebrates sexuality especially fornication, bestiality, sodomy, Lesbianism, and other "unnatural" forms of sex, those in the dominant tendency of the women's movement oppose it because it both "degrades women" by portraying them as sexual objects and because it allegedly results in men being more violent toward women than they would be without it. On this issue, both part company with the classical

liberal doctrines of anti-censorship--the position that anyone has the right to read or watch anything they themselves choose. The dominant tendency's position on pornography rests on the opposite philosophical premise from its position on the absolute right of a woman to control her own body. In the early 1980s narrow-Feminists are much more likely to be seen picketing or disrupting Deep Throat or The Story of O than they are to be seen protesting the rape and murder of nuns in El Salvador, to say nothing of participating in an anti-war or anti-racist demonstration (even though half of all oppressed nations and racial groups are female). In fact, it would be conceivable that an anti-pornography coalition could be formed between the narrow feminists and women from the Moral Majority to more effectively achieve their common end.

It should be noted that the traditionally materialist socialist position on crime would take exception to the claim that rape or other acts of violence against women could be caused by watching a movie or reading a book. It would consider such claims idealist and a distraction from the real causes of such behavior, causes which are to be found in the social structure (racism, class oppression, oppressive childhood experiences, the destruction of communities, competitive individualism, etc.). The evidence that pornography, even the most violent and offensive, increases the incidence of crimes against women is very weak. A substantial case can be made that such pornography rather serves as a substitute form of "gratification" or sublimation of aggressive energies. Aggressive energies which have a much deeper cause than exposure to pictures or words. It is almost certainly the case that the release of such hostile impulses through the fantasy of film reduces the rate of rape and other violent crimes. For without such sublimation, hostility would have to explode somewhere, and what more likely target than real women, rather than fantasy women?

The great bulk of analysis of the effects of identification with film characters would seem to support this latter view. For example, during the great depression Romantic films thrived, as did Superhero comic books. This because the identification with the leading characters was a functional substitute for being in charge of one's life outside of such fantasies (without such forms of sublimation, the probability of striking back against those responsible for the depression would have increased). This is also the theory behind the Roman idea of bread and circuses for the masses. Free shows in the Coliseum, where the masses could take out their aggressions through seeing the lions eat Christians, stabilized the rule of the Roman ruling class. Likewise, the popularity of watching aggressive sports, among otherwise fairly passive men, would seem to be a substitute for their actual aggressive behavior.

Of course, it is true that the rate of violent crimes against women and the prevalence of increasingly violent forms of pornography have been rising together. But as any student of elementary logic understands covariation does not mean that the one thing causes the other. It can, of course, very well be the case that a third thing is responsible for the rise of both. If we seriously want to reduce the rate of real sexist violence against women we would be advised to avoid distractions such as pornography and move to understand, and then change, the real causes at which the decay and crisis of advanced capitalism is at the heart.

Another central issue to the hegemonic tendency within Feminism is the assertion that a woman's right to control her body is absolute, i.e., that neither any individual man nor society collectively has any rights whatsoever in her womb, or in her sexuality. The individual woman alone has the total right to decide if and when to conceive as well as if and when to give birth, and with whom and under what conditions she will share her sexuality. Socialists too (as do Libertarians), disagree with traditional conservatives, such as those around the Moral Majority, on these questions. All three tendencies share a belief in the right to abortion, the right to be homosexual or bisexual without suffering discrimination or humiliations, the right to contraception or conception, the right to divorce or live together without formal marriage, etc. The difference between the shared Libertarian/narrow feminist theory of these rights and the traditional socialist position, is that socialists believe that while important these rights can

sometimes be superceded by greater rights of the social groups of which an individual woman is a part. Such rights are not absolute and are not derivable from any classical liberal assumption of the priority of the individual over society.

For example, we could conceive of a case in which a woman's right to decide whether or not to conceive and terminate a pregnancy had to be superceded by the needs of her society to increase its birth rate. Hypothetically we could envision a primarily female society in which women were the leaders and warriors, which was threatened by traditionally patriarchal societies which surrounded it. As long as there were plenty of female children to recruit as warriors such as Amazon society could successfully beat back all attempts to conquer it and destroy its matriarchy. But if sufficient girl babies were not born, then the society would be destroyed within a generation. Under such conditions it would seem that a prior commitment to strong Feminist values would dictate that the absolute right of individual women to choose whether or not to give birth would have to be superceded in the interest of the greater good. Whether or not the leaders were able to convince most women to have ten children willingly within the time frame necessary measures such as banning abortions and limiting contraception (or even forced fertilization) might well be justified in order to prevent the triumph of patriarchy and all the oppression for women that it would bring. In the real world it is always a question of right against right, and thus under what conditions does one right get superceded by another.

We need not turn to such hypothetical cases to understand the conditions under which the realization of a greater right might require the superceding of a woman's right to control her body. Abortions were made difficult and finally banned in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s as a part of the Communist Party's policy of increasing the birth rate. During this period the Soviet Union was surrounded by predator powers who threatened to destroy and subjugate it, and who in fact in 1941 almost succeeded (20 million Soviets were killed repulsing the genocidal Nazi's). Had not the USSR succeeded in beating the Germans (90% of all German war casualties were on the Eastern Front), Hitler might well have won the War. The consequences for Europe, for the Jews, and for women throughout Eurasia would have been horrendous. Had there not been sufficient soldiers, and sufficient workers in the fields and factories backing them up, the Nazi's could have won the war. Was not the interest of the women of the Soviet Union (as well as Jewish women everywhere) served by the denial of the right of Soviet Women to have abortions for a generation? It would be nonsense to maintain that even had it meant a victory for Hitler, Soviet women should still have been free to choose not to have children. If such were to have been the case, it is most conceivable that millions of women would have been able to exercise their absolute right over contraception and birth for 10-20 years and then have lost all right over their bodies (when they were either enslaved by the Germans or exterminated).

The third of the principle issues of the hegemonic tendency of the Feminist movement has been "affirmative action" for professional and managerial women. This thrust of the Feminist movement has proven to be rather successful for the class of women for which it was designed, but has brought no improvement to the vast majority of women who are working class. Professional women have improved their position relative to men while rapidly integrating many traditionally male professional occupations. But the condition of working class women generally deteriorated in relation to men, both in terms of occupational concentration and relative income levels. The ratio of the median earnings of year-round full-time women employed as professionals and technical workers rose from .66 to .68 of the equivalent category of men between 1970 and 1977. Meanwhile the ratio of the median earnings of full-time year-women employed as clerical workers declined from .64 to .62 of the equivalent category of men.

The 1970s also saw the large scale recruitment of women into the professions and management, while at the same time the traditionally female clerical and sales occupations became still more female while blue collar employment witnessed no significant change. The ratio of the number of women to men in the professions rose from .94 in 1972 to 1.09

in 1978. Among engineers the ratio rose from .20 to .30; lawyers and judges from .04 to .10, among physicians and dentists from .10 to .12; among natural scientists from .11 to .22, among university and college professors from .39 to .51; among social scientists from .27 to .51 and among computer specialists from .28 to .43.

The number of doctor's degrees issued to women in the health professions rose from .19 of those granted to men in 1970 to .47 in 1977. The ratio of college degrees (B.A.s) in business and management increased from .09 to .31, the ratio of Ph.D.s in biological sciences from .15 to .27, in the physical sciences from .06 to .10 and in the social sciences from .15 to .28.

Among clerical workers the female/male ratio rose from 3.11 to 3.91 and among retail sales clerks from 2.21 to 2.51. Women made very little progress in the traditionally male blue collar occupations. The ratio of women to men among all blue collar workers rose from .20 to .22, the ratio for construction craft workers stayed constant at .01, for metal craft workers it rose from .02 to .03. But the ratio in the traditionally female textile industry went up from 1.23 to 1.49. (See A Statistical Portrait of Women in the U.S., U.S. Department of Commerce, Current Population Reports Series P-23 #100 Tables 5:3, 8.1 and 9.4).

The class structure of the "affirmative action" emphasis of the hegemonic tendency of the Feminist movement is clear. It is very much a middle class program operating in the interests of petty bourgeois women while having no effect on the condition of working class women. What working class women need is not so much "affirmative action" to put them ahead of the men of their class, so much as a general improvement in their working conditions and remuneration both in relation to men and, together with the men of their class, in relation to capitalists. Opening access to the professions and management and improving the remuneration of professional and managerial women offers little or nothing to working class women. When only about 20 percent to 25 percent of all positions in society are petty bourgeois (both employed and self-employed) there is very little chance for working class women to improve their lives by upward mobility (facilitated by affirmative action). First, the female children of the petty bourgeoisie who have the appropriate backgrounds and preparations provide most of the recruits into the new openings (thus reproducing class privilege). Second, even higher rates of upward mobility from the working class to the petty bourgeoisie, of course, could not increase the number of privileged petty bourgeois positions. All that could happen, is that more female children of petty bourgeois backgrounds would be "bumped" into the working class, i.e., there would be no effect on class structure. The increase of upward mobility is a distinctively liberal (and individually oriented) social program with nothing in common with socialist programs to deal with class oppression. While liberals (the Horatio Alger myth being the extreme) have seen the hope for the working class lying in upward mobility for the individual, socialists have always seen the hope lying in the abolition of classes. Affirmative action is very much a traditionally liberal remedy in as much as it is designed to increase individual (as opposed to group) mobility and in as much as it in practice benefits petty bourgeois women (and not working class women).

The tone and thrust of the dominant tendency of narrow feminism became increasingly anti-male and anti-family over the course of the 1970s and early 1980s. As criticism of capitalist and even patriarchal structures receded, individual men increasingly became the focus of bitter hostility. A general materialist and scientific approach to the liberation of women was largely superseded by a moralist and subjectivist assault on men as the enemy. This has nowhere been better expressed than in the mainstream of the anti-rape/anti-pornography/anti-battering trend. Perhaps the most important work in this tradition is the collection of anti-male polemics edited by Laura Lederer, Take Back the Night. As Anrienne Rich states in her afterward to this volume this book is "in some ways a microcosm of the American feminist movement as it stands at the beginning of the 1980s." Rape and pornography are here treated as political instruments of terror used to keep women in fear and in line. The editors of Playboy, Penthouse and Hustler

are said to be "every bit as dangerous as Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito." An essay on "Why So-called Radical Men Love and Need Pornography" begins "Men love death . . . men especially love murder." The collection overflows with hostility to men as individuals "Rape is the perfected act of male sexuality in a patriarchal culture," "the rapacity of male greed for dominance; the malignancy of male supremacy, the virulent contempt for women," as well as anti-family sentiments "Child bearing is slave labor." This is not the stuff out of which progressive movements are made, nor is it compatible with either scientific analysis nor effective political strategy against the main enemy. The vast majority of working class and minority women can not relate to such an assault on people they love (and perhaps even more importantly need). Following Carolyn See, it is appropriate to quote Marge Piercy (a contributor to the volume) against herself. In her Dance the Eagle to Sleep, a critique of the New Left, what she says about the failure of the male oriented left, would seem to be equally true of the dominant tendency of the narrow feminist movement, a movement that seems to have painted itself into a corner:

That movement failed, not because its members had stopped talking, but because they had lost (or never found) their audience. Their movement failed because, for years, they had been talking only to one another (New York Times Book Review December 28, 1980, p. 14).

Even while there are still real problems with the residue patriarchal structures of the working class family (which are being undermined by the drawing of women into the labor force) and the persistence of male chauvinism among working class men (although usually more openly and honestly expressed, certainly no worse than the male chauvinism of petty bourgeois or capitalist class men) the working class family offers a considerable degree of emotional and economic security for the average working class woman. This fact is demonstrated by the fact that battered wives go back again and again to their husbands, as well as the fact that divorced women generally rather quickly remarry. Seldom do they generalize their experience into anti-male or anti-marriage attitudes. Being a single divorced mother is not a comfortable position in society (unless one has sufficient wealth to avoid having to either work or rely on welfare). Thus the anti-male/anti-family thrust of the hegemonic tendency within narrow feminism does not appeal to working class or sub-working class women (white or minority).

What is perceived, rightly or wrongly, as an attack on the family by the narrow feminists, tends to isolate the women's liberation movement from the bulk of both the working class and much of traditional petty bourgeois women as well. This self-isolation of the women's movement, opens the door to groups like the Moral Majority and others who gain considerable support in both the petty bourgeoisie and the working class with pro-family demands. In good part then, the failure of the narrow feminist movement manifested in its rightward and anti-male drift through the 1970s is responsible for the traditional pro-family pro-patriarchy new right's ability to mobilize women who a progressive women's movement should have been able to reach.

The isolation of the dominant tendency in the narrow feminist movement is underscored in their increasing alienation of what was once their primary base--young pre-professional students of elite institutions of higher education. A late 1970s study of 3,000 students at elite Eastern colleges found that 77 percent of the women said that mothers should either not work at all or work only part time until their children were 5 years old (New York Times, December 28, 1980, p. 1). Most such women, while they want both a family and a career, are willing to sacrifice career advancement so as to find a good husband and be involved full time in child care. A great many of these women no longer identify with the Feminist movement (their access to professional jobs is now taken for granted) and have become alienated from the women's centers on their campuses because they feel that their primary concerns are not addressed.

With the increasing alienation of young female students and professionals and the inability to relate to average working class and minority women because of their neglect of the primary concerns of such groups, the social basis of the mainstream of the

narrow feminist movement is increasingly narrowed to those women who feel especially bitter against men, e.g., older divorced single mothers (especially those downwardly mobile from the petty bourgeois, or who are striving to be upwardly mobile through part time school attendance), non-socialist Lesbians (many of whom became Lesbians out of personally bitter experiences with men), a few students, white collar workers and professionals who have been repeatedly brutalized, manipulated and used sexually and emotionally by men, etc. The law and order anti-male (and often anti-family) thrust of narrow feminism in the late 1970s and early 1980s thus reflects the experiences and demands of rather marginal sectors of women. It no longer even reflects the general class interests of petty bourgeois women, who seem to be increasingly alienated from it. As legitimate as the concerns of such women are (and they have suffered real brutalization), the issues that they make central are not the issues that are able to mobilize most women. The contradictions of the notion that "the personal is the political" have become apparent. The subjectivism of this approach must be replaced by scientific analysis and strategy if the goals of women's liberation are to be realized.

Conclusion: A Socialist Movement for the Liberation of Women

The right wing law and order tendency of the Feminist movement claims to be the legitimate representation of the entire women's liberation movement. It claims to speak for all women of all classes, nations and ethnic groups. But there are in fact other tendencies within women's liberation. There are a wide range of positions which are equally opposed to patriarchal structures, male chauvinist behavior and sexist ideas, but which differ fundamentally on their analysis of the basis of the oppression of women and in their programs for dealing with it. The leadership of narrow feminism has brought the mainstream of the movement into the right wing of American politics, while increasingly isolating it from the concerns of minority and working class women. It has increasingly come to express the bitterness and anti-male sentiments of sociologically rather marginal groups of women, rather than the concerns of the vast majority. The hope for the women's movement lies in its reasserting its progressive roots, in an effective socialist challenge to the current law and order and anti-male tendencies.

What should a distinctively socialist program for the liberation of women look like? How would it contrast with the hegemonic tendency within narrow feminism?

(1) A socialist women's movement would not reject what have become the primary concerns of narrow feminism: rape and battering; women's right to control their bodies and affirmative action for professional women. But it would put these in perspective as well as provide an analysis and strategy that could really effect a radical decrease in violence against women as well as consolidate women's rights in their own bodies. It is most oppressive not to be able to walk the streets at night, to be battered by one's husband or lover, etc., just as it is most oppressive to be subject to mugging and other forms of violent crime that are not sex specific. But, a materialist non-moralistic analysis dictates that an effective strategy to reduce violence requires the elimination of the social conditions that generate it (not the punishment of individuals). Therefore, the movement for women's liberation must take the issue of socialism seriously, for it is capitalism with its corollaries of racism and imperialism that is responsible for the urban decay, massive unemployment, racial oppression, individualization, etc., that generates rape and other violent crimes.

Likewise, women's rights to choose her sexual partners, whether or not to conceive and give birth are valid rights, which any socialist movement must support (even if not in absolutist terms, for society or close relatives sometimes too have rights in reproduction). It has in fact been the socialist left over the years that has been the most consistent supporter of the right to love, the right to contraception and the right to abortion.

The right of women to equal access to the professions and to promotion within them is also an issue socialists must support. However, the right to enter management and be promoted into higher executive positions, raises a question of advancement of those serving the function of exploiters of working class--managerial women are truly "enemy sisters" and their demands for equal access to exploiting working women, should be treated as equivalent to the demands of female career, military or prison officers or officials to be promoted to generals or wardens on an equal basis with men. These are not issues that a truly socialist movement would be concerned about. Further, affirmative action for professionals mostly operates to allow the female children of the petty bourgeois equal access to the relative privileges of that class. Even to the extent that it facilitates the upward mobility of working class daughters, it does nothing for working class women as a whole (the number of petty bourgeois positions doesn't increase, there is only a change in the individual distribution of privilege). Thus while a socialist women's movement has to endorse the right of petty bourgeois women to have careers equal to those of the men of their class, and for working class daughters to have equal opportunities with middle class sons and daughters, this is not a socialist issue, and should not be a matter of priority. Priority must be given to matters which have the potential of advancing the whole class (not changing individual occupants of class positions).

(2) Unlike the dominant tendency within narrow feminism, a socialist movement for the liberation of women would not be anti-male, nor would it give the appearance of being anti-family. It would accept men as well as women as full participants in the movement, even while recognizing the usefulness of all women mass organizations, study groups, consciousness raising groups, etc. Rather than holding out an anti-male and anti-family ideal, which tends to dictate a standard "feminist" life style, it would hold out the ideal of the right to choose one's own life style. The goal of a socialist women's movement would be to abolish the patriarchal structures of both the family and jobs, so that freed of the determination of those structures, women would be truly free to decide how much time and energy they wanted to give to children, the home, to "career," (within the limits of the social obligation to produce according to ability), to men, to themselves, to the other women (and likewise, men too would be similarly free from structural sex role determination). A socialist women's movement would recognize that most women love some men and want to be mothers, even at the cost of holding back one's "career" or working full time outside of the home (if this is economically possible) and that there is nothing wrong with this, providing it is a truly free choice and not socially imposed.

Lesbianism is a right that a socialist women's movement must of course endorse, but it must be understood that this life style (unlike bisexuality) is in part based in the bitter experiences of women in their relationships with men. Whether or not women choose men as lovers, men are in fact not the real enemy. Further, alliance between the women's movement and working class men is an essential precondition for the abolition of the patriarchal structures generated by capitalism. Therefore, the anti-male tendencies of the Lesbian movement must be considered to be counterproductive and not progressive. Women with such politics should both be struggled with and emotionally supported. A socialist movement must support one's right to their own sexual preference, but it should not celebrate Lesbianism, anti-male sentiments, or anti-family attitudes, especially in a world in which the vast majority of working class women can not relate to such issues (and where our celebration of them makes our work of organizing such women around class issues all the more difficult).

(3) A socialist women's movement must focus on capitalism and its corollaries of imperialism and racism as the primary ways in which most women are oppressed. The vast majority of the world's women are most oppressed by being in subordinate ethnic groups which are the subject of racist humiliations, living in semi-colonized countries brutalized by imperialism, or are subject to the daily oppression and humiliation of working class, or in the case of many single mothers, sub-proletarian life. The primary goal of a socialist women's movement is then to carry the anti-capitalist (and anti-racist and

anti-imperialist) struggle to these women (and to generate support for their struggles in other sectors of the population, especially among white Western petty bourgeois women).

To raise the question of antagonism to men of their class, nation and ethnic group to the level of oppression by capitalism, racism or imperialism, is to be devious as well as scientifically inaccurate and politically incorrect. For narrow feminists going to minority or white working class women with an essentially anti-male, anti-family program is to do the work of the bourgeoisie in hindering the development of a socialist (and anti-racist) movement that unites oppressed women and men in an effective struggle against their common oppressor. Male chauvinism within the working class and among minority men must be fought in a manner appropriate to contradictions among the people and effectively resolved in ways that strengthen the overall primary struggle (the classical film Salt of the Earth presents the classical socialist model for dealing with such contradictions).

(4) A socialist women's movement, must also raise the issues of the special oppression of women, especially of working class and minority women. It must have as one of its primary focuses the organization and mobilization of women as part of the overall struggle against capitalism. It must continually be emphasized that women's special oppression (real sexism) as well as most of women's general oppression is a product of capitalism. And thus that the destruction of capitalism is a necessary condition for the ending of real sexism. And to be effective in this task it must pay special attention to the actual problems of women. Following in the footsteps of the traditional Marxist women's movements (such as those led by Clara Zetkin in Germany and Alexandra Kollontai in Russia) a socialist women's movement would stress such working class issues as unionization of white collar, service and textile workers (occupations which are predominantly female), equal pay for equal work, jobs for all that want to work, improvement in working conditions (including special protective legislation, which might well serve as the model for later advances by male workers), higher pay (which should come from profits not be taken away from male workers wages), free, readily available and quality day care (especially at the work place) support for the rights and improvement in the conditions of welfare mothers (40% of Black families do not have an adult man present), support for improvement in medical care for women and children (the infant mortality rate among Blacks is twice that among whites), etc.

It is a standard narrow feminist parody of Marxism to argue that Marxists feel that the "woman question" need not be given any special attention, either before or after the socialist revolution, since because, the argument goes, capitalism produces the oppression of women, it will automatically disappear with capitalism. First, Marxists have always given considerable attention to the oppression of women. Women's associations were central institutions in the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions both before and after the seizure of power. Kollontai's Women's Association played a leading role in winning support for the revolution among the peasants and minorities after 1917. The Leninist tradition throughout the West, including the U.S.A., has consistently emphasized the special problems of women workers as well as stressed the importance of combating patriarchal structures and male chauvinism (witness the film Salt of the Earth). Second, no Marxist would ever argue that anything would "automatically" disappear or be resolved, after a socialist revolution. What distinguishes Marxists from anarchists (e.g., the classical debate between Marx and Bakunin) is the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Marxists, unlike anarchists, who have a much more romantic view of transformation, insist that wiping out "the muck of the ages" is a long, slow hard process, that will take perhaps generations after the working class seizes power. The creation of a new type of person, without selfishness, white chauvinism, male chauvinism, etc., who relates to everyone as brothers and sisters and who feels quite comfortable about operating according to the principle: "From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs," takes the active intervention of the proletarian state quite a time to create. Of course, male chauvinism

will not automatically disappear with a socialist revolution, but the abolition of capitalism and its corollary of patriarchal structures is the necessary precondition for the abolition of male chauvinism. Without the abolition of the structures which continually reproduce male chauvinism, "fighting sexism" is like plowing the sea. All this is not to argue that nothing should be done about patriarchy or male chauvinism until after the revolution, no more than the argument that capitalism generates racism, poverty or war instructs Marxists not to do anything about these until after the revolution. The revolutionary premise is that Marxists must take up the oppression of all segments of the people, put forth their demands and lead their struggles in the here and now. Although small gains (minor reforms) can be won through solidarity, fundamental change is impossible, without a revolution. Thus while a specific war might be ended (e.g., Vietnam), concrete improvements in the condition of Blacks made (e.g., the civil rights act of 1965, the integration of public accommodations), the living standards of the working class raised (as through the Social Security and Wagner Acts of the late 1930s) capitalism will continue to generate more wars, more racism and more unemployment, poverty and oppression of the working class. Likewise, minor reforms which improve the condition of women can be won, and should be fought for, in the here and now (affirmative action for professional women, the E.R.A., abortion rights, etc.), but patriarchal structures and male chauvinist attitudes will continue to be reproduced (even if the locus of their reproduction is displaced from the family to the office) as long as capitalism exists. What differentiates the reformist tradition from revolutionary Marxism is not whether to fight for reforms, or even whether or not it is felt that some progress can be made without a revolution, but the question of whether or not problems can be fundamentally solved piecemeal within the logic of the capitalist mode of production. To the extent that it addresses the question of long term strategy at all (which given its prevailing moralism is seldom) the dominant tendency of narrow feminism seems to answer with the reformist tradition that "sexism" can in fact be overcome piecemeal within the capitalist mode of production. The Marxist women's movement, on the other hand, of course answers, no. A revolution is the necessary condition for the full liberation of women. And further, the commitment to making this revolution is not an abstract principle to be taken out for a parade on May Day, but rather the reality that Marxists must take to working class and minority women as the answer to their daily felt oppressions.

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