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# FOR DEMOCRATIC FUNCTIONING OF THE SWP

by Wesley Weinhold, Seattle Branch

July 23, 1975

## AGAINST THE EXPULSION OF I.T. ADHERENTS WITHOUT TRIAL PART I

The letter transmitted by Bob Langston concerning the expulsion of the IT from the SWP has caused me to consider what actually was accomplished in that action. While the expulsions were generally justified, I have concluded that the manner in which they were carried out was in violation of the norms of our movement. If the organizational principles of the SWP allow such means of resolving political and organizational indiscipline, then those organizational principles should be changed.

I am not being super-democratic, nor am I for allowing undisciplined or disloyal acts to go unpunished. But the only case in which such expulsion without trial is justified is in the case in which direct harm to the Party would occur if the expelled were given warning of his coming expulsion. This might happen if the member were discovered to be a police agent or provocateur, especially under conditions of repression. The IT are not police agents and we are not underground. There is no excuse for not having granted trial rights to the accused ITers.

Consider the various aspects of the expulsion of the IT. Some of the procedure carried out by the Party leadership was irreproachable and some was definitely mistaken.

The charges against the IT were specific and were certainly sufficient to justify expulsion. The IT was charged with forming a rival organization, recruiting to its positions rather than to the positions of the SWP and carrying out public actions in accordance with the IT's perspectives rather than the SWP's.

The evidence against the IT certainly demonstrated that numerous acts of indiscipline had occurred. The Memorial Day weekend convention of the IT indicated that at least the embryo of an organization was forming, although it could have been argued that this convention was only a formal national faction meeting.

The Party leadership decided, apparently by considering the document votes in 1973 and subtracting formal IT resignations, which comrades were to be considered members of the IT Party.

These comrades were formally not expelled, but placed outside the Party. The distinction is important, since they then had none of the protections granted in our organizational principles to individuals accused of acts of indiscipline. They had no rights to trial and no rights to appeal. If they did not in fact happen to be part of the IT organization (although perhaps in partial agreement with its positions) they had no recourse whatsoever, since neither the SWP nor the IT, which could and did now negotiate as an outside organization, would defend their rights.

I suspect this to be true in at least one case, and Comrades Langston et al mention cases known to them.

But because of the way in which the expulsions were carried out, the Party leadership cannot know whether in fact all those expelled were members of the IT organization.

Especially in view of the great interest American workers have shown in Watergate and Nixon's visible abuses of the democratic process, it is important that we uphold our own traditions of democratic functioning. And as we grow larger, it will become even more important. Comrades will not be able to know personally of every situation and whether an abrupt act of discipline is justified. We must not allow, through laxity in adhering to Leninist norms concerning the rights of an accused member, any faint suspicion that the leadership is unjust and arbitrary, that it carries out sweeping or even selective vendettas and purges against political dissidents. At a time when it is of the utmost importance that the Party leadership is trusted, when we are carrying out a shift in orientation, such organizational mistakes should be avoided.

Certainly the expulsions were not a factional maneuver. It is clear from the evidence that extensive, organized acts of disloyalty had been carried out by the IT, or at least by its organized core. These acts of disloyalty included at least preparations to set up a rival party. These acts, when demonstrated to have been committed by a particular comrade, merit expulsion. What was not done was precisely proving that acts of disloyalty were carried out by particular comrades.

Rather than simultaneously expelling by mail all suspected members of the IT, the Party should have 1) announced its findings concerning the character of the IT; 2) formally charged and tried those regarded as responsible for initiating and setting up this rival party; 3) notified all suspected members of the IT Party and requested from them a formal declaration of their status with respect to the IT in view of the CC's findings; 4) charged and tried those who profess their continued adherence to the IT; and 5) finally, if thought necessary, charge and try on charges of individual acts of indiscipline those who resign from the IT, but were guilty of double-recruiting, refusal to carry out Party assignments, etc.

Since the mistake has already been made, it should be set right as soon as it is recognized. In this case, a beginning has been made. By allowing the re-entry of expelled comrades after a period of common work in building the Party, those dedicated people who were caught in a situation that had gone further than they realized toward splitting the Party can resume their activity as revolutionaries. However, this does not meet the needs of rectification completely.

Some expelled comrades may have been so demoralized and discouraged by their expulsion that they hesitate to approach the Party even if they know themselves to have been loyal. We should offer to all expelled comrades the opportunity to prove their innocence of the charges made against all expelled comrades, i.e., that they were members of a rival organization to the SWP. This means essentially rescinding the expulsions pending trial of any expelled comrade who so desires. This should in no way prejudice the process of re-integrating any comrades of the IT who are currently attempting to rejoin and are building the Party.

The above procedure would make clear both to the ranks of the Party and to the world movement that the leadership of the SWP understands and works to maintain the democratic as well as the centralist character of the SWP.

## **CONCERNING THE RIGHTS OF A FACTION—**

### **PART II**

Although many comrades may now want to put the organizational nightmare of the IT and its predecessor FAPO behind us, I think it is important that we discuss the lessons of these experiences. Organizational problems can lead to mis-education as well as enlightenment, especially in such cases where unprincipled cliques and slanders cause principled people to lose their tempers.

One major confusion was raised by the IT because it either believed itself or pretended to be a tendency, when it functioned like and demanded the rights of a faction. A tendency has few organizational rights because it does not need them. A tendency is not fighting to replace the leadership of the party. It supposedly still has full confidence in the leadership and only seeks to convince the party and that leadership of its opinions. Thus, as a tendency, it has no basis for even requesting representation on leadership bodies.

A faction is a different animal. It is fighting to replace the leadership of the party and has certain organizational needs if it is to carry out that fight effectively and in a manner not harmful to the party. These needs should be recognized as faction rights by the party organizational principles. Because of the confusion created by the demands and claims both of the party leadership and the IT, I am not sure whether they are now so recognized.

These needs are simply the ability of the faction to organize itself and to plan strategy for the fight. This implies that a faction would need to hold meetings and to refine and edit documents without interference from members of another faction in the party. This would imply that only finished documents are seen by the party as a whole and that faction members may discuss documents before presenting them to the entire party.

The point has been sufficiently made that the IT was a faction, not a tendency. I would like further to point out that it was its pretense to being a tendency that led it to commit such grave organizational errors as secret leadership bodies, underground discussion, etc. But this was not the IT's only problem.

The IT's major problem, that it was an unprincipled bloc consisting mostly of people with grudges against the leadership, also caused problems for the party leadership. What is only elementary courtesy (i.e. not peeking at unfinished formulations) when dealing with a principled faction becomes its opposite when dealing with an unprincipled faction. A principled faction has a political program, agreed upon by every member of the faction, which it seeks to lead the party in implementing. It has no need to discuss anything more than details of formulation and application within the faction. An unprincipled faction, having no common political program, will tend to replace discussion in the party with discussion in the faction. Under such circumstances, it becomes a dereliction of duty on the part of the leadership not to insist on the presentation of all faction documents to the party and not simply to the faction. The IT's misconception of this point, as well as its unprincipled nature, led it to form a new party within the SWP. The IMT is following a similar path in the world movement.

But it is also important that the abuse of this right (of a faction to determine its own method of presentation, to carry out its struggle for leadership as effectively as it can) does not lead us to rejecting this right categorically. That will only put pressure on principled minority factions to accomplish in secret what they cannot do openly. Despite the fact that the leadership's actions in demanding full knowledge of the functioning and discussions of the IT were necessary, they have not made it clear why these actions are necessary and what implications they have for future disputes within the party. I would like such a clarification in this discussion.

## Some Background to the Politics of Baraka and the Congress of African People

Lynn Rashkind, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local

July 31, 1975

On Friday, July 25, the New York Local of the SWP voted to set up a new branch of the Party in Newark, New Jersey.

With our expansion into Newark, it will become even more important for all comrades, not just those transferring to Newark, to follow the Congress of African People (CAP) and their paper *Unity and Struggle* more closely.

In *Unity and Struggle* CAP describes their political ideology as "MLM" (Marxist Leninist Mao Tse-Tung Thought). They are not aligned with any particular current within the Maoist non-regroupment. CAP opposes busing in Boston and, like the other Maoist tendencies, are workerist and sectarian. On the major issues that divide the Maoist forces, they take the following positions: (1) they support the struggle in Oman and oppose the Shah of Iran (the Shah received the "butcher of the month" award in the June 1 issue of *Unity and Struggle*); (2) they apparently think that US imperialism is the major enemy of the world revolution, although "Soviet social imperialism" is viewed as important also; (3) in Portugal CAP supports the MRPP, an ultra-left Maoist group.

Their politics, while generally MLM Thought, are still impressionistic. For example, *Unity and Struggle* described the Portuguese General Spínola as a conservative in the June issue, a fascist in the July issue. This is a small example of their widespread lack of programmatic clarity.

The most important questions facing CAP activists and radical Black youth that we want to win over are questions our comrades understand—Boston, nationalism, the role of Blacks in the revolutionary movement, the role of the Democratic Party and the Congressional Black Caucus, the call for an independent Black party, and the economy. But as we get closer to this milieu of radical Black activists, especially on the campuses and in the new branches in cities with large Black populations, it will become more crucial to also follow the debates carried out in *Unity and Struggle*, *Black Scholar*, and *African World*.

In these publications the question of Africa, the struggles on the Continent, particularly Southern Africa, and the role of Pan Africanism are key.

Positions on these questions have been changing, reflecting changes, not necessarily on the Continent, but especially in the U.S. and in world politics.

In this light I want to trace Amiri Imamu Baraka's position on this question. I pick Baraka as the leader of CAP and because he remains the most influential person among this general layer of the Black movement.

Up to 1-1/2 years ago Baraka's politics were best characterized as Black nationalist, with heavy emphasis on cultural nationalism. On the Continent he supported the concept of African Socialism. This idea was developed by the European-educated leaders of many of the African states which gained formal independence from colonial rule in the 50's and early 60's.

This theory pretends to be a unique African road to socialism based on Africa's unique development. It claims that, since traditional African society was communalist (communist), a return to these values inherent in African culture would make the transition from colonialism to socialism quite natural. The concept of *ujamaa* (the Swahili word for familyhood) symbolizes this concept. Stated another way, in terms more familiar to comrades, African Socialism states that class antagonisms in Africa did not exist until they were imposed by Europeans. With the end of colonial rule, the concept of class struggle had no relevance in Africa, except in Southern Africa where the colonialists still rule outright.

This conception, African Socialism, is completely false. Even if it were reasonable to dismiss the effects of centuries of colonial intervention, class differentiated society was not alien to Africa. In fact, if anything was unique about Africa's development, it was the relatively advanced formation of pre-capitalist class-structured society. The elaborate Egyptian civilization is the most familiar, but kingdoms also existed throughout the African continent.

The other key fallacy of African Socialism is based on the first. That is, given Africa's supposed unique communalist heritage, it could develop in a third way, a non-aligned way to socialism. The concept of non-aligned, middle way economic development leads to the type of countries that exist in much of Africa today. They are marked by certain "socialized" forms, such as state planning and the existence of one-party states (a mockery of socialism) on the one hand; and on the other hand, these countries flagrantly court imperialist enterprises.

Ironically, then, African Socialism is a concept that rejects the most salient features of African history and leads, not to socialism, but to neo-colonialism.

Up to July of last year the masthead of *Unity and Struggle* read: Nationalism, Pan Africanism, Socialism (*Ujamaa*)—reflecting that Baraka had not completely rejected the concept of African Socialism. He still hasn't. But he was beginning to change his assessment.

Perhaps the biggest impetus to this change was not something that happened on the Continent, but something closer to home—Baraka's "betrayal" by Gibson, the Black Democratic Mayor of Newark whose election CAP had vigorously supported. This forced a reconsideration of what Baraka calls the "skin analysis" and a break with some of the more crude adherents of African Socialism, such as Senghor of Senegal whose support to African Socialism pivots solely around the concept of Negritude (Blackness) to the exclusion of any class analysis.

In July of last year *Unity and Struggle* ran several articles on the 6th Pan African Congress (PAC) where Baraka makes his new position clear. CAP continued to support the "progressive" countries—Tanzania, Guinea, Somalia, the Congo, and the liberation movements in

Southern Africa—but stated that “the skin analysis is to cover up the class struggle that rages in the Afrikan world.”

At that time (last summer) the YSA plenum recognized this development within CAP and the other layers of the Black movement as a step forward and as an opening for us. CAP, still skeptical of orthodox Marxism, became open to the ideas of non-Black theorists for the first time.

As I mentioned before, CAP has solidified their Maoist position over the fall of '74 and spring of '75 and have become quite sectarian.

In the last two issues of *Unity and Struggle*, Baraka wrote in “Raise” (the back page editorial) a 2 part article called “The Liberation of Afrika will bring imperialism to its knees, but it will lose its head on the funky streets of the U.S.A.” This is essentially an attack on the “ultra-lefts” that “relegate the Black liberation struggle or attention to African Liberation to the back of the bus.” He states that the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), for example, will likely fall apart for turning away from attention to Africa.

As I stated earlier, Baraka's line on Africa is motivated largely by American issues. In this case it is becoming clear that Baraka's attack on the ultra-lefts and his revival of militant revolutionary nationalist rhetoric is largely a cover for the '76 electoral strategy he is proposing.

Through the National Black Assembly (NBA) he is pushing for a Black candidate “to pose a creative alternative to the moral assumptions of the democratic and republican party politicians” (small d and r in original).

Yet the conception of this campaign is clearly a reformist one and represents at this point not a break with but a turn again toward the Democratic Party. The rhetoric used to describe this campaign sounds very much like the rhetoric the CP uses to describe their antimonopoly popular fronts.

Although the outcome of their electoral strategy is uncertain—it is by no means certain that they will get this campaign off the ground—the orientation to the Democratic Party is indicated by the speakers for the NBA conference on the economy over August 1 weekend. The major speakers are (1) Mayor Richard Hatcher; (2) Julian Bond, Georgia State Senator; (3) Parren Mitchell, U.S. Congressman; (4) Ron Daniels, President NBA, who, I

believe, is also in the Democratic Party; (5) Amiri Baraka. Of the five keynote speakers, not one has clearly gone on record for an immediate and decisive break with the Democrats.

Baraka's electoral maneuver needs left cover and clearly this is why he wrote his two part attack on the “ultra-lefts.” This is especially directed at the Maoists who pose no alternative to the bourgeois parties on “principle” and who refuse to join CAP in this electoral attempt.

In the upcoming issues of *Unity and Struggle* this will undoubtedly develop further and the polemics around CAP's electoral strategy will likely appear in the Black and radical press.

There are other issues being debated in the radical Black milieu that comrades should be familiar with.

CAP is a workerist organization that opposes work on the campuses, yet many of the Black and Puerto Rican Maoist organizations are student based. The role of the Black student movement and the student movement in general is a debate we can contribute to.

The issue of “detente” between the colonial regimes in Southern Africa and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) is very explosive and is being debated in all of the Black press, even in *Muhammed Speaks*. This debate is over whether or not the liberation movements should negotiate with the racist regimes (the position of the OAU at their recent conference in Uganda), carry out armed struggle against these regimes, or do both.

We should follow the debates on the role of the trade unions. CAP considers the trade unions reactionary and bourgeois, a position that gains ground with each betrayal of Black workers by union bureaucrats. The low level of unionization among Black workers, and the racist policies of the trade union officials makes this position very common among large layers of Blacks. We should be conscious of this position and counterpose our position to it.

The debates around these issues, particularly the '76 elections will cause rifts in the Maoist and radical Black milieus, lead to questioning within the ranks of CAP and that general milieu and will create openings for us to intervene in these and other debates. A branch of the SWP in Newark will be a huge asset for our movement nationally.

# Marxism, Anthropology, and Science

by Stephen Bloom, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

July 14, 1975

Scientific theories, whether in the realm of the physical or the social sciences, never gain enthusiasm among the general public as a result of their rigorous adherence to truth or their scientific accuracy. These are items which the majority of people are poorly equipped to judge. History is filled with example after example of ideas which won widespread acclaim and popularity, all dressed up with apparently irrefutable proofs and statistics, but which should have been quickly debunked, even on the basis of the scientific knowledge of the time.

For example, the racist immigration laws of the United States are a result of absolute proof, presented to the U.S. Congress by reputable scientists, that people from certain parts of the world are less desirable because of naturally lower intelligence. (The absolute proof was in the form of I.Q. tests, given in English to arriving immigrants.) Whether the theory is based, as it was in this case or in the case of the racist theories of Shockley today, on manufactured evidence, or on misrepresentation and one-sided application of real facts, it gains its credibility from the social setting into which it is thrust, rather than from the accuracy of its conclusions.

For revolutionary Marxists, however, the only theories which can advance the struggle for social change are ones which accurately describe the reality of the world in which we live so that we are best armed to change it. We are not interested in ideas, however attractive they might be aesthetically or emotionally, which do not correspond to the present or the historical reality.

It is in this light that I believe we should discuss Evelyn Reed's contribution to Marxist anthropology, *Woman's Evolution*. I believe that if we review this work critically, from the point of view of its scientific credibility, we will discover not a landmark contribution to a materialist understanding of prehistory, but rather a departure from the scientific and therefore from the Marxist method. I hope to be able to document this conclusion in the remainder of this article.

## I. The Cannibalism Theory of Human Origins

Let us begin by discussing the basic ideas contained in *Woman's Evolution*. Mary-Alice Waters, in her review of *Woman's Evolution* for *The Militant* presented a reasonable summary of the central thesis which Reed is presenting:

"That the crucial hurdle that advancing hominids had to surmount was extending cooperation to assure production (adequate food) and reproduction;

"That to achieve even the beginnings of social organization they first had to place restrictions on the most readily available food supply (each other);

"That this necessary restriction on killing and eating each other was registered by means of a food taboo, which was the most elementary law of savage society;

"That derived from the cannibalism taboo was a sex taboo, until now universally and falsely interpreted as an incest taboo, but which in reality had no relationship whatsoever to any modern conception of incest;

"That the sex taboo stemmed from the violent nature of sex in the animal world and the need to protect the young;

"And finally, that the women of the species, the female animals, led and organized this entire process of socialization and humanization (albeit unconsciously) because they, unlike the male animal, were biologically capable of banding together in the first cooperative maternal broods." (The *Militant*, March 14, 1975, p. 24)

Reed's purpose in discussing the origins of human society and its evolution away from the anthropoid apes is to explain the original development and universality of matriarchal social organization. Since the "women of the species, the female animals, led and organized this entire process of socialization and humanization," it was only natural that the women would emerge from this process as the social and economic leaders of society. This situation remained, according to Reed, until the rise of civilization ushered in the patriarchal monogamous family and the downfall of women.

This mode of argument, that the matriarchy arose as a result of the very process of the humanization of the species, has certain advantages for a proponent of the theory of a universal prehistoric matriarchy. For once the humanization process is accepted to have taken place as presented, the development of the matriarchy must also be accepted. But the converse proposition is likewise true. In order to defend such a theory of matriarchal origins it becomes necessary to prove, conclusively, that human social organization emerged in the manner outlined. Here, I believe, Reed fails rather severely.

*Woman's Evolution* presents the process of the transition from ape to human fundamentally as a process which required a social revolution. According to Reed, the animal world is individualistic and antisocial. To become human, our prehistoric ancestors had somehow to make the transition to cooperative social organization. With the rise of meat-eating, the antisocial force of the animal instinct for individual survival would have led to the rapid destruction of the primal horde through cannibalism. The implementation of the double taboo assured the species against the destructive force of the basic animal instincts. It was the women who must have implemented this social revolution, since they were by nature responsible for the protection of their young and capable of banding together for social cooperation, while the males, limited by their natural propensity for violence and striving for dominance, were not.

A few quotations from *Woman's Evolution* will, I believe, serve to illustrate the centrality of this point to the entire book:

"The phenomenon called the 'dominant male' exists in the animal world; it is the product of the individualistic

and competitive character of male sexuality. Each male competes with other males for sexual access to the female or females in his vicinity. This makes males the combative sex, fighting one another not only for females, but to secure the dominant place in the tract or territory occupied by the females.

"The most naked expression of what is sometimes called 'jungle law' is this unmodified male animal behavior. The antagonism and strife of male animals is an antisocial force which prevents them from banding together in cooperative groups for mutual provision and protection." (pp. 49-50)

"It is seldom pointed out, however, that early man also had to win mastery over his own animal impulses and convert them into a new humanized nature. In particular, males were obliged to conquer their own easily aroused animosity against other males of their own species and learn to cooperate with one another. The combativeness associated with male sexuality had to be overcome and replaced by fraternal and social relations." (p. 51)

"Perhaps the most graphic portrayal of the problems posed by the striving for dominance is given by Atkinson:

"In a state of society where literally every male creature's hand was against the other, and life one continual uproar from their contending strife; where not only was there no instant's truce in the warfare, but each blow was emphasized (fatally) by the intellectual finesse which now directed it, it became a question of forced advance in progress or straight retreat in annihilation as a species. . . . A forward step was somehow taken, some road out of the maze was somehow found. . . ."

"That forward step was taken through totemism and taboo, which instituted social controls over natural needs and drastically altered the violent character of male sexuality." (page 66)

"The first task before our anthropoid ancestors was to become humanized and socialized. This could not be done by perpetuating the antisocial forces that operate in nature, but by radically changing them." (p. 67)

"So long as males remained hobbled by individualism, competition, and striving for dominance over other males, they could not respond to the need for group preservation. But the females, already equipped by nature with their highly developed maternal functions and, moreover, capable of cooperating with other females, could achieve the self-restraint and foresight required to take the measures necessary for group survival. They instituted taboo." (p. 69)

"The double taboo must be placed in the context of the twin hazards that confronted early humanity. On the one hand there was the violence of male sexuality, on the other, the problem of cannibalism. It is improbable that males imposed the necessary restraints upon themselves in their hunt for food and mates. Rather, it was the females, with their highly developed maternal functions and their inhibitions with respect to eating meat, who led the way.

"Thus, far from being handicapped by its biology, the female sex was, in fact, the biologically advantaged sex. . . . These advantages enabled women to institute the prohibitions and restraints required for social life.

"Through totemism and taboo, men were reconditioned to overcome the handicaps imposed upon males in nature." (p. 73)

There are many, many more passages which could be

quoted in which this theme is repeated. The logical development is straightforward: males in nature are violent, antagonistic, and individualistic. With the development of meat-eating in the first prehumans, cannibalism became widespread and even threatened the existence of the species. In order to make the transition from ape to human, some force was necessary to curb the violent behavior and cannibalism of the males. This was done by the females, who were equipped with the biological instincts required, through the implementation of totem and taboo, which restricted the mating and eating habits of the males. Reed also asserts that women were able to accomplish this and enforce the taboos because they had discovered fire, and used it as a weapon against the males. (I will return later to this question of the use of fire.)

We are faced here, in essence, with a "biology was destiny" theory in reverse. There is nothing inherently wrong with such a thesis. However its proponent must submit adequate (and accurate) evidence to confirm that the biological propensities of the two sexes are, indeed, what they are purported to be. In this case Evelyn Reed is 100 percent wrong in her generalization of the roles and behavior of males and females in the animal world; she relies on inaccurate and unscientific information, and she draws the wrong conclusions from it.

## The Real Record of Animal Behavior

Let us begin our discussion of this question with a word of caution. Anyone familiar with the field of animal behavior, in even a passing way, would immediately be wary of any broad sweeping generalizations which were proposed to be true about animal behavior in general. The most striking thing, in fact, is the extreme diversity exhibited by different animal species in their behavior, and even between individuals of the same species.

But Evelyn Reed is not inhibited by any such caution. Her statements on the character of male and female behavior in the animal world are absolute, and rarely even qualified with a "usually." Her mistakes on this question are crucial, since her entire theory about the origins of human society and its divergence from the anthropoid apes hinges around the conception of the relative capacities of males and females for cooperation and social modes of behavior. Reed's purpose in discussing this question goes far beyond any mere polemic with those who would assert that the nuclear family is a universal institution in the animal kingdom. She is attempting to establish a particular pattern of behavior which must have been true of our primitive ancestors, and which must have been overcome in the transition to humanity.

What are some of the mistaken assertions which *Woman's Evolution* makes on this score?

1) *That males in the animal world are primarily antagonistic and violent because of their sexuality and their striving for dominance.* I believe that the passages already quoted from the book make clear that this is Reed's thesis.

In fact, there are species, predominantly the herding herbivores, in which such behavior is exhibited; but to generalize to the entire animal kingdom is simply to ignore reality—even if we limit the discussion to mammals. Porpoises, males and females, live in peaceful, friendly groups, and seem to have no antagonism. Beaver of both

sexes will spend an entire winter cooped up in a lodge on the friendliest of terms.

Among primates, which are most important for our discussion, a whole range of behavior is exhibited by different species. I will cite a few examples of behavior that differs from Reed's schema from *Primate Social Behavior* edited by Charles Southwick (1963, D. Van Nostrand Co.). Speaking of howler monkeys, C.R. Carpenter writes (p. 41): "Adult males of the same group feed closely together without fighting and share receptive females in rotation . . ." In an article about redtail monkeys, A.J. Haddow has this to say (p. 57): "It is to be remembered, however, that neither the writer, nor his colleagues, have ever witnessed fighting among males in nature, during many years of field experience."

In an article called "The Social Life of Baboons," in the same book, S. L. Washburn and Irven DeVore state (p.108): "Normally, there is no fighting over females, and a male, no matter how dominant, does not monopolize a female for long." Phyllis Jay writes on the Indian langur monkey (p. 116): "Although langur troops do not come into contact frequently, whenever they do, relations between them are peaceful, with no display of aggression. . . Fighting has never been observed when several troops were next to each other." And finally, writing on gorillas, John T. Emlen, Jr., and George Schaller say (p. 133): "Tolerance is even extended to non-members, and visiting males may join a troop for a few days without overt signs of antagonism."

This is not to say, of course, that antagonism and violence do not occur. But the real situation is a far cry from the picture painted by Evelyn Reed.

There is another serious misconception in the understanding of the role of dominance hierarchies in nature as presented by Reed. She states consistently that the striving for dominance of the males is a source of instability and antagonism. In fact, the development of dominance hierarchies in animal groups is a stabilizing and pacifying factor. It is reported over and over again that when any event upsets a previously arranged hierarchy, a period of instability occurs which may see fighting and competition, but that in the normal course of events a new dominance structure is quickly established and stability and peaceful relations return to the group. For example, flocks of chickens in which dominance orders are well established tend to lay more eggs than new flocks in which there is competition.

Reed also errs in discussing violent behavior, and especially dominance as though it were the sole province of the males in nature. In fact, the first case in which a dominance structure was discovered was among barnyard chickens, the famous "pecking order". Among primates, every species thus far studied has revealed dominance hierarchies among the females as well as among the males. Females are also just as capable of violent behavior as are males. Carl B. Koford writes: "The animals are especially quarrelsome and competitive when food is restricted. On occasions one female grabs the back of another and bites hard." ("Group relations of rhesus monkeys", Ibid. p. 138.) Female wolves will fight amongst each other for access to males. Summarizing this point concerning primates, John Paul Scott writes in his book *Animal Behavior* (1972, University of Chicago Press), "If there is anything which is genuinely characteristic of all primates, it is that both sexes show at least some of all the various kinds of social behavior exhibited by the species."

(p. 211)

Finally on the question of the violent male in nature as presented by Reed, let us examine her belief that the female is in mortal danger from the male at mating time. She spends several pages discussing the "universality" of cannibalism amongst carnivores, quoting extensively from Briffault on the subject, particularly with reference to the dangers to the female inherent in mating. Here is a sample:

The sex urge, as Briffault says, can be 'as cruel as hunger' and among the carnivorous animals the distinction between the two forms is frequently effaced. He writes:

'All carnivorous animals and rodents are cannibalistic. Lions and tigers, which furnish favorite examples of mating among carnivora, commonly kill and devour their mates.' (p. 57)

"The circumspection which is exhibited by many animal females in yielding to the male,' says Briffault, 'the haste which is shown by most to separate as soon as impregnation has taken place, would appear to be due in large measure to the danger attending such relations rather than to "coyness"'. (p. 58)

I will leave for later the problem of accepting Briffault as an authority on this question. I have been unable to confirm Reed's assertions on this with any additional data about animals in the wild. Perhaps she has such information, though in her book, the only other examples used besides Briffault were of animals in captivity. In fact, from what I can gather from the literature, studies of animals in the wild contradict Reed's assertion. Again I quote from Scott:

"Finally, there is the theoretical case where a particular pattern of behavior has negative survival value for both group and individual. We would predict that such behavior would be strongly selected against. An example is destructively violent agonistic (fighting—S.B.) behavior resulting in death or serious injury to the combatants. Studies of agonistic behavior under normal ecological conditions and social organization show that there is a general evolutionary tendency to reduce social fighting to relatively non-harmful forms. Furthermore, *it is extremely rare to have any sort of fighting between the opposite sexes that would interfere with mating.*" (Ibid., p. 297) my emphasis—S.B.

As far as I can tell, there is also no evidence of cannibalism among the large carnivores, except perhaps in times of stress. (Under some conditions of stress cannibalism is still practiced by humans.) Among some fishes, and other small animals which breed in large numbers—yes; but we would not expect to find extensive cannibalism by larger animals which breed in smaller numbers.

2) *That the animal world is universally individualistic and competitive, and that there is no cooperative effort among members of the same species, especially males of the same species, the sole exception being the care of the mother for her young.* Again, a few passages from *Woman's Evolution* to illustrate the point:

"Animal behavior, fashioned by nature's mode of survival, is preponderantly individualistic and competitive. . . .



"Whether the competition is more or less intense each adult animal forage for its own food and provides for itself without regard to the needs of others. With the exception of the provision made by the female for its offspring, there is no cooperation among animals in getting or sharing food." (p. 45)

"The antagonism and strife of male animals is an antisocial force which prevents them from banding together in cooperative groups for mutual provision and protection." (p. 50)

"Even among primates, cooperation is virtually nonexistent." (p. 45)

Such generalizations are not borne out by even a cursory study of reliable data in this field. In the interest of space, I will limit my examples here to the primates, though many others could be given.

The most important area of cooperation among primate males is in the area of defense of the band, and especially the young. There is example after example of this which has been observed:

"At the Minoo Ravine, when I tried to capture monkeys of the B troop by a trap, the predominant male held back the monkeys from approaching the trap and attacked the individuals that dared to do so. In the Takago-S troop, we saw some infants trying to get the bait we had prepared for them, and being driven away by the leaders. In such a way, when any danger is likely to be incurred by the youngsters' 'free floating behavior,' some controlling actions were exercised to check them." (Kawamura, "Sub Culture Propagation among Macaques," Southwick, op. cit. p. 87)

"As the baboon troop moves, the less dominant adult males and perhaps a large juvenile or two occupy the van. Females and more of the juveniles follow, and in the center of the troop are the females with infants, the young juveniles, and the most dominant males. The back of the troop is a mirror image of its front, with less dominant males at the rear. Thus, without any fixed or formal order, the arrangement of the troop is such that the females and young are protected at the center. No matter from what direction a predator approaches the troop, it must first encounter the adult males.

"When a predator is sighted, the adult males play an even more active role in defense of the troop. One day we saw two dogs run barking at the troop. The females and juveniles hurried, but the males continued to walk slowly. In a moment an irregular group of some 20 adult males was interposed between the dogs and the rest of the troop. When a male turned on the dogs they ran off." (Washburn and DeVore, *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101)

"On many occasions when monkeys were handled in a large outdoor cage, the leader of the band charged furiously and tried to bite the men. In another example, a captive young commenced to call when the band was nearly 200 yards distant and out of sight. The leader charged all the way to the cage and his entire band of 20 animals followed." (Koford, *Ibid.*, p. 146)

Cooperation in the area of food procurement is less clear among primates. Sharing of food gathered by a particular individual is certainly rare, though cooperative efforts are not unknown. But on another level, there is close cooperation and interdependence in terms of finding new sources of food and determining group movements which are predominantly for the purpose of finding food resources. Here, again, the males generally lead the way:

"In howler groups, even though there are fewer males than females, the males play the predominant role in determining group movements." (Carpenter, *Ibid.* p. 30)

"(The leader of a rhesus monkey group) will closely coordinate his behavior with the rest of the group males during an inter-group fight or while leading the group from one location to another." (*Ibid.*, p. 42)

"The males of any particular clan (of howler monkeys) do not fight among themselves, but they roar at any other group or individual that comes near. . . . The males of a group tend to stick together, and as they move through the trees, each one will explore separately, looking for routes from one branch to another. When one male is successful, he gives a clucking noise, and the other come over and follow him. . . ." (Scott, op cit., p. 183)

We can see then, that far from the maternal brood with the males totally peripheral and expendable, as Reed describes animal societies, the primate bands are cohesive social units, containing both males and females, each with their specific role to play in the preservation of the group. Reed is also incorrect on a relatively minor point here, that is, whether males living outside of the male-female hordes are condemned to a solitary existence or can form cooperative bands of males. In many primate species all-male groups have been observed in addition to the male-female groups and solitary individual males.

Finally, in the area of cooperation among animals, such cooperation is observed on many levels. Among primates, one of the most frequently observed varieties of social behavior is the act of grooming. Grooming is exhibited by males to females, females to males, male to male, and female to female. The advantages to the species of such activities are obvious—keeping the fur clean, and eliminating ticks and other parasites. But the intense pleasure exhibited by animals grooming and being groomed illustrates the significant social nature of such activity. Similar behavior is exhibited by other species: "Other animals, such as mice, comb one another's fur with their teeth and claws. . . . Even horses will stand head to tail and whisk flies out of each other's faces." (*Ibid.* p. 196)

3) *That caring for the young is solely the province of the females among animals.* Here again, we are faced with a gross oversimplification of what is in reality a complex picture.

Although the general pattern is that the sole role of the male is during the act of fertilization, this is by no means a universal law. Among many species of fish the female swims away after laying her eggs, leaving the male to watch and tend them until birth. Many male birds join with the female in feeding the young, teaching them to fly, etc. Penguin fathers even share sitting duties while the eggs are incubating.

Among mammals as well, paternal care is not infrequent. Male leopards cooperate with the female in hunting and providing food for the cubs. Cougar males likewise return to the den after the cubs are born. Some animals, such as linxes, remain in family bands until the next mating season. Foxes and otters (which mate for life) also have the male providing for the young. In general the most highly developed father-care is exhibited by animals which are monogamous. There is even the case of the marmoset father who is handed the young by the mother as soon as it is born, and is responsible for all of its care with the exception of suckling (which the female accedes to as infrequently as possible). Wolf fathers will also watch for predators and contribute food to their puppies.

We also see examples of "father" care (more properly male care) among the primates. The role of the males in defense of the young from predators has already been discussed. It is also common for the males to regulate the play of the young to make sure no injury is done: "If a juvenile is hurt and cries out, adults come running and stop the play. The presence of an adult male prevents small juveniles from being hurt." (Washburn and Devore, Southwick, Op Cit., p. 106)

Other forms of adult male relationship to infant also have been observed among primates.

"The family relationship within a troop (of mountain gorillas) is very close and quarrels are rare. Both females and babies like to sleep near the dominant male. He even accepts baby-sitting duties, and freely tolerates as many as four exuberant infants clambering all over him and hitching rides on his back." (Emlen and Schaller, Ibid. p. 133)

"I have also seen both males and females adopt young not their own, and indeed of a different species." (Carpenter, Ibid. p. 47)

And on occasion an immature, even a male, carries the infant of its mother or older sister." (Koford, Ibid. p. 151)

Among one species of monkey, the Japanese macaque, an even more developed form of male-infant relationship has been observed in some groups:

"We have noticed among the troops of such Japanese monkeys a special intimate relation between adult males and infants, and though it may not be quite proper to call that relation 'paternal' for the reasons mentioned above (the inability to determine paternity—S.B.), the behavior itself appears to fit exactly the term 'paternal care'. It is quite similar to the behavior of a mother toward her infant, except for the lack of suckling." (Junichiro Itani, "Paternal Care in the Japanese Monkey," Ibid. p. 92)

It would seem from these examples, and they do not by any means exhaust the possibilities, that Evelyn Reed has clearly overgeneralized where a more thorough investigation and somewhat more caution were required.

4) *That the only form of family among animals is the maternal brood.* This overgeneralization is closely connected to the one just discussed. On page 53 of *Woman's Evolution* Reed writes, "The animal family is no more than a maternal brood, with the mother alone providing for herself and her offspring."

Indeed, such maternal broods do exist, but so do other forms of animal family. Some examples of these were given on the subject of child care. Speaking of foxes, Scott writes: "Fox breeders often have great difficulty in getting a male to mate with more than one female." (op. cit. p. 189)

One of the most interesting observations of the studies of primates in the wild was the discovery of family-type groups within the larger hords in at least several species:

"An important observation made by Zuckerman is that *P. Combatus* bands split up into small family parties for the night. At a later date Lumsden (1951a), working on the sleeping-habits of monkeys in western Uganda, found that this observation held good for various species belonging to the genera *Cerobus*, *Cercopithecus*, *Papio* and *Colobus*, and the present writer has seen a band of ten chimpanzees (*P. troglodytes schweinfurthii*) divide into at least two parties for the night. Lumsden's results showed that in *C. albigena johnstoni*, *C. a. schmidtii*, *P. doguera tessalatus* and *C. abyssinicus ituricus* the mean size of resting bands was between four and five individuals, and the figures for other less common species were largely in agreement. Buxton . . . working on *C. a. schmidtii* in a small forest patch in central Uganda, has found that the mean size of resting bands is even smaller, being between three and four individuals. On the other hand, bands observed by Lumsden during the day were larger, usually numbering over ten individuals.

"Such behavior indicates strongly that family parties do exist in *Cercopithecus* spp., as in the baboons. It is true that in *C. aethiops centralis* Buxton has observed very large bands sleeping together, and the present writer has had a similar experience with *C. aethiops johnstoni*. In other *Cercopithecus* spp., however, it seems to be definitely established that small family parties form the usual unit at night. In the *Colobus (C. abyssinicus ituricus)* Lumsden was further able to show that one small party of six, including two juveniles, probably remained together as a compact unit for about four months, after which observation was discontinued." (Haddow, Southwick, op cit., p. 55)

There is also the example of the gibbon, unique so far among primates studied, where the largest group known is one male, one female, and their offspring. The reason that gibbons form these groups is that neither males nor females can get along with adult members of their own sex, and so they consort only with the opposite sex.

Once again, a study of the actual reality of animals in the wild contradicts Evelyn Reed's simplistic assertions about animal life and behavior, which are the backbone of her analysis of the development of humanity and its differentiation from the rest of the animal kingdom. What happens to Reed's schema of human origins if we substitute a real understanding of the varied and complex nature of animal social organization for her half-truths and incorrect generalizations? Let us review some of her assertions in this light.

What can we say of a statement like: "The antagonism and strife of male animals is an antisocial force which prevents them from banding together in cooperative groups for mutual provision and protection"? or: "so long as males remained hobbled by individualism, competition, and a striving for dominance over other males, they could not respond to the need for group preservation"?

What becomes of a description of animal society such as

the one by Atkinson which Reed quotes favorably: "A state of society where literally every male creature's hand was against the other, and life one continual uproar from their contending strife." Can we accept an otherwise completely unsupported assertion by Reed, such as: "But the females, already equipped by nature with their highly developed maternal functions and, moreover, capable of cooperating with other females, could achieve the self-restraint and foresight required to take the measures necessary for group survival"? Nowhere does Reed offer us any concrete evidence of this superior female ability for cooperation in nature, and I doubt strongly that it could be substantiated.

An objective assessment of Reed's assertions in this area must conclude that they are not based on any substantive scientific data, but solely upon her own speculations and opinions. Far from convincing "even the skeptical," as Mary-Alice Waters put it in her review, Reed's exposition of her theories on the origin of humanity can convince only the credulous, or those who do not bother to check her facts. Since Reed herself makes this theory of human origins the central core of her discussion of the matriarchy, her errors in this regard constitute a serious flaw in the book as a whole.

*Woman's Evolution* falls into its errors about animal life and behavior because it accepts as good coin the statements made by Briffault on this subject. Most of the citations in Chapter Three which deal with this question are from Briffault. Those which are not are concerned with studies of animals in captivity. But at the time Briffault wrote, there had been virtually no rigorous studies of animal life and behavior in the wild; he relied upon stories and tales, and drew his conclusions about animals from them. For Briffault there was no alternative—the scientific studies had not been done. For Evelyn Reed, we can find no such excuse. Since the time of Briffault, there has been a qualitative improvement in the observation of animals in their natural habitat. The information is available. It would seem to me incumbent upon the proponent of a thesis such as the one we are presented by Reed to check and confirm her information.

As for observations of animals in captivity, they are notoriously unreliable as an indicator of what the species' behavior is in its natural environment. Reed herself makes note of this in her section on "the London Zoo Catastrophe."

Before leaving the question of animal behavior, I would like to discuss one more aspect of the problem. Even if all of Reed's generalizations about animal life had been correct, there is a qualitative leap which is not necessarily valid in assuming that the behavior of the pre-human hominoids was identical or even similar. As we have seen, there is no lack of species-unique behavior in the animal world. The variations, even between related species, is enormous.

Among the primates, we saw examples of such behavior on the part of gibbons—a family grouping pattern instead of a trooping horde. Among the Japanese, macaques, the paternal care type behavior is not even seen among all groups of the same species. It is for this reason that any generalizations must be viewed skeptically when studying a new species, until it is verified by empirical observation. Even if all other primates are found to congregate in hordes, there is still the gibbon to be dealt with.

How does this point relate to a discussion of human origins? We have no empirical evidence concerning the behavior of the pre-human ancestors of the genus *Homo*. Our closest relatives, the anthropoid apes, have gone through an evolution of at least ten million years since the two lines diverged. We must, therefore, apply any generalizations about the behavior of present day primates with extreme caution when discussing the evolution of humanity. (It is even conceivable that it was the differences in behavior which began to develop in one group of primates that permitted the human species to evolve.) And caution is the one element which is, to say the least, lacking from Evelyn Reed's exposition on this question.

## An Evolutionary View of Human Origins

If we find difficulty in accepting Reed's theories about the origins of humanity, what alternative can be posed? Of course it is not required that a substitute be presented in order to reject a particular thesis, but I believe that in this case a general outline can be discussed.

At the time that the human strain diverged from the present great apes (chimpanzees, gorillas) the earth was going through a climatic change. The forests, the habitat of our ancestors, and the provider of the fruits upon which they subsisted, were shrinking. It seems likely that there would be severe competition among groups for the remaining forest territory, and that some groups were pushed out.

Those which remained within the trees, of course, evolved into the anthropoid apes, which still make their homes in the jungles. Those who were pushed out faced a choice. The sources of their previous vegetable diet were now difficult to reach. They had to adapt, find new sources of food, or become extinct. Again, it seems probable that at least some of the groups were able to discover such new foods. Some of these would be plants native to the grasslands which were now their home. It would also seem probable that for the first time meat, in the form of small game, would become a significant portion of the diet of at least some of these primates.

The transition to meat eating, as Reed notes, is an important milestone in the evolution of humanity. But far from being the divisive influence which Reed describes, it may well have been the very force which created the human species.

Although the normal diet of all known species of primates except for humans is herbivorous on the whole, various species have been known to consume meat at times: "Only rarely did we see baboons engage in hostilities against other species. On one occasion, however, we saw a baboon kill a small vervet monkey and eat it." (Washburn and DeVore, Southwick, op cit, p. 101). "The baboon's food is almost entirely vegetable, although they do eat meat on rare occasions. We saw dominant males kill and eat two newborn Thompson's gazelles." (Ibid. p. 102)

Similar behavior has been observed in other species. What would have been required, therefore, in our theoretical model would be simply a shift in the importance of meat in the diet, and not an introduction of an entirely alien source of food. Let us examine the implications of such a shift.

For Evelyn Reed, the transition to meat eating represented a severe threat to these humans-to-be. She states that the development of meat eating would have quickly led to

the rise of cannibalism, since each individual, incapable of banding together with other individuals and interested only in its own survival, would have preyed on the easiest source of food—other members of its own kind. She confirms this further by presenting statements about the universality of cannibalism among carnivores. But as we have seen, these statements, plus the other misconceptions about animal behavior upon which she bases her projections, are completely fallacious.

Can we accept Reed's assessment on this score? In addition to the problem that the primates simply do not exhibit the type of behavior upon which her model is based, we have difficulty seeing how such a process would not have quickly wiped out the entire species.

Contrary to Reed's approach, it would seem to me that the new dietary requirements would have reinforced exactly the cooperative aspects of primate behavior. To regularly be able to acquire the necessary meat to supplement their new diet, these early pre-humans, who were not equipped by nature with hunting instruments (claws, fangs, etc.) would have needed to expand the cooperative efforts already learned in defense of the herd into the new field of hunting. Such a process would also explain the primitive sexual division of labor, since the hunting would become merely an extension of the male activity of defense.

The transition to hunting and meat-eating, then, would be an important impetus to the process of natural selection. Certainly those groups and individuals which exhibited social habits with regard to food procurement would have had a significantly higher survival potential than those which did not. In addition, the need to expand the hunting arsenal would have given impetus to the creation of tools, and the intellect required for their use and refinement. Certainly we could expect a strong natural selection for intelligence and for social cooperativeness, both on an individual and on a group level. In addition, we would expect that groups and individuals which did not display these traits would tend to have a lesser survival value and would be selected *against*.

It is interesting to note, with regard to this, that there is a strong correlation between the growing importance of meat in the diet, and especially the emergence of big-game hunting, and the growth of brain size (see chart at end of article). There is also an interesting anomaly which has been reported that would tend to confirm the possibility of a development of humanity along the lines I have sketched. In her book *On the Side of the Apes*, (Thomas Crowell, 1971) Emily Hahn reports on a group of chimpanzees which have been pushed out of their natural forest environment, and now live in the grasslands. Unlike all other groups of chimpanzees studied, these animals make meat a significant portion of their diet. Although much of their meat even comes from other species of monkeys, it was never observed that this created any internal strife, or that there was any instance of cannibalism.

Rather than Evelyn Reed's totally unsatisfactory formula of the origins of humanity, what is required is a truly evolutionary view. It would seem likely that the changed lifestyle of our early forebears set in motion a process of natural selection which ended in creating modern homo sapiens, with all of the traits which differentiate us from the anthropoid apes. A process such as that described by

Evelyn Reed, with the change to meat eating creating an internal war of immense proportions, would have led down the road to extinction, or, if the species managed to survive through some mechanism as Reed describes, would have evolved in the direction of an animal equipped for combat rather than for social intercourse. The very direction of our species evolution, it would seem to me, argues against the conceptions presented in *Women's Evolution*.

No, the development of humanity was an evolutionary process, in which the new conditions faced by the species created a strong push for the development of the social animal we are today. Only such a process can explain the development of intellect and culture: speech, social organization, etc. Only an understanding of such a process can lay the basis for a materialist analysis of prehistory.

## II. Evelyn Reed and the Scientific Method

Having been interested in the field of animal behavior, and somewhat familiar with the subject, I was rather shocked and surprised in reading the sections of *Women's Evolution* which dealt with Reed's conclusions on this score. Although I was much less familiar with the anthropological data in the book, I began to wonder whether the same lack of scientific objectivity might not be involved in this area as well.

I now believe that the method by which Reed has come to her conclusions is completely unscientific. Just as in the case of her statements on animal societies, she has chosen by and large to discuss only the data which support her thesis; she has made no attempt to verify the accuracy of her information; and she has simply ignored the information which contradicts her ideas.

Reed herself has discussed the way in which she began her investigations into anthropology, and hinted at the method she has employed. At the May 9 rally in New York City sponsored by Pathfinder, celebrating International Women's Day and the publication of *Women's Evolution*, Reed stated that she had come to the conclusion that the so-called taboo against incest was in reality a taboo against cannibalism, and "I set out to prove it."

Now, there is nothing wrong with beginning a scientific investigation by forming a working hypothesis, putting it to the test of the known data, and where possible, of experiment. However, the key requirement is to put the theory to an honest test, to alter it, or even discard it entirely if it does not fit the totality of the available information on the subject.

But in attempting to "prove" her theories about the origins of, and existence of, a universal pre-historic matriarchy, Reed has followed a different course. Her book contains only that data which supports her conclusions. All else is either simply ignored, or written off as the distortions of a male-chauvinist, establishment-dominated, official anthropology.

By following such a method, it would be possible to prove almost anything, as long as the audience is not too familiar with the subject. However, conclusions backed up by such evidence cannot be expected to make much impact in the long run.

I have not had 25 years to investigate the anthropological literature. But I would like to share with comrades some of the points which I discovered through a preliminary survey of some materials.

## Time and Space Are Important Dimensions

One of the problems encountered in grappling with the ideas presented in *Woman's Evolution* is that nowhere is this process of the evolution of humanity described in the book located in time and space. Exactly when and where does Evelyn Reed believe that this development of totem and taboo took place? How long did the process take? These questions are never answered, which presents difficulties in attempting to determine the credibility of the theory.

In fact, by ignoring time and space, Reed is able to telescope events which took place hundreds of thousands of years apart. There are various minor examples of this, and at least one major one, which I would like to discuss.

Throughout the entire first part of *Woman's Evolution*, the reader is left perplexed by the problem of how the females were able to enforce the strictures of totem and taboo, if the behavior of pre-human males was indeed what Reed contends. On page 143 we are at last informed of Reed's theory on this question:

"If such battles (between men and women) took place, and it is entirely plausible in that primeval dawn of human development, the objective of the woman was to lay down the inviolable totemic taboos and rules of avoidance by which the safety of women and children was assured. Put another way, the objective was not to establish a little father-family but to effect the creation of a brotherhood of men modeled in the image of the motherhood and sisterhood of women.

"The women were not only biologically endowed to bring this about; through their labor activities they had acquired the decisive means for their victory. They had discovered fire."

Such a thesis seems to solve our problem neatly. The women, faced with the need to tame the violent behavior of the males, and implement totemism and taboo, were able to accomplish this task and enforce their will through the use of fire. It seems to solve our problem, that is, until we investigate when and where certain events occurred.

The first common use of fire by humans dates from around 400-500 thousand years ago. (*Woman's Evolution* says more than half a million years; I won't quibble). But if that is true, how could fire have been the decisive weapon of the females in implementing totem and taboo, which Reed contends are the earliest of social institutions, and were required for the humanization of the species?

The human species first emerged around two million years ago. Soon thereafter, big game hunting began to expand in importance for the human groups, and by one-million years ago was certainly well established as an important food resource (see chart at end of article). From these factors, if we go by Reed's theory about fire, we are faced with a serious problem. For unless the fossil evidence on the first use of fire is incorrect, and in fact it came much earlier; or the evidence on the role of hunting is incorrect, and in fact it did not emerge until much later; then we must conclude that the human species grew and evolved and engaged in meat-eating for *three quarters of its time on earth* without benefit of totem and taboo, since these could not have been enforced until the women discovered fire.

If totem and taboo were required to regulate the cannibalistic tendencies of the males unleashed by the transition to meat eating, it is impossible to conceive a one

and a half million year lag between the development of meat eating on a large scale, and the development of the weapon which allowed the females to combat it. Yet this seems to be what Reed is asking us to accept. The problem is further complicated if we consider another minor detail: This first use of fire, 500,000 years ago, occurred in China; the first indisputable use of fire in Africa, occurred only around 55,000 years ago.

Now, most scientists agree that Africa was the birthplace of the human species. Perhaps Reed disagrees with this theory. If so she fails to inform us.

But let us consider another possibility. Perhaps Reed is contending that this process she is describing—the implementation of totem and taboo—was not required for the first emergence of primitive humans, but only for the development of homo-sapiens, modern humans. As I said before, Reed does not place her process in time and space, so we are left to conjecture as to possibilities. Here the timing of the discovery of fire would fit quite well. The first homo-sapien fossils date from around 40-50 thousand years ago, corresponding with the discovery of fire in Africa, allowing the females to implement totem and taboo.

But in this case we are still left with our time lag with regard to the first meat-eating almost 2-million years ago (now aggravated by around 450 thousand additional years). Furthermore, the internal evidence from the book would indicate that Reed is discussing a much earlier development than the evolution of homo-sapiens. She specifically states that the implementation of totem and taboo were required for a differentiation from the apes; in addition she cites examples from as far back as the Australopithecenes to support her arguments.

As we can see, the question of placing events in time and space is crucial to an investigation of the validity of the basic assumptions and logical progression of any theory. It is a very difficult question to ignore. Reed's theory about fire, and the problems posed by that theory, is only the most severe example which I uncovered of the difficulties created by Reed's not clarifying this area.

I will not attempt to sort out the contradictions any further. I believe that more precision, and fewer mere generalities, will be required from Reed, or from those who would defend *Woman's Evolution*.

## The Question of Totem and Taboo

The key institutions, according to Reed, in the transition to humanity were totemism and taboo. Through these two basic laws—that males may not eat or mate within their own kinship group (Reed's interpretation)—the females guaranteed the stability of the earliest human groups. But Reed's exposition on this question asks us to accept various assertions which are, at best, half truths.

Reed believes that totemism represents the food aspect of the double taboo. The totem animal, considered to be a member of the tribe or group, was taboo, and could not be eaten. By so forbidding the eating of an animal which was "kin", so was the eating of other "kin" outlawed, and according to Reed cannibalism banned within the kinship group.

But despite the lengthy examples and illustrations presented in the text of *Woman's Evolution*, an objective study of totemism would not, I believe bear out Reed's thesis. For one thing totemism, though common, is by no

means as universal an institution as Reed seems to maintain. Among some primitive groups it simply does not exist. In addition, where it does exist, the totem is not always an animal. Such inanimate objects as rocks, sky, clouds, rain, sun, moon, etc. are sometimes totems. Also, the totem may occasionally be a plant. If the purpose of totemism was to limit the cannibalistic tendencies and meat-eating diet of the males, how are the existence of such totems explained?

Furthermore, even when the totem was an animal, as was usually the case, it was not infrequently an animal which could have had little, if any, impact as far as the diet of a group was concerned. And despite what Reed claims, the totem animal was not even universally tabooed as a source of food.

On the question of taboo (exogamy) there are also omissions and gaps in the information Reed presents. For example, much is made in *Woman's Evolution* of the incorrectness of the classical position that the primitive sex taboo, the law of exogamy, was a taboo against incest. In fact chapter one, which deals with this matter, is one of the strongest chapters in the book. However, Reed fails to mention that this same conclusion, for much the same reasons, has been reached by at least several "establishment" anthropologists. I ran across rejections of the incest taboo theory in at least three books.

In addition, in attempting to come up with an alternate theory for the development of exogamy as a virtually universal practice among primitive groups, some of the same conclusions are reached as Reed describes: that exogamy would have developed as a means of strengthening ties between different human groups; that groups which established such ties would have had greater survival potential than groups which did not; and that therefore the institution would tend to spread and become universal.

Reed makes much of the broad distribution of the institutions of totemism and taboo as evidence that they must have had their roots in some fundamental process involved in the origin of humanity. But in fact such a conclusion does not at all follow if we keep in mind the question of time and space which we just discussed. For the vast bulk of the time in which the human species has been on the earth, it has been concentrated in a relatively small portion of the globe. Until a few tens of thousands of years or so ago, the total land mass occupied by the genus *Homo* was Africa, and the southern portions of Asia and Europe.

Fossil evidence clearly demonstrates that during the time before the dispersal of the human species throughout the globe, different cultural institutions, which originated in one area, eventually became widespread and perhaps universal. This can be seen most clearly in the case of various techniques for chipping flints to make different stone implements. When an improved method developed in one area, it gradually spread throughout the occupied world. Of course, the methods of communication were slow, but in the course of one million nine hundred some thousand years, even sporadic contacts between groups would serve to spread such technological and social achievements. It should be remembered that such contacts were made more possible by the fact that for much of that period, various seas which are now barriers between continents did not exist, since much of the earth's water

was locked in the polar ice caps and the ice-age glaciers.

The problem is, that while stone tools, or various types of carvings which also underwent this cultural exchange process, can be dated to determine when they began to be produced in any particular region—that is their spread and development can be documented—social institutions such as totem and taboo cannot. It is impossible to determine at what stage of human development these institutions emerged, or how fast they spread to different groups. In the final analysis we are left simply with Evelyn Reed's conjectures on this question.

## The Origin Myth of the Andaman Islanders

One of the repeated techniques of Evelyn Reed is to cite certain aspects of the origin myths of various tribes to bolster one or another aspect of her thesis. However, through the entire book, we are never given a *complete* origin myth to see if the totality fits in with the picture she has painted. The origin myth of the Andaman islanders shows where this can lead.

Reed raises this myth in her discussion of fire. On page 144 she has this to say:

"*The most ancient myths* single out fire as marking the dividing line between humans and animals. Radcliffe-Brown gives examples from the legends of the Andaman Islanders. 'It is the possession of fire that makes human beings what they are, he writes, and it is the 'lack of the ability to make and use fire that makes animals what they are, that cuts them off from participation in human life.' According to the aborigines, 'It was an account of the fire (i.e. the possession of fire) that the ancestors became alive' (*The Andaman Islanders*, on pp. 342-43)." (my emphasis—S.B.)

She gives another quotation from Radcliffe-Brown concerning Biliku, the ancestress of the Andaman islanders page 146:

"*Biliku* as the source from which comes the fire is also the source of life. This view of *Biliku* is certainly to be found in all parts of the islands, though it has been developed more in the South than in the North. Biliku thus becomes responsible for the beginning of society, and since the whole universe centers in the society, of the whole universe. She becomes the being who created or arranged the order in which men live." (*The Andaman Islanders*, p. 372)

Reed cites these aspects of the Andaman myth in order to back up her theory that women were the first discoverers of fire, and that its original use was to create humans out of animals, i.e. to enforce totem and taboo. In his book, *The Hunting Peoples*, Carleton Coon also discusses the origin myth of the Andaman islanders. He cites the story concerning another deity, *Puluga*. Reed informs us that *Puluga* and *Biliku* are "closely associated" (p. 149), but that *Puluga*, a male, has "not yet displaced" *Biliku*, a female. Coon states that *Puluga* was a goddess. I do not know the source of the confusion, but in any case, the origin of the Andaman islanders by way of *Puluga* has some interesting points for us. I would like to quote a few paragraphs:

"Next Puluga created a man named Tomo. . . . She showed Tomo the fruit trees in the jungle from which he could get food, but warned him not to eat the fruit of some of them during the rains. She also gave him fire. . . ."

"Now that he had fire Puluga taught Tomo how to cook pigs. In those days the pigs were helpless, having neither ears nor noses, and had to be fed. . . ."

"The first woman was named Chana Eliwadi. Some say that Puluga created her after having given Tomo food and fire, and that Tomo saw her swimming near Wotaemi, and she came ashore to live with him and bore him two sons and two daughters. Others say that she came ashore already pregnant . . . but in either case the present Andamanese are descended from her.

"Before long, the pigs had become so numerous that it was a nuisance to feed them, so Chana Elewadi bored holes in their heads and snouts so that they could find their own food. Then the jungles stretched outward from Wotaemi to make room for the pigs. Either Puluga spread out the trees, or Tomo shot arrows with flies tied to them and the flies became trees, but now, in either case it was hard to catch the pigs so Puluga came down again and taught the men to make bows and arrows and to hunt . . . ."

". . . . Finally Tomo drowned and became a whale, the enemy of turtles, and Chana Elewadi also drowned, turning into a small crab." (1971, Little-Brown and Co., pp. 296-7)

There are a number of interesting points which could be made about this origin myth. For example, it is noteworthy that the first thing Puluga did after creating the first man was to give him fire and meat. This seems to contradict Reed's ideas about what the females were trying to do. She also taught the men to hunt. It is also interesting that both Tomo and Chana Elewadi drowned and turned into animals. This process, Reed asserts, was reserved for the males.

But none of these points are the most crucial. Reed can simply wave them away by asserting that they are part of the revision of the real origin myth, resulting from the transition from Biliku to Puluga, though she would have difficulty if she had to prove it. There is another aspect to the myth which should not be overlooked. At the time of the origin of the Andaman islanders, according to their myths, "the pigs were helpless, having neither ears nor noses and had to be fed." In other words, the Andaman islanders were descended from some group of humans who had *already domesticated pigs!*

What is left, then of Reed's contention that the beliefs of the Andaman islanders represent the "most ancient myths"? If they are describing events which occurred after the domestication of animals, they date at the most from tens, not hundreds of thousands of years. Certainly they do not chronicle any original creation, any transition of humanity from animality. Yet this is what Evelyn Reed claims. It may be, in fact, that this is one of the most ancient myths; but if that is so, it merely documents further the grossly unscientific method of attempting to use it as proof of what is contended to have occurred in the original creation of humanity.

This point illustrates one of the basic problems with Reed's entire approach. Much, if not most, of her evidence, if traced back, rests upon some completely unproven, and probably unprovable assertion. In this case, it is asserted that the origin myth of the Andamese is "most ancient"

because it corresponds with Reed's schema. There is not any other reason for us to believe that it chronicles the original making of humans out of animals by the women.

By picking and choosing her evidence, by selecting only one aspect out of context, Reed attempts to prove her case. All that she really proves, however, is the flimsy nature of her theory.

## Other Origin Myths

While picking and choosing certain aspects of particular origin myths which will back up her assertions, Reed does not, in fact does not even attempt to, illustrate that all origin myths fit in with her theory. In fact, such a demonstration would be impossible, though to cite such myths as evidence where they agree with Reed, it would be at least required to show that there is a general tendency for them to coincide with the outlines of her process. Through her selectivity in this area, Reed simply distorts the real picture.

I was particularly struck by one omission in the area of origin myths in *Woman's Evolution*. One of the elements of Yaghan mythology actually contains a full-blown matriarchal system, and I was initially surprised not to have seen it included by Reed:

"In the old days the women ruled the men, who had to do the housework and sit in the stern of the canoe. The women were able to keep the men in subjection because they had a big hut that they would not let the men into. There they put on conical masks reaching to their shoulders, impersonated spirits, and frightened the men.

Lem had to hunt to feed them and the supposed spirits inside the hut. One day, coming back from hunting, he saw two girls washing paint off themselves at the edge of the pool. He crept up secretly and overheard their conversation. They were talking about how they fooled the men with their goings-on in the big hut. Lem jumped at the girls and they turned into ducks. Lem then told the men what he had discovered. So they sent the smallest and fastest-running man into the women's big hut, and he tipped over all their masks, and when he ran out he turned into a swamp bird.

"Then the next smallest and fastest man ran in, and so on, until only the men who could not run so fast were left.

". . . The men now knew the women's secrets, and from then on the men kept them from the women. From that time on the men assumed their masculine roles, and began to mount their wives to copulate. Before then, the women had mounted the men." (Ibid., pp. 299-300)

Although this myth, at first glance, would seem to support Reed's contention concerning Matriarchal social organization being the original form, a second look makes clear why it could never be included in *Woman's Evolution*. Again, there are a few minor points, such as that Lem was required to hunt to provide meat for the women. But the primary contradiction here is that this myth chronicles not only an original matriarchal organization, but *also the overthrow of that form*. This is in complete contradiction to Reed's schema, which contends that the matriarchy was only decisively overthrown with the rise of class society and the patriarchal nuclear family.

## Initiation rites

Another idea which Evelyn Reed spends significant time

developing is her belief that "initiation rites" constitute a celebration of the victory over cannibalism. That the young males are required to go through a series of purification rituals, and only after these are they considered humans. That they must be "reborn" and transformed. Here is one passage from this section of *Woman's Evolution*, p. 285:

"What did happen in primordial time to so transform the world that it has to be commemorated by every generation of youth? And why, at the same time that the youth were instructed by the old men through lectures and homilies, were they obliged to go through some very peculiar ordeals, punishments, and frightening experiences apparently designed to engrave these lessons on their minds?"

"Spencer and Gillen venture the hypothesis that the incidents acted out in initiation 'may be commemorative of a reformatory movement which must at one time have taken place in the tribe with regard to cannibalism'.

"In other words, initiation represents both an 'acting out' and a commemoration of the victory over animalism and cannibalism. . . ."

Reed documents her conclusion with many examples of various initiation ceremonies, and explains how these relate to the victory she believes them to be commemorating; an example, page 288:

"The drama which is acted out in the ceremony, especially in its more primitive forms (here again, no proof that one form is "more primitive" than another, just Reed's assertion—S.B.), is clearly a story of cannibalism and animalism. The novices are killed and eaten by a "devouring monster," a "demonic being," a "mythical animal," or some other terrible figure.

"Sometimes the boys are boiled, baked, steamed, or roasted before they are devoured. And when they are resurrected it is from the belly of the monster. Briffault describes one of the more literal forms of this drama, in northern Papua:

'Among the Yabim, for instance, an enormous hut is built in a secluded spot in the bush, which represents a monster whose huge mouth, richly furnished with teeth, forms the front of the hut, while the palm forms the backbone, which tapers to a long tail. . . . The initiates are swallowed through the mouth of the monster and remain secluded in its belly for three or four months. When they are restored to the world they appear stupefied, their eyes sealed with plastered chalk, and it is only by degrees that they awake and recover their senses. (*The Mothers*, Vol. II, p. 688)'"

Similar initiation ceremonies are common throughout New Guinea. Reed contends that they are necessary to make the young males civilized and human so that they can become a part of a cooperative human society.

I will leave aside the difficulty we must have in accepting the idea that these ceremonies of primitive humans, observed by anthropologists and others only in very recent times, are memories of events which occurred in primordial times, according to Reed connected with the transition from ape to human. There is another point of importance here. At least in New Guinea, there is a striking feature about the initiation ceremonies which Reed ignores, though she chooses to use an example from

that part of the world.

In New Guinea, these initiations, such as the one Reed describes via Briffault, are not initiations into the tribe. They are not ceremonies which purify the initiates and make them human, fit to live with the females. In New Guinea, these initiation ceremonies are the entry of the novices into the Tamberan cult, a male operation from which the females are excluded, and which is utilized to terrorize the females. Does this fit in with Reed's chronicling of the transition from animality to humanity? Once again, Reed's "evidence," when placed in context, hardly supports her theories.

### The Mundugumor and Tchambuli

As a final entry in this section on Evelyn Reed's lack of scientific approach with regard to her evidence, I would like to cite the way she utilized one of the books mentioned in her bibliography: *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, by Margaret Mead. This book deals with three tribes in New Guinea, the Arapesh, the Mundugumor, and the Tchambuli. But a reader of *Woman's Evolution* would have heard of only the first of these three. There are four references to the Arapesh listed in the index of Reed's book; there are none for the Mundugumor or the Tchambuli. Several quotes are taken from Mead's work, but all deal with the Arapesh.

There is a reason why Reed has chosen to ignore the information concerning the other two tribes contained in *Sex and Temperament*: It does not fit in with her schema. In fact, the study of the Arapesh also, I believe, if taken as a whole, would not bear up Reed's arguments, but she is able to at least abstract a few details and put them forward as corroboration of her theory. For the other tribes, she is unable to do even that.

What does Mead report? First the Mundugumor:

"The society is not organized into clans, as is the Arapesh, so that a group of related individuals form a permanent unit, bound together by common blood, a common name, and common interests. Instead, Mundugumor social organization is based upon a theory of a natural hostility that exists between all members of the same sex, and the assumption that the only possible ties between members of the same sex are through members of the opposite sex. Instead therefore of organizing people into patrilineal groups or matrilineal groups, in either one of which brothers are bound together in the same group as either their father or their mother's brother, the Mundugumor have a form of organization that they call a *rope*. A rope is composed of a man, his daughters, his daughter's sons, his daughter's sons' daughters; or if the count is begun from a woman, of a woman, her sons, her son's daughters, her sons' daughters' sons, and so on. All property, with the exception of land, which is plentiful and not highly valued, passes down the rope; even weapons descend from father to daughter. A man and his son do not belong to the same rope, or respect the same totemic bird or animal. A man leaves no property to his son, except a share in the patrilineally descended land; every other valuable goes to his daughter. Brothers and sisters do not belong to the same rope; one is bound in allegiance to the mother, the other to the father." (Dell Publ. Co., 1973, p. 172)



There are other aspects of Mundugumor culture which contradict Reed's theory as well. For example, the social ideal for both males and females is the violent, self-centered individual. All that can be said is that there is simply no place in Reed's schema for the Mundugumor, and therefore she simply chooses to ignore their existence.

What becomes of some of Reed's foremost assertions in the face of such a primitive group (one which practiced cannibalism and head-hunting until recent years, and which should, therefore, be close to Reed's construct)? What about the cooperative abilities of the females? What of the idea that matrilineality is the primary form of organization? What of the lack of primitive knowledge of paternity (such knowledge would be required for a system like this to develop)?

An examination of the information in Mead's book concerning the Tchambuli presents similar problems:

"The structure of the society is patrilineal, groups of men, all related through male ancestors, and bearing a common name, own strips of territory. . . ." (Ibid., p. 236)

This patrilineality means that exogamy among the Tchambuli has exactly the opposite effect than Reed attributes to it:

"The women remain, however, a solid group upon whom he (a Tchambuli boy) depends for support, for food, for affection. There is no split between the women of his blood group and the wife whom he marries, for he marries a daughter of one of his mother's half-brothers or cousins. He calls her by the name which he calls his own mother, *aiyai*. All of the little girls of his mother's clan, to all of whom he looks hopefully, he addresses as *aiyai*. One of his 'mothers' will some day be his wife." (Ibid., p. 236)

### Skepticism required

The extreme diversity of social institutions, family forms, religious and other beliefs among different primitive groups means that abundant illustrations can easily be found to defend a theory such as the one which Evelyn Reed presents us with in *Woman's Evolution*. But what is required is not the picking and choosing of data to defend a particular theory. Rather what is necessary is the weighing of all available information to see if the thesis will stand up in practice.

I am sure that there are many problems with Reed's book similar to the ones I have discussed here which I have left out. However, it seems to me that even the points I have found would require us to view with extreme skepticism the conclusions presented in *Woman's Evolution*.

### III. The Decisive Proof of Reed's Theory

One of the tests of any scientific theory is not only that it be able to explain existing data on a subject, but that by following it through to a logical conclusion, we can determine specific tests for the idea to determine its validity. In the case of *Woman's Evolution*, such a test is indeed possible. But far from confirming Reed's hypothesis, the results would tend to deny it.

Reed believes that primitive social organization passed

through a series of universal stages, from the initial matriarchal primal horde, to the clan, the phratry, and the tribe (see p. 198), which is finally overthrown by the rise of class society. The family, likewise, went through an evolution, being completely absent in the initial stages, and eventually culminating in the nuclear family, instituted at the same time and old tribal institutions were overthrown.

From a materialist point of view, such an evolution of social institutions would have to be based upon some basic social force, and ultimately must rest on the development of economic productivity to a level which would push new institutions to evolve. At least on this point, Reed is consistent with such a materialist approach. She states that it was the development of technology and production which resulted in the breakdown of the matriarchal forms, through such institutions as patrilocal marriage, bride price, etc.

Such a contention, that the social forms we are concerned with evolved under the pressure of the developing productive capacities of primitive groups would suggest to me a test which would go a long way toward determining the accuracy of Reed's theory. For if such an evolution took place as Reed describes it, there should be a correspondence among primitive groups still existing, or existing into historical times, between the level of productive technology, and the forms of social organization. If the correspondence is not one to one, we would at least expect some correlation between these factors.

To be more precise, we would expect that the most primitive groups—those still reliant upon hunting and gathering—would at least show a tendency to be closer to the original matriarchal institutions, and furthest from a family structure. At the very least, we would expect to find more "survivals" of the earliest period.

In fact, however, the vast majority of such hunting and gathering societies exhibit patrilineal and patrilocal forms. The two major exceptions are the Andaman islanders, the the Indians of the American Pacific Northwest. It is interesting, again, to note that it was these two groups upon which Reed relied most heavily for data to back up her theory. The vast majority of primitive peoples who exhibit any "matriarchal" forms or "survivals" no longer rely primarily upon hunting and gathering, but upon agriculture and horticulture.

There is not, on the strength of logic alone, any basis from a materialist point of view to insist that matriarchy is the only possible form of primitive organization. Nor is there any basis for denying the possibility of family organization to primitive peoples. There is nothing incompatible between the family, even the nuclear family, of course as a social, rather than economic unit, and primitive communism. Nor is there anything incompatible with a patriarchal structure. There is also no logical contradiction between a form of family organization along with a matriarchal structure.

One confusion which I believe should be cleared up here is the distinction between matrilineality and matriarchy. One of Reed's arguments against the possibility of patriarchal organization is that the concept of paternity was unknown to primitive peoples. For the purposes of discussion here, let us accept that as given. But knowledge of paternity is not required for males to be the social leaders of a group. We even saw this among hordes of monkeys, where the dominant male was the group leader

in many respects; certainly monkeys do not have any knowledge of paternity. Acknowledgement of paternity is only required for the determination of descent through the male line. It is possible to have a matrilineal society which is patriarchal, and vice-versa.

Since there is no inherent contradiction between primitive communism and either patriarchal or matriarchal forms, either family structure or the absence thereof, the burden of proof is on Evelyn Reed to show a correlation between the proximity to the most primitive economic modes and matriarchal organization. I do not think she would be successful in such an endeavor.

#### IV. Evelyn Reed and Frederick Engels

Evelyn Reed presents her theories as the continuation of the Marxist method in anthropology, as originated by Engels in his work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. However, a study of Engels's work does not bear out Reed's contention. Both Engels's method—his respect for science—and his purpose in writing the book were completely different from those of Evelyn Reed.

Firstly, on the question of method, one of the characteristics which is most striking about *The Origin of the Family* is that all of its conclusions are couched in some phrases as "on the basis of the best available information" or "it seems likely that." In other words, all of the conclusions are made in a tentative way, open to the test of future data which might require their adjustment or complete revision. It is also to Engels' credit that he did, indeed, rely upon the best available scientific information of his time in attempting to draw his conclusions.

As I believe we have seen, Reed's procedure differs from Engels'. Perhaps we could excuse her absolute pronouncements about primitive society as resulting from honest overzealousness. After all, Reed would not be the first scientist to be guilty of such excesses. What is completely inexcusable, however, is her complete disregard of all new data which has been discovered about primitive cultures since the time of Marx and Engels, except for that which can be fitted into her system. For Marxism to have any value in the field of anthropology it must be used to analyze and create order from such new data as it arises.

#### Bourgeois Anthropology and Marxist Anthropology

Reed's contention on this score is that current schools of anthropology represent a reaction against the discoveries of the early anthropologists, and have denied the discoveries of the pioneers such as Morgan, because they threatened to undermine bourgeois ideology on the question of the sacredness of the patriarchal nuclear family. There is no doubt that much bourgeois anthropology is not interested in creating order from the mass of empirical evidence which it has uncovered, and in general deals with each group in a strictly empirical manner; however this in no way absolves Marxists from the problem of explaining the new data and integrating it into our conceptions.

To illustrate this point, let us look at a different field of the social sciences where bourgeois empiricism holds sway—economics. The establishment forces in economics have steadfastly denied all of the basic Marxist contributions to this field. They have repeatedly pointed, for

example, to the long capitalist boom since World War II as evidence that Marx's conclusions about the collapse of the capitalist system were completely incorrect.

Now, groups claiming to be Marxists have reacted to this same empirical data—i.e., the growth and expansion of capitalism in the past quarter century—in various ways. One approach is to simply deny that the boom has taken place at all; to state that the statistics are all a trick of pro-establishment bourgeois economists. Such an approach, as we all know, will lead only up a sectarian blind alley. The correct Marxist approach has been to explain the new data on the basis of Marxist principles and incorporate it into our understanding of political economy, even if that required the revision of some conclusions that had been reached before the new information became available.

The fact that bourgeois anthropologists have amassed information in an attempt to bolster bourgeois ideology should not surprise us. But what is needed is not an attempt to wish their data away, but rather an attempt to incorporate it into a coherent system of Marxist anthropology. To do this will, of course, require the reinterpretation of the material, the addition of data which is ignored by establishment anthropologists, and also, undoubtedly, the adjustment of our concepts and understandings in the light of new information.

#### Anthropology and Women's Liberation

The second area in which Reed's book differs from the work of Engels is in their purposes in writing them. Engels was not attempting to prove the former universality of the matriarchy. He simply accepted this as a given based on the work of Morgan. What Engels was attempting to do was to demonstrate how, under the pressure of a growing social surplus product, the family, private property, and the state had developed out of primitive conditions in order to fill particular social needs.

But what is it that Reed sets out to do? She is trying far more than to demonstrate that the patriarchal nuclear family is not a universal institution of pre-class society, and how it arose; or that the oppression of women within the family structure is a product of the development of social classes and the need to oppress all but a select few. Rather, Reed is attempting to demonstrate that a particular form of social organization, the matriarchy, was a universal prehistoric institution. In other words, she does not take the facts now known about primitive cultures and try to explain, using a historical materialist method, how class society and the oppression of women evolved from such primitive cultures. She tries, instead, to twist and distort the facts until a universal matriarchy is somehow squeezed out of them.

The reason that Reed clings so tenaciously to the matriarchal theory—she makes a belief in the matriarchy synonymous with a belief in historical materialism—is that she believes it is a valuable item for the women's liberation movement. In an article in *SWP Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 31 No. 32 entitled "Is The Nuclear Family Eternal? An Answer to Comrade Vernon," she makes this point quite explicit:

"After almost twenty-five years of research into the data and positions of both the nineteenth and twentieth century investigators, I am completely convinced of the former

existence of the matriarchal commune, and the priority of the collective clan unit over the individual father-family unit.

"This subject, which was previously regarded as academic and having little relevance to current events, has now been catapulted into prominence through the rise of the women's liberation movement. Its second wave brought about a recognition of the family as a prime source of women's degradation today and this in turn has aroused interest in the matriarchal period when the family did not exist and women were not degraded and oppressed. This explains why I "hang on" to a hypothesis that can be of such immense service to women fighting for their liberation, and why I refuse to be intimidated by the weight of the dominant empiricist schools today which try to deny or conceal the truth."

The problem which revolutionists and supporters of women's liberation face, however, is that a hypothesis can only be of "immense service" to a cause if it is correct. It does not strengthen the women's liberation movement, nor the intervention of the Marxist movement within it, to "hang on" to a thesis which cannot be sustained by the weight of scientific evidence.

In fact, I do not believe that it is necessary to demonstrate the universality of a prehistoric matriarchy in order for anthropology to debunk any myths which bourgeois ideology would like to present about the family or the role of women in society.

If what we are attempting to demonstrate is that the bourgeois myths about eternal human nature, and the sacredness of class institutions, including the patriarchal nuclear family, are completely fraudulent, then the very diversity and variety of primitive cultures, and the easily demonstrable role of women in many of these cultures, is

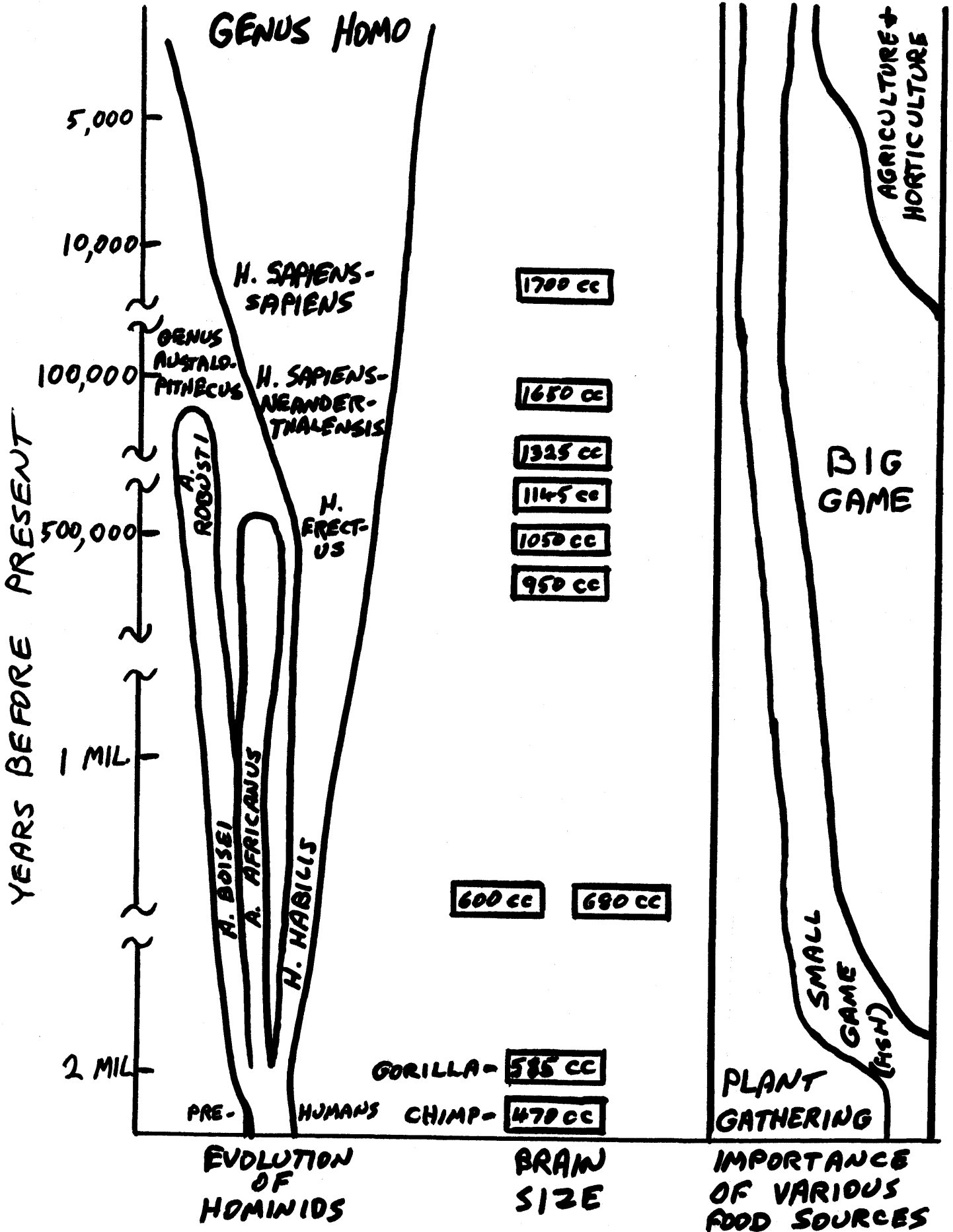
the strongest argument we can present. In the interests of advancing the women's liberation movement, let us take even the evidence of the bourgeois anthropologists and show how it explodes their own ideology.

## V. Conclusion

There is a danger in the SWP becoming too closely associated with the advocacy of the ideas presented in *Woman's Evolution*. We must be quite clear that this book represents Evelyn Reed's opinions, and is not a question of Marxist or Trotskyist orthodoxy.

This would be true, of course, even if the scholarship and research were completely rigorous, and there was no disagreement about the conclusions within our movement. Given the dubious nature of Reed's work, however, and I believe I have outlined sufficient cause to use that term, it would be even more serious for us to get involved as an organization in the advocacy of ideas which are beyond our ability to judge objectively.

The most serious danger, of course, would be the discrediting of the party resulting from the discrediting of Reed's book. This seems an unlikely development, at least in the short run, and at least in most circles which we are interested in, since they are no better equipped to judge the validity of the book than are most members of the SWP. However, the party is also interested in spreading its influence in scientific and intellectual circles, and an effort along the lines of *Woman's Evolution* is unlikely, it seems to me, to help us in this effort. In the long run, in any case, I do not believe that we will be able to maintain a defense of Reed's book.



## AGAINST THE STREAM

By Randy Christensen, Milwaukee Branch

July 29, 1975

The construction of the revolutionary workers party must be seen as an absolutely integral aspect of the revolutionary political maturation of the class as a whole, but most concretely of its most militant layer. It must never be seen as abstracted from this, for this is the whole purpose of constructing a revolutionary party—that is, to fuse the revolutionary program with the most militant vanguard layer of the class, and through them, the entire class, and its allies, and to infuse in this layer, and through them, the entire class an optimistic spirit of combativity against the ruling class.

Concretely, this means propagandistic elaboration of our program—agitational calls for action—and the leading in the organization of the actions so called.

The mobilization of the workers on the basis of our program—in contradistinction to the reformist program of the bureaucracy, and their opportunist apologists among the rank and file, as well as the ultra-left program of the different sectarian tendencies—is the solution, raised in relation to the concrete experience of the masses, to the multi-faceted attack now taking place against the workers, as well as to the fundamental problems that aren't unique to the present phase of this crisis-torn system.

We must concretely explain the character of, and reasons for the present crisis, in its long and short term sense, and flowing from this, to patiently and persistently attempt to convince the masses, through the process of struggle, of the necessity for abolishing the capitalist state and establishing a workers state to resolve the contradictions and misery inherent in class society. In addition, we must convince them of the lessons we have drawn from the history of the class struggle, revolutionary victories and defeats, etc.

The central most important lesson in this respect is the necessity for class independence. Primarily this means political independence, but since the organizational flows generally from the political, it also means organizational independence. Political independence signifies a rejection of the different political solutions, or political programs that the ruling class offers to resolve the crisis—conservative, reformist, and fascist (and the various shades in between). The reason for this is that we see no way out of the crisis of capitalism inside of the capitalist system, or in the context of the rule of the capitalists, and because their programs are limited to that system.

The trade union bureaucracy continues its slavish dependence on the capitalist class politically, and this finds its organizational expression in its continued support for different reformist capitalist politicians, primarily from the Democratic party. As well, they continue their campaign to maintain this dependence among the rank and file, where the illusions about the “need” for this dependence is breaking down, spurred on daily by the continued exposures of the capitalist state and the parties that run it growing out of Watergate.

The main task in the immediate period ahead remains in exposing and opposing continued support of capitalist politicians, and in agitating for and attempting to organize a congress of labor (on a local, state, and national level). In addition, we should continue propagandizing for a Labor party, as well as continued utilization of our election campaigns. The strategic goal must be seen in the construction of a revolutionary tendency within the unions, in the form of caucus based around the central points of our program, as well as among the unemployed in the form of unemployed organizations around the same program. It should be understood that this work is the concrete work of building an alternative leadership, a class struggle leadership, that has its perspectives set on the seizure of power.

The central points are for union democracy, for organizing all workers into unions, for shortening the work week with no cut in pay and for an escalator clause in all contracts. It must stand in principled opposition to all layoffs, and pose the most concerted and militant struggle against them. It must stand in opposition to racist and sexist discrimination and oppression, and must chart a clear struggle to abolish it. It must stand clearly opposed to the deportation of undocumented workers and in solidarity with the struggles of workers and the oppressed internationally, and thereby unconditionally opposed to the Imperialist war. It must stand against any wage or other control over the unions by the state. It must stand opposed to the Democratic and Republican parties and take the lead in developing a mass Labor party that would lead the struggle on all these fronts and fight to establish a workers government, and to nationalize industry under workers control.

The process of getting from where we are today to the point where millions will be fighting under this banner is a long one with many dangers, twists, and turns.

The two centrally most important tools to avoiding pitfalls are criticism and self criticism. We must maintain a granite hardness in not budging from our principled political program, while at the same time, maintaining a throughgoing and creative flexibility in all things tactical.

This course will include participation in different groupings; confronting the bureaucracy head on, in one instance, and outflanking them in another, all the while exposing and weakening the floor they stand on until we succeed in pulling the floor completely from under their feet, at which point the seizure of power will be on the order of the day—on the subjective level.

This work today is the preparation, and must be clearly understood. The key task is to intervene in the struggles of the workers to raise the struggle from the economic to the political, that is, to develop political class consciousness and to infuse the masses with an intensive combative spirit, and to recruit, in ones and twos. This is the preparation for the Revolution.

## Unemployment

Unemployment is a consistent aspect of life under capitalism. It serves the interests of the ruling class and is opposed to the needs and interests of the working class. Unemployment hurts and causes tremendous unnecessary suffering among employed as well as unemployed workers. Full employment is the only realistic solution for workers.

Massive illusions exist within the working class that full employment is impossible—a necessary evil—and that unemployment is inevitable. The labor bureaucracy perpetuates this illusion to cover their inaction to end unemployment due to their collusion with the capitalist class. Workers think our hands are tied when it comes to such a massive problem.

This is one of the pillars of illusion upon which the bureaucracy rests. Our program can expose that illusion or it can be stretched out of shape and become turned into propping up this illusion. In my opinion the preferential hiring demand falls into the latter category, because it begins with accepting unemployment as, at least for now, insurmountable, which is an illusion.

We must put forward our program as posing a solution to unemployment that can be implemented today—not as posing a struggle to deal with the composition of the unemployed—or to say “since *everyone can't have a job*—the jobless should reflect the composition of the population.” The problem of the discriminatory composition of the unemployed (disproportionately higher amounts of Blacks, women, youth, etc.) is a problem of the racist, sexist, and age-discriminatory policies of employment of the capitalist class, and should properly be taken up there. This also reflects that the union bureaucracy has abrogated their responsibility on these questions, and that the unions must be made to fight this discrimination (as well as the unemployed movement must be solidly based on this principle, but this task is much easier) as well as unemployment as a whole, until every unemployed worker finds employment.

But this approach precludes a willingness, nay, a necessity to fight against, expose, and finally depose of the reformist bureaucracy, in toto. In my opinion the leadership's proposal to fight for preferential hiring fell into the trap of having the impoverished fight over the crumbs that fall from the table that the ruling class and labor lieutenants dine at.

The ruling class considers unemployment necessary (some say necessary evil). The reformist bureaucracy says full employment is necessary but most think it impossible. But since action speaks louder than words, they see and pose no real solution. The attitude of the bureaucracy towards full employment is characterized by a through going pessimism—through and through, and therefore they consider the importance of struggling to eliminate unemployment as something that rocks the boat unnecessarily—unless under the guise of “fighting for jobs for all”, they are able to channel this struggle into acceptable channels of reform. In periods of acute class struggle, the leading bodies of the trade unions aim to become masters of the mass movement to render it harmless.

Unemployed people and rank and file workers, in general, still maintain the illusion perpetrated by the employing class and their labor lieutenants that some

unemployment is necessary, although this illusion has been steadily breaking down with the deepening of the crisis.

Precisely in totally breaking down this illusion, and instilling optimistic self confidence in the masses that full employment is possible only if they will it and act on it (not of course, abstracted from program) consists of the first major task in developing a movement of the masses to liquidate unemployment.

But precisely in achieving that task is what a struggle for preferential hiring stands in the way of because it concentrates on shuffling the composition of, as opposed to removing the category of, unemployment. In doing so it helps to prop up instead of break down the illusion that unemployment is necessary.

Beginning from that general context, it must be clearly stated that to “unite and fight” is not enough to liquidate unemployment. It is necessary that the unity and combativity have a concrete program to solve the unemployment problem and we propose that the work week be shortened with full pay, and that a massive public works program be launched until *every* worker secures their most basic right to a job. Also, until every worker is employed, that they get full union pay.

Unemployment must be viewed as an attack on the entire class and the perspective of independent working class action, to implement above demands, must be posed as a partial solution to the generalized and many faced attack taking place against the working class. Nothing else is acceptable. Every worker has a right to a job.

## Inflation

Beyond, but absolutely and inextricably linked to the 30 for 40 demand as a solution to unemployment is the central need to see that *inflation* is stopped. To meet this problem we propose organizing all workers into unions and demand a cost of living escalator clause in all union contracts. In addition we propose price-watch committees controlled by the unions be established. And, here again, as throughout, it must be clearly stated that this problem (rising costs) wasn't created by workers, and that workers shouldn't be made to pay for it. Also, we must use this demand to expose the bureaucracy's inaction in the face of 12 percent annual inflation.

The securement of these demands is really the securement of forty hours pay.

Without an escalator clause inflation will eat the 40 hour pay away. Really, this is the Americanized sliding scale of wages.

## Layoffs

Layoffs, as with inflation and unemployment must be seen as an attack on the working class as a whole, by the capitalists in the context of *their* crisis. Workers didn't cause it—workers shouldn't pay for it. The layoffs represent an attempt by the ruling class to cut costs and maintain or drive up profits.

Layoffs, as with unemployment must be seen as an attack not simply on those being laid off or those unemployed. It also is an attack on the employed workers, organized and unorganized, because the threat of unem-

ployment serves as a very heavy lever to keep down struggles for better wages and against steadily deteriorating working conditions. Also it serves as an especially heavy hammer against unionizing drives, and one other most obvious purpose is to keep workers fighting each other for the few jobs they throw out—part of the old divide and conquer scheme.

The response of the entire working class must be—with all the power we can muster—absolutely no!!

In dealing with this question, Comrade Hansen states the following, “Like battles on these issues [for better working conditions—R.C.] the battle against unemployment [layoffs—R.C.] is an aspect of the struggle for a decent standard of living.” And that to “adopt an ultimatic stance on such questions in individual plants would open us up—and correctly so—to the charge of ultra left sectarianism.” Since this quote appeared under “The Problem of Layoffs,” I feel justified in assuming that Comrade Joe meant that we shouldn’t adopt an “ultimatic” stance on the question of layoffs. I’m not sure what he means by ultimatic. But in my opinion, our approach should be unconditional opposition to any layoffs and agitational support for direct action to stop them (slow downs, sit downs, picket lines, work stoppage, strike, general strike, etc.). Where and to what extent we are able to be successful depends on the relationship of forces. Is this an “ultimatic stance”? Is this ultra left sectarianism? If this, you think, I’m obliged to repeat that—to a revolutionist, the charge of sectarianism, coming from an opportunist, must sometimes be recognized as a compliment.

The employers complain “we’re losing money”—they got to cut back costs and increase prices. The bureaucrats are their echo among the workers—“they’re losing money—they say their product isn’t selling—layoffs are a necessary evil.” Our hands are tied. They speak cynically because they know the billions of profit that’s made and they know the power of the class. The rank and file are taken in by these illusions somewhat, but not nearly as deeply as on the unemployment question.

In this context we must raise the demand to open the books to the workers. Let the workers see how much money they are “losing”.

If this demand is realized, which it has been a few times, it is also necessary that we propagandize previously around the concept that if they are so inefficient as to lose money, then we propose nationalization under workers control.

This is all designed to expose the capitalist class for what it is—profit hungry, and also to expose their lieutenants among the ranks of labor. And the illusions they perpetuate on the so-called “necessity” of layoffs. To this we must counterpose shortening the work week with no cut in pay and no layoffs—for strike action against them—full compensation for full duration of any workers laid off—layoffs should take place by date of hire—seniority on the job.

We must champion the concept that “the only justifiable layoff, is no layoff at all.” They are “necessitated” (by this I mean “indefinite” layoffs) only by the drive for bigger profits by the employers—absolutely unnecessary and harmful to all workers. It is precisely in breaking down the bureaucracy’s most important weapon, the pessimistic illusion that we can’t do anything in the face of the layoffs, that they’re inevitable, etc. That must be our first

major task in developing a movement among the masses against the layoffs, of developing resistance. But precisely in achieving that task is what a struggle for preferential seniority, or preferential layoffs stands in the way of because it concentrates on shuffling the composition, as opposed to eliminating the category of the layoffs. In doing so it helps to prop up rather than break down the illusion that the layoffs are necessary.

One additional point to consider in the whole seniority system question is that young people are also disproportionately affected by layoffs—young people are always last hired, first fired—is the conclusion that, because of this, the seniority system should be totally revised so that the proportion of young people remain the same?

One additional demand I think we should make is “to revise the seniority system so that the present 60 day waiting period is eliminated, and that, upon entry into a closed shop the worker be considered seniority employee with full seniority rights”. I propose this in place of the present leadership’s scheme of preferential seniority.

As I stated previously, the whole problem of the disproportionate share of Blacks, women, youth, etc. among the unemployed, as well as the layoffs, is a problem of the racist, sexist, and age discriminatory patterns of employment of the capitalist class and should properly be taken up there. The unions must be made to fight this discrimination.

It’s been said in the discussion that the layoffs are racist and sexist because of the disproportionate way they’re hitting Blacks and women. And this is true. These are two characteristics of the layoffs. And it’s been stated further that therefore the layoffs represent an attack on the movement for Black rights and women’s rights that have developed. And this is also true, but isn’t it also true that the most fundamental characteristic of the layoffs is their anti-working class content—and doesn’t it represent, and shouldn’t this be center stage for us, an attack on the entire class? And shouldn’t we use all efforts to mobilize the class, as a class, to stop the layoffs and end unemployment? As opposed to struggling to change the character of the attack and change the composition of those unemployed and laid off.

### **Against White Racism**

Racism is a special feature of class society which serves the interests of the ruling class. White racist ideology is a systematic set of mythical ideas developed by the “leading bourgeois educators” particularly in Europe and the Americas, to justify the enslavement of the “Third World”, and Africa in particular.

White racist oppression of the African slaves through the “Middle Passage” and in the Americas, was the most dehumanizing experience any people in all history have faced. Because of this, along with the historic failure of the workers movement to struggle against this oppression; racist, chauvinist illusions are deeply embedded in the consciousness of the American working class.

These racist illusions must be fought against and thoroughly exposed. These illusions are due primarily to ignorance, and are fostered by the labor bureaucrats due to a conscious betrayal of the most oppressed and exploited. Short of a massive breaking down of these racist illusions among white workers, the unity of the class, a precondition of the revolution, will prove impossible. This task

must be viewed as central to revolutionary activity. Economic insecurity can serve to unite the class in common struggle, or to intensify the internal conflicts between different sectors of the working class. This depends wholly on the political maturation of the class. The ruling class, which presently determines the size of the work force, seeks to keep white workers thinking that Black workers are responsible for their plight and vice-versa. To counter this illusion we must propose a struggle for economic security, a unified class struggle to attain jobs and economic security for all. This in a general sense. As well we must pose a struggle, first of all against the divisive and racist employment, upgrade, and pay policies of the employment class, by demanding an end to discrimination in hiring and upgrading, and by launching a struggle against these policies and for union hiring halls.

Secondly, we must pose a struggle for equal pay.

Thirdly, we must pose our general solutions to unemployment, inflation, and layoffs. As well, we must concretize what mass public works should be used for. To rebuild the ghettos and barrios first of all.

But since racist oppression isn't limited to the economic sphere, our program must pose solutions to all aspects of life where racist oppression is manifested. This means a fight against segregation at all levels—housing, education, etc.

Today, this aspect of the struggle must revolve around the struggle against de facto school segregation. Today this struggle is breaking most rapidly in the Boston situation.

This question must be taken up and battled out within the working class. We must pose a unified class struggle to defend this desegregation process. We must expose the collaboration between the state and the racists. In my opinion, this exposure has been blurred because of the failure of the leadership to concretize, at least in a propagandistic form, how the Black students can be concretely defended, without, or short of, the introduction of federal troops, which, they assure us, will defend the best interests of the Black students and ruling class alike.

To call on the bourgeois state to enforce its own laws to defend peoples lives, in and of itself, is not unprincipled. But, to build a movement to defend those being attacked, and pose as the sole or even most desirable means of defense as being the introduction of the bourgeois army is, at best, sowing illusions which must be exposed.

To suggest that the troops, even if introduced, would necessarily defend Black people's best interests, or even lives, is to encourage dependence—certainly in the absence of a proposed alternative means of defense, i.e. self defense—and to sow illusions as to the nature of the troops.

In his attempt to justify this course, Comrade Hansen, in an IP article, asks if the demand for federal troops can help lay the basis for developing self defense. The answer is yes, IF that is the way it is posed—that is, if we raise, along with the federal troops demand, the concept of organizing, in the face of federal, state, and local inaction, worker-student-community self defense organizations, and utilize the racist passivity of the state to expose it, and to forward the concrete work of building such organizations. As far as I can see, though I wish I were wrong, this is not the manner in which this demand has been raised. *Therefore*, the posing of the question, in my opinion,

seemed rather demagogical. Instead, in my opinion, dangerous illusions in terms of blurring over the irreconcilable differences between the best interests of the Black masses and the bourgeois state were posed. From the articles I read, the dangers involved in illusions, about reforming the army to defend our interests, are either minimized or dismissed altogether as sectarian hair-splitting.

The demand for federal enforcement of their laws protecting people's rights, can be effective in exposing the complicity of the state, and in spurring the development of self defense, if that is how it is used. I propose that it be used thusly, and therefore, far from being a central demand, falls in the context of being part of a defensive formulation for the organization of self-defense, and the call for worker-student self-defense group replaces it with a central importance in an agitational manner. This is called for, not by the people, but by the objective situation. In this respect, it is important to note that the demand for federal troops was raised not by "the Black community" in Boston, but by the reformist misleaders of the Black community. They say "all necessary force, including federal troops" should be mobilized in the face of federal inaction, we must shoot this back at them, and pose the question openly, "does this mean you think the workers and students should organize defense squads?" We say yes. The reformists say no. We must use this to further expose and weaken the reformists and to spur on the self-organization of the oppressed—concretely here—in worker student defense guards. This must be done to expose the reformists who, behind the "troops demand" let the attacks escalate on the Blacks who remain unprepared to repel these attacks.

That self-defense be agitated for under "worker-student self-defense" is emphasized by the emerging openly anti-communist character of this racist drive, which daily becomes clearer.

Another absolutely essential aspect of the struggle against the racist attack in Boston is clarifying our position on how and when "quality education" will be a reality for Blacks and all poor and working-class people. We must patiently explain that the present racist character of education in capitalist America stems from its essentially bourgeois nature. We must further explain that there is no such thing as quality education for workers and oppressed under capitalism, and that nothing short of a fundamental social revolution, where the workers take power, will produce such an educational system. The present bourgeois "educational" institutions serve the ruling class.

We must also state clearly that equal education, although unlikely under capitalism as well, is an absolutely essential prerequisite to quality education. We must seek to make crystal clear the racist and unequal manner that education now functions in. From this we must state, as we have, that it is the right of those treated in a racist way to decide how they seek to equalize it—through busing and/or increased funding. In addition we must clearly state who we favor controlling these schools, the students, workers, and faculty.

### **On Black Nationalism**

For the past several years on the national struggle against white racist oppression, the leadership has stated



its support for "the nationalism of the oppressed." This sort of blanket support must be ended.

Black nationalism is a petty bourgeois multi-class ideology of class unity, which is counterposed to proletarian internationalism, which is an international working class ideology of international working class unity with an unconditional and irreconcilable hostility to the world ruling class. Nationalism necessarily limits the "problems", and therefore the solutions, to those which the nation or nationality (in the case of African Americans) have in common, where as proletarian internationalism "limits" the problems to those problems particular to the oppressed nationality as well as extending them to include those that the workers of the oppressed nationality hold in common with the workers throughout the world. It logically flows from nationalist ideology that a united nationalist struggle will lead to liberation. Proletarian internationalism assumes that only the united struggle of the workers of all nationalities, for power can lead to liberation from national oppression and class exploitation.

What this means is that the conscious nationalists perpetuate illusions which must be combatted and exposed in order for the masses of an oppressed nationality to attain proletarian internationalist consciousness. By stating that Marxists support Black nationalism or nationalism of any sort, the present leadership capitulates before, and helps to prop up, as opposed to breaking down, these petty bourgeois illusions. In relation to this it must be clearly understood that the "nationalist" consciousness of the broad masses of an oppressed nationality—has within it a wholly democratic thrust which we must seek to identify with in the face of racist oppression we must see as fundamentally progressive Black community identification, pride, and dedication to collective mass struggle to eliminate it. It remains for us to extend this hostility, and willingness to struggle against racist oppression throughout the entire class, and to say that this is not enough. It is necessary that this struggle take place under a concrete program which poses fundamental solutions to the fundamental problems posed. The final point is agreed upon—Marxists lend unconditional support to the struggle against national oppression and for the right to self-determination on the Black party. The concept of supporting the construction of an organization of Black workers around our program is a good one. The use of the "Black Party" slogan hasn't clarified this, and I think it should be clarified. Where ever we forward this concept in the future, it should be under a call for an independent Black workers organization, independent programmatically from the bourgeoisie's solutions as well as the Black petty bourgeoisie. This is not to suggest organizational exclusion, but rather a fight for political exclusion of bourgeois and petty bourgeois influence.

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Another essential aspect of the struggle against racist oppression and chauvinist illusions is in the struggle against the deportations.

This aspect is one which goes beyond "White" racism, though encompassing it to include all American chauvinism. The essential illusion propping up this is the supposed "threat" posed by the "illegal alien" to jobs of US workers. To this we must counterpose our economic demands (30 for 40, escalator, unionize, etc.) In addition we must add

solidarity with all workers struggles internationally. Behind the "buy America" campaign lies a genuine attempt by the union bureaucracy to help the world ruling class keep the workers of the world divided and fighting each other. This must be seen as extremely important in fighting against, on the one hand, to build a movement capable of resisting the deportations, and on the other hand, in undermining the bureaucracy, and laying the ground work for their removal. The fight against the deportations should be carried out in close collaboration with our international co-thinkers, including articles in the press, speakers at rallies, etc., where possible.

What has been stated in relation to Black work is generally applicable to Chicano work as well. We should work in La Raza Unida party and attempt to win it to adopting our program and to infuse it with a combative anti-capitalist spirit. This should become a central component of the militant workers struggling to forge a mass workers party around a program of democratic and transitional demands.

In addition, a technical point, the utilization of our campaign material in Spanish is very good and should be expanded where possible, including the *Militant*. Also we should encourage La Raza Unida party to begin a newspaper.

### Against Sexism

The struggle against women's oppression must be seen, as with racism, as an absolutely integral aspect of the coming American Socialist revolution. Women's oppression must be seen as being in the material interests of the capitalist class and as being opposed to the best interests of the working class. Due to the historical subjugation of women throughout the development of class society, extremely deep-seated sexist prejudice exists among the workers in the U.S.A., as well as the world over. In the same way as the White workers have acted as beasts towards the Black workers, though not nearly identical in form, the male workers have acted like a beast towards the female workers, and the straight workers have acted as a beast towards the gay workers. These sexist attitudes, which are based on illusions, propagated by the bourgeoisie and propped up by the labor bureaucracy, must be combatted, exposed, and significantly destroyed, in order to achieve a revolutionary unity of the working class.

It must be seen as the task of the whole workers movement, as with racism, to liquidate sexist oppression and discrimination.

It must be viewed as an elementary revolutionary duty, not just to fight the chauvinist illusions, but to convince the masses, on the basis of their concrete experience, of the need to defend whatever gains have been made against sexist oppression as well as to extend these. This begins with launching a struggle against sexist discrimination in hiring, promotion, etc., combined with the struggle against racism. Beyond that we should also join/initiate struggles to defend/extend free child care, for equal pay, for free abortion, and contraception, etc.

We must combat the illusions perpetuated as well among women, particularly those constructed by the feminists. Feminism is a bourgeois ideology of multi-class female unity. Feminism sees the liberation of women coming through unifying all classes of women around a program that speaks simply to those problems that all classes of

women hold in common, that is a bourgeois program. To these illusions, we must counterpose the Marxist understanding of the road to female emancipation through unifying all workers around a program that speaks to all the problems of women workers, and male workers as well—a proletarian program.

The errors that have been made in this area by the present leadership parallel those made in the other areas.

The abortion coalition should have displayed a class content, but it did not. It should have been posed as a workers united front for abortion (or a women workers for abortion, etc.) Instead, it was conceived by the leadership as a multi-class, single issue, "united-front-type" formation. More on this under antiwar work.

Our perspectives for the Coalition of Labor Union Women must be to first of all break the trade union parochialism and fight to open the door to the most oppressed and organize them. Secondly must be a struggle to win it to the central demands of our program, adapted to the special needs of working women, exposing the reformists and *thirdly*, must be to broaden it more and move it into action. Also we should encourage the formation of a newspaper. This could prove to be another central component of the most militant layer struggling to construct a mass labor party on the basis of a program of democratic and transitional demands.

### **Against Imperialist War**

In relation to our campaign in defense of the Indochinese Revolution it was correct to build the movement around a principled demand and in a massive way, but those are simply two aspects of a revolutionary opposition to Imperialist War. In addition, it is necessary that the nature of Imperialist War, that it is the extension of predatory capitalism internationally serving the interests of the capitalist class, in particular, be clarified. In addition it is necessary that the means to end Imperialist War, the revolutionary mobilization of the workers, be clarified, and that all our work take place within the context of this perspective. Not just to end the war, but to end Imperialist War. Beyond this it was necessary to have clarified that the interests of the workers in the U.S.A. and the world over were on the side of the Indochinese worker-peasant masses politically and militarily. Short of this, and the leadership fell short, there is no revolutionary defeatist opposition.

Fighting for immediate, unconditional withdrawal against all those who would compromise on that most basic position was thoroughly correct. Fighting for mass action was also correct. But, the out now position had long been the dominant position, widely recognized as our responsibility, and yet the leadership held tight from going beyond this position, which even many bourgeois politicians endorsed, and refused to lead the process of continuing to deepen the movement politically. This was

incorrect. It was a maneuver to maintain the organizational alliance with the liberals, which involved the subordination of, one of the pivots of revolutionary antiwar work, the struggle to expose the reformist "solutions" to Imperialist War.

The organizational alliance took place through the single-issue, non-exclusionary, "united-front type" organization.

National Peace Action Coalition (N.P.A.C.) was an action coalition of bourgeois, petty bourgeois, and proletarian forces organized around a single democratic demand. In this coalition the leadership's perspectives were to fight against all attempts to deepen the program, so as to expose the anti-working class character of the liberals opposition to this war. This was one of the key tasks for revolutionaries in the antiwar movement. This was a principled error which leads me to the point that since it didn't have a program nor the intention of seizing state power, it was not a popular front, but it must be said that N.P.A.C., by its very nature served to cover up and justify the fundamental error. The reason is because it was a popular front type formation—which served as a cover for fundamental class differences. It must be clearly stated that participation in N.P.A.C. was not, in and of itself, unprincipled, only the willingness on the part of the party leadership to abandon the struggle, within the coalition, to expose the reformists, and to fight, with the reformists, against all attempts to deepen the program of the coalition.

These were the same mistakes made in our participation in the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition. These policies must be reversed!

### **Defense of the Workers Movement and Victims of Class Injustice**

In terms of self defense of the workers and oppressed, much has been said under the section on racism. One key point remains here and that is the almost complete silence of the leadership in criticizing the pacifist policies of the United Farm Workers leadership in the face of pickets being shot down. This also must be reversed, and the whole question of self-defense must receive a much more open hearing, particularly in relation to the attacks on our movement by the fascists, etc.

In relation to our defense of political prisoners, I think that the policy of the present leadership of keeping the different cases divided is incorrect. I think we should launch a political prisoners defense organization along the lines of the international labor defense of the early C.P. The different cases should be linked together and generalized within such a democratic organization. In order to be really international, it would need to take up the cases of those victimized by bureaucratic repression in the workers states. If this is done, it should be limited to defense of those that have committed themselves to the defense of these revolutions from Imperialism.

# KOMCHVANSTVO

Robert Des Verney,  
Upper West Side Branch, New York Local

August 2, 1975

The discussion generated by the promotion of Comrade Reed's pseudo-anthropology raises a cluster of very serious problems which cannot be handled in this discussion period. These problems would be difficult to thrash out adequately even in an extended literary discussion that was separated out from pre-convention discussion where the attention of comrades is naturally focused on voting issues and on problems more central to the party's normal sphere of activities and thought.

Foremost among these problems are:

1) the relationship between materialism and empirical science (or between materialism and science; there is no science that is not empirical);

2) the relationship between empirical science and a range of nonmaterialist trends of philosophy which can be grouped under the heading *empiricism*;

3) the superiority of the methods and outlook of empirical science, and even of bourgeois empiricism, over pre-scientific and antiscientific modes of thought (medieval scholasticism, utopian rationalism, irrationalism, etc.);

4) the coexistence of pre-scientific and antiscientific (antiempirical) modes of thought with some degree of sophistication in Marxist historical materialism. This bizarre combined and uneven development shows up in a peripheral area (promotion of pseudo-science in an area outside the range of competence of the party and its members) in the SWP, but is characteristic of the normal politics and thinking of all rival political groups claiming adherence to Marxism;

5) areas of common ground and areas of conflict between materialism, specifically Marxist historical materialism, and various bourgeois empiricist trends.

This discussion will involve a bit of pain and embarrassment, but it is worth keeping a sense of proportion. The ability to apply Marxism to social anthropology, ocean-bottom geochemistry, or tensor algebra is not an essential prerequisite for a revolutionary party, nor for an individual revolutionist.

As matters now stand, the SWP is about the *last* place I would advise anyone to look for guidance on social anthropology. But the American Anthropological Association is no place to look for guidance or assistance in building an antiwar movement that puts millions of Americans into action in the streets and effectively thwarts U.S. imperialism in a war vital to its interests. (I think most social anthropologists would appreciate the difference too.)

## Empirical Anthropophagology

In response to my challenge to her speculations on the history of cannibalism, comrade E. Reed has abandoned what little data she claimed to have on the topic, in her

article "Sex differentiation in cannibalism," *DB* vol. 33, no. 10. Her total lack of data to support this crucial part of her system of conjectures on pre-history does not seem to bother her in the least. While it is of no concern to her, anyone interested in scientific investigation of the topic cannot help but be concerned with what relevant data bear on the topic.

In her book, Reed states the following:

p. 72 "the cannibal feast was reserved for men only"

p. 280 "females could not be killed or eaten"

These are *ex cathedra* utterances, handed down with no attempt at verification, to be taken on faith by the readers as Received Belief.

p. 279 "Did the men kill and eat females . . . there is sufficient direct and indirect data to suggest a negative answer."

p. 277 "It is fortunate that at least one survival of this ancient state of affairs was studied by investigators and is now part of the anthropological record." This one "survival" is the situation covered by Métraux, whose study thoroughly disproves her above *ex cathedra* contentions. Comrades may take note that in Reed's haste to dump Hogg's book she simply says nothing about Métraux.

Reed now retreats to a new, less adventurous, *ex cathedra* position: cases of female cannibalism are now no longer *nonexistent*, but "far less plentiful and only an incidental part of the record." How does Reed know this? How is anyone to check this out? Again we are back to *secret data*, mysterious "voluminous reports" and "voluminous data" of the sort we were promised prior to the publication of *Woman's Evolution*. Perhaps in vol. II or vol. III some of this "voluminous data" will be exposed to the light of day, and abandoned just as precipitously when it is revealed as irrelevant, false, or counterfactual to the system of conjectures she has elaborated.

In her rush to shake loose from Hogg's book, Reed resorts to a stratagem that should leave every reader spell-bound with admiration: Reed claims that what she is dumping is "*his* descriptive data," as if I had somehow slipped the item into her bibliography. She also bad-mouths her own reference item unmercifully, now that it is no longer of any use to her. Unfortunately, readers of *WE* who check out the reference will have no way of knowing that she disowned it. Aside from plagiarism, nothing is more contemptible to scientists than deliberate fudging of data, invention of nonexistent data, deliberate suppression of discomfiting controverting data clearly readily available to the author.

For the first time that I am aware of, Reed shows some interest in the reliability of some part of her "voluminous data," the part represented by the now dispensable Hogg and the sources he quotes, and vamps on it. But 90 percent

of the references offered by Reed are either less reliable than Hogg or less relevant to any point Reed is trying to make. Why strain at a Hogg while uncritically swallowing Briffault, Crawley, Frobenius, Hartland, E. Kanter [a Marxist? see *WE*, p. 298], Lippert, Wm. McGee, Raglan, G. Thomson, or the quaint and antiquated Hastings's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*? Hogg's silly editing comments have little bearing on the source material he cites, and that source material is very directly relevant to the question of female cannibalism, on a worldwide basis and over a spectrum of different types of societies.

What is needed perhaps is some publicly stated (not secret and known only to E. Reed) method for separating the reliable source material from the unreliable. Reed rejects the "lurid" material on cannibalism made available by "white men" [sic, p. 21, several times]. Any description of cannibalism that goes into detail is "lurid," and the majority of explorers, missionaries, colonialists, and professionally trained social-anthropologists from whom either unreliable or reliable accounts can be obtained are *white men*. Almost every title in her bibliography is authored by some *white man*, including Frederick Engels. What sort of novel scientific method is this??

To help out the situation, I have some further contributions on women and cannibalism obtained from what I hope are *good white men*. R. Fortune's *Sorcerers of Dobu*, cited repeatedly by Reed in *WE* in connection with cannibalism, mentions women as cannibal meals twice (p. 90, p. 302). Unfortunately, Reed neglects to inform her readers of Reo Fortune's more complete coverage of the subject. Perhaps she will now dump this reference too.

P. Schebesta, *Bambutu, die Zwerge vom Kongo*, Leipzig 1932, reports active female participation in cannibal feasts, p. 254. This is of more pertinent interest for diachronic evolutionary studies of cannibalism, since the Bambutu pygmies are a hunting/gathering people. Schebesta belongs to Father Schmidt's Vienna Catholic missionary anthropologist group, which accepts the word "Matriarchat" in reference to matrilineal rainfall-horticultural peoples, so he can't be *all bad*.

E. Fison and A. Howitt are missionaries who accepted Morgan's views from A to Z, back a century ago before the unspeakable Boas, Radcliffe-Brown, and their ilk introduced consistent scientific methodology and spoiled everything. In *Kamilaroi and Kurnai, Group-Marriage and Relationship, and Marriage by Elopement*, Melbourne-Sydney 1880, Fison reports (p. 214, footnote) that even in Fiji, where he served the Lord as missionary and which is one place where women were commonly banned from (or voluntarily avoided?) cannibal feasts, some of the women "indulged on the sly." One woman "within my own knowledge" participated much more actively and openly. We'll spare the gory details.

There is *nothing secret* about the real data—any data available to comrade Reed are available publicly in print. The literature on the subject does not support Reed's statement that reported incidents of female cannibalism or victimization of females in cannibalism are "far less plentiful."

While we're on the subject, it puzzles me why the conjecture that women universally outgrew cannibalism many eons ago should be more inherently feminist than the verified incidents of female cannibals who fit in quite compatibly with Amazon myths appealing to other feminists.

With not a shred of evidence to back her up, Reed proceeds: "My theory . . . is based upon what we know so far, not upon what is still unknown or uninvestigated . . . the documentation I give sufficiently supports my contention . . ." Even sarcasm stands disarmed in the face of such majestic disdain for material evidence.

But then there is the *theory*—when one has a psychedelic "theory" however divorced from material evidence, who needs data to support or test any aspect of the theory? Reed concedes verbally (*DB* vol. 33, no. 10, p. 21): "Every theory must begin with the empirical data that has been collected on the subject." In practice, Reed neither "begins" with any data nor sees the slightest need to test a theory or conjecture against material evidence later on, and will cavalierly dump any data she has as soon as it is contested.

"Comrade Des Verney . . . is unhappy with my hypothesis that . . . social leadership was first exercised by the women . . ." Comrade Reed cannot resist falling back on this standard demagoguery. Her theory will have to stand or fall on its own merits, whether the critics are misogynists or feminists or anything in-between.

This sort of demagoguery is more grotesque and out of place when used inside the party. In any case, support of Reed's views is no conclusive evidence of devoted support to women's liberation. Promoting this pseudo-science serves as a *diversion* from the struggle. It is compatible with a patronizing attitude: "as long as the women go for it, let Evelyn do her thing, what harm can it do?"

"In his polemic, comrade Des Verney does not object to my theory of cannibalism per se . . . Along with rejecting the matriarchy, he must now try to exorcise, not my theory of cannibalism as such, but my analysis of the sex differentiations that enabled the women to take the lead in its conquest." Can anyone make sense of this? What is left of the theory or the part of the theory dealing with cannibalism once the very material female cannibals intrude and cannot be wished away?

"Des Verney says that the 'burden of proof' is on me to deny Goldenweiser's writings and to 're-establish totemism' as a reality. He doesn't seem to understand that this is precisely what my theory of cannibalism does." Reed has not even begun to deal with Goldenweiser's arguments and facts, which are not sucked out of his thumb in a utopian manner but based on a study of worldwide organized data, a serious painstaking study, covering the various topics concerned with the abstraction "totemism" and dealing conscientiously with opposing views on the subject. To surpass Goldenweiser's effort would require a similar study, taking into account views and relevant data accumulated since that time, and elaborating a new and more adequate theory which might subsume Goldenweiser's and other scholars' views in a more general approach. It would most likely not revert to the older and more naive views limping along before Goldenweiser.

Reed *needs* her theory on cannibalism for her views on "totemism" and *needs* the totemic part of the theory to support her theory on cannibalism. She says as much. There are neither non-utopian arguments nor relevant data to support either. It is a commonplace among scientists (the empiricist rascals!) that a theory retains no value if the sole justification for supplementary hypotheses tacked on to salvage the theory is that they salvage the theory.

"Comrade Des Verney . . . presents no theory of his own on the origin, development, and eradication of cannibalism . . ." Indeed I don't, and I have no intention of weaving any such utopian "theory" out of thin air. Reed's theory will have to stand or fall regardless of whether any of its critics have peculiar esoteric theories of their own to counterpose to it. If this attitude, generally accepted in scientific methodology, seems strange in the SWP, and if Reed's "methodology" is acceptable as less than scandalous, then we need kindergarten lessons on elementary scientific methodology before venturing further into the ambitious promotion of pseudo-scientific fads. And that seems to be the case.

### Female Infanticide

The topic of female infanticide is treated in consistent *ex cathedra* fashion by E. Reed, with such off-the-cuff take-it-or-leave-it statements as: "female infanticide is found in the transitional period from communal ownership to private property" (*WE*, p. 408).

In fact, female infanticide is quite common in the "stage of savagery," i.e. among hunting/gathering peoples, and horticultural peoples. The subject is just as touchy as cannibalism, many peoples who commonly practice it deny it vehemently. The unusually high ratios of boys to girls in many primitive groups tell a different story. Whether female infanticide, killing off a certain proportion of infant girls, is an open part of the group's ideology, or whether it is denied vehemently, whether the primary mechanism is conscious infanticide or selective neglect by the mothers, it is an efficient method for holding down an expanding population that might outstrip the local resources accessible to the population given its primitive mode of production. The abnormally higher ratio of boys to girls resulting offers various advantages in training a corps of fierce warriors. The male/female ratio of 140-160 to 100 tends to level out more evenly in the higher age brackets, or even reverse, as males get killed off in warfare.

This pattern may have bearing on the frequency of unmistakable intense male supremacy and subordination of women in many primitive horticultural and hunting groups. Overt male supremacy and subordination of women is common, but not universal, at most weakly institutionalized, in primitive horticultural and hunting societies. Cross-cultural studies of possible correlation between female infanticide, intensity of tribal warfare, overt male supremacy features in ideology and community life, rainfall horticulture, effects of pressure from encroaching outside societies, are under study (preliminary findings: W. Divale, M. Harris, "Population, warfare, and the male supremacist complex", 1975, unpublished to date).

Results from these studies should be valuable in gaining insights on large-scale relationships between the sexes in hunting/gathering and early horticultural societies. It is still too early to invest definitive conclusions with any certainty.

### Other Speculations

Most of the remainder of Reed's theory is based on unverified *ex cathedra* pronouncements, some of them unverifiable and unrefutable, most of them refuted long ago. The part of the theory dealing with the family

"stages" fell apart under criticism decades ago, and Reed offers nothing new that can withstand scrutiny. Conjectures on incest depend on the part of the theory dealing with the family. Australians show both familial incest rules and clan incest rules.

Reed accepts, without reservations, Morgan's mechanical substages (first stage of savagery, second stage of barbarism, etc.) which have no validity and were refuted in detail six decades ago.

"Ceremonials and practices that have become deformed or degenerated in the course of time, or subjected to the influence of outside forces, must be recognized as such and separated out from examples indicating the original practices. This is the scrupulous scientific way of developing and presenting a new theory." Here Reed announces explicitly her intention to invent and distort data as suits her fancy, to fit her system of conjectures. Since there is no discernible scientific methodology, since Reed rejects any notion of testing any part of her theory against empirical data as *bourgeois empiricism*, she is free to "recognize" whatever she feels like recognizing in the data, or in the case of cannibalism doing without data altogether. Neither she nor anyone else is free to do that in scientific inquiry. But I would not quibble with her freedom to proceed in that manner in that strange mixture of utopianism and "historical materialism" she is working out. But the question again is: why is the party promoting pseudo-science?

The Australian data on clans show that weakly structured interlinked matrilineal and patrilineal clans can both be traced into pre-history. These clans are keyed into the family structure, and do not exist independently of nuclear families, although they are structured differently and cannot be derived from nuclear families by any convincing method. These families, patrilineal, matrilineal, and patrilocal hunting bands are the closest ethnographic evidence that can be mustered for probing into the structure of kinship and conjugal organizations in pre-history. But they all belong to *Homo sapiens*. They support no inferences on the possible types of social organization that existed in pre-hominid societies.

At some time in the very remote past pre-hominid or hominid groups would have featured groups with mother's kin recognized but no conception of father's kin or father. Speculation on the details of the type of social structure is neither verifiable nor refutable outside of a utopian crystal ball. How many stages such structures would have passed through, or whether there was unilineal development of such structures throughout the hominid world, are problems totally in the realm of unverifiable speculation. There is no justification whatever for equating such unknown forms or structures with the known human clans and families.

Primate ethology data indicate males form a consistent and integrated part of primate bands (gorillas, chimpanzees, baboons, macaques). This argues strongly against conjectures of hominid bands from which adult males are expelled.

Comrades may not like that state of affairs, but then we don't have information we would like in many fields, and in many areas of politics today for that matter. We would like to know a lot more about details of life in Cambodia, China, Vietnam, the USSR. But we will be worse off inventing phony data, sucking utopian theories out of our thumbs, rejecting data we find unpalatable or unpleasant

(e.g., mass popularity of Stalinist organizations, theories, and methods), than admitting our ignorance and taking stock of it, a necessary step in moving to acquire knowledge.

## “Evolution”

The abuse of the term “evolution” in the discussion is of a piece with Reed’s description of her variety of utopian rationalism and rejection of science as “historical materialism.” “Evolution” is flung about as a shibboleth, a metaphysical abstraction divorced from material reality, even a demagogic device.

The evolution of an object of inquiry or system, sex-differentiated cannibalism for instance, itself requires study and empirical verification. Before anything meaningful can be said about the evolution of the object of inquiry, it will have to be ascertained whether the object exists in the first place, and how it behaves. Knowledge about its evolution is more like an *intermediate end-point* in the study, a goal to shoot for, leading to further and better informed inquiry—but certainly not the starting point.

Every object of inquiry that exists in reality is going through changes and is probably undergoing an evolutionary process in some one predominant direction. Particular conjectures as to the nature and direction(s) of that evolutionary process have to be advanced and tested empirically. If they are disproved, that does not refute “evolution” in the abstract, that only refutes the particular conjectures.

If Reed’s sex-differentiated cannibalism is a utopia, a chimera, as the evidence indicates, then it cannot be undergoing any evolutionary process in any direction, except as a false abstraction evolving in the heads of those who find the idea attractive. Human cannibalism obviously had been undergoing evolution in any of several unknown directions throughout human history, whether adequate relevant data on the subject are available or not, whether we can develop valid theories about its evolution or not.

Maybe we will never know anything much about the nature of that evolution and its direction(s) over time, because the data needed to test inferences and conjectures are not available. If so, too bad. But that situation is no more tragic than our ignorance and lack of information on any number of other topics: the origin of the solar system, the origin of the family, why dinosaurs became extinct, what’s going on in Cambodia right now, information need to inform a thoroughgoing analysis of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in ample detail.

Reed carries this fixation on “evolution” in the abstract to the absurdity of demanding that challenges to her “voluminous data” be themselves “evolutionary,” whatever that would mean. “There are several things wrong with his procedure. It is non-evolutionary . . .”

Reed’s “evolutionary” schemata are necessarily utopian, since any test of her inadequate “evolutionary” conjectures entails the monstrous sin of “empiricism,” and any critic of her “evolutionary” conjectures will be automatically “anti-evolutionist.” Since Reed has no scientific method for arriving at a verifiable materialist position emphasizing the evolutionary aspect of the object of inquiry, Reed is in effect “anti-evolutionist” in a sense, in

that her approach is a diversion from a genuine evolutionary study with all the difficult, solid empirical work required. But anti-evolutionist only as a special case of being antimaterialist and antiscientific, antiempirical.

As for the hated and despised “anti-evolutionist” social anthropologists (Boas, Lowie, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, etc.), my 1973 statement holds:

“Since the only theory of general historical evolution worth consideration (Morgan’s) was untenable in many respects, the empiricists’ claim that they were not all against ‘history,’ not against ‘evolution’ per se, but for rigorous standards of research and proof, that what they rejected were specific evolutionary and racist schemata, unvalidated and untestable hypotheses and conjectures, cannot be dismissed lightly.”

Social anthropologists sometimes fling the charge “anti-evolutionist” in their polemics, but in an entirely different context from Reed’s, since they share common ground in scientific methodology and canons of inquiry.

Trends concerned with evolutionary studies are major factors in present-day social anthropology, no matter what misinformation Reed feeds herself or the party in that respect. The theoretical discussions on the problem of evolution in general and in particulars, in social anthropology, archeology, and biology, could be of enormous benefit to Marxist scholarship. Notions on “evolution” prevalent today in the party, especially as reflected in acceptance of Reed pseudo-science, are by comparison pathetically naive and sketchy in many respects.

## “Empiricism”

“Bourgeois empiricism” has become an epithet wielded against any insistent demand that Reed-type “historical-materialist evolutionary” conjectures be subjected to verification or refutation against material evidence. “Empiricism” seems to have a wide variety of meanings in the discussion.

For comrade Reed, “empiricist” may mean:

(A) adherents to any of the philosophies generally known as “empiricist”;

(B) practitioners and supporters of empirical science;

(C) materialists and Marxists who practice or support empirical science and its methods, particularly if they do not accept her “historical materialist” and “evolutionary” conjectures.

I have no objection to Reed calling me empiricist—(B) or empiricist—(C) in her lexicon; empiricist—(A) can be dismissed as an epithet.

Empiricists—(A), real empiricists who subscribe to the views of Schlick, Carnap, von Mises, Ayer, Reichenbach, Nagel, Hempel, Popper, etc., include many leading scientists in many fields, and the relationship of their philosophical cerebrations to the actual practice of empirical science is a complex and contradictory one. They have contributed a great deal to the development of the philosophy and practice of science, and have also contributed a great deal to the obfuscation of philosophy of science and of their own thinking, going off on tangents, “chasing their tails” in involuted attempts to construct philosophies that stand “above” both materialism and idealism. There is empiricism gone mad, insane hyperversionist and hyper-operationalist insistence on verifying/refuting not just testable hypotheses but also theoretical constructs, definitions, emotions, moods, underlying

principles, axioms, and every word in every sentence.

Add the pragmatists, the Mach-Avenarius extinct Empirio-critics dealt with by Lenin, the great pioneer empiricists of the past, and who knows what else.

All of them, and empiricism as whole, as a cluster of related philosophical views, represent a great advance for humanity over pre-bourgeois pre-scientific modes of thought, at least in areas of science and technology. This is particularly true of the aspects of empiricism which are closer to the actual practice of science and further removed from the rarefied cloud-castle domains of pure empiricist cogitation.

Antiempirical or utopian rationalism, emphasizing concoction of "theories" devoid of contact with the real world, with the attitude "damn the facts, full speed ahead!" should the "theories" run into conflict with material evidence, is not a self-avowed philosophical school, it just *is*, all around us. It is further removed from Marxism and dialectical materialism than is empiricism at its worst, and is philosophically reactionary compared to empiricism. Marxists lacking sophistication in scientific methodology can slip into this fairly easily, by equating *empirical science* and its methods with *bourgeois empiricism*, and covering their own antiscientific attitudes and habits under the aegis of Marxist polemics against idealist and inadequate *empiricist* modes of thought and inquiry. As we know, Lenin wrote a whole book against *empiricism*, so there can't be anything good about empiricism, can there?

The term "empiricism" or *narrow empiricism* is also often applied to grubbing unimaginative thinking limited to examining only what is readily palpable and right in front of one's nose, seeing or looking for only isolated aspects of the whole, inability to discern the latent connections between things, aversion to launching abstractions and daring theoretical ventures that open up new and unforeseen paths, extreme nihilistic skepticism, wallowing in minutiae and trivia with no ability to make out the forest from the trees.

These are faults that are by no means limited to conscious or unconscious empiricists. If anyone cares to accuse me of these faults, I would feel they are exaggerating a wee bit—but nobody's perfect. On the other hand, comrade Reed would benefit greatly from a slight infection of these faults, just enough to bring her closer to speaking terms with empirical science.

*Rationalism* is the opposite of empiricism, in a sense, and should not be a dirty word either. Our dialectical minds should immediately grasp the idea that rationalist overemphasis on developing theory without recourse to facts or without checking facts is counterproductive, and that the narrow empiricism described above is also counterproductive. Without a tentative initial guideline theory, and underlying principles, what sets of empirical data, out of the infinite multitude of "facts" in the universe, would one look for, and to what purpose? Besides, rationalism with its emphasis on the power and capability of human reason is an advance over irrationalism, blind faith, spiritualism, obscurantism, and a host of other -isms that are worse than rationalism in any form, and a lot worse than the worst of empiricism.

What I object to is antiscientific, antiempirical rationalism, of those interested only in those data and facts that support their own biases, interests, convictions, assump-

tions, and pet theories. Narrow rationalism that puts forth a system of conjectures derived from conjectures, none of the conjectures being connectible to a corpus of reliable and relevant empirical data, none of the conjectures being compared conscientiously against the most important opposing views with standing in the particular science, and where there is no adherence to a publicly stated method of acquiring and verifying data shared with a community of competent observers.

If there are any problems of adaptation to empiricism, or failure to overcome empiricism, they cannot be resolved and liquidated by burying our heads in rationalism and dogmatism, or by abandoning scientific method. It appears to me that we have a problem not so much of avoiding or overcoming empiricism, but of attaining the level of the stronger and more science-oriented aspects of empiricism, those aspects shared with empirical science and hence with materialism. Anyone who consistently and wantonly rejects uncomfortable relevant empirical data, i.e., who rejects material reality, cannot be accused of being an empiricist, but cannot qualify as a materialist either—NO WAY!

### Morgan and Lowie

Reed, *DB* vol. 31, no. 32, pp. 41-42: "His main target is Lewis Morgan. He . . . condemns him as an 'eclectic, and an idealist and white-racist . . . Two years ago Vernon denounced Lowie as a 'white racist.' But this does not prevent him from standing on Lowie's side today, just as previously he stood on Morgan's side. The presence or absence of racial prejudice is not relevant here. Vernon switched sides not on that basis but on the basis of his theoretical turnabout. Retreating from the search for origins and its fearful disclosure that the family did not always exist, he has abandoned the historical-materialist for the empiricist approach."

Reed, *DB* vol. 33, no. 10, p. 22: "Corresponding to his shift of allegiances, he switched his former characterization of Lowie as a 'white racist' to Lewis Morgan as the 'white racist.'"

It is unfortunate that Reed feels so attached to this demagogic misrepresentation of hers as to have to return to it. The impression conveyed to the incautious reader is that, like Reed, I seek to settle questions by branding the opposition "white racist" much as she imputes anti-woman attitudes and panic in the face of "fearful" matriarchalist "disclosures" to her critics.

In fact, in my 1973 "Repudiation" article I presented the case of Morgan's blunders early on in the article and kept any discussion of Morgan's unusually vicious white racism to a later separate section where an independent point relevant to Morgan's racism was made (see below). Clearly, Morgan's racism can have little bearing on which parts of Morgan's work remain valid and which don't, just as Wm. Shockley's demented racism cannot invalidate the splendid contributions made by Shockley to solid-state physics.

One of the most conspicuous lasting contributions made by the Boas school—Boas, Lowie, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, M. Ashley-Montagu, et al.—outside of social anthropology per se is their effective and persistent rejection, exposure, and refutation of racist ideology and racist pseudo-science in social anthropology, physical anthropology, and society in general. As I pointed out,

they pursued this creditable endeavor using their particularist, empiricist, anti-evolutionary methods and outlook. In their day, they had to combat racist theories, racist materialism, and racist evolutionism. This they did at a time when racism ran rampant and triumphant throughout American society (1890s to 1930s).

I define racist materialism as the notion that "races" are material biological entities, not just political and sociological entities, and that the trumpeted inferiority of non-whites had a material basis in biological reality provable by scientific methods. This sure as hell isn't *our* materialism, but you can see it is a "materialist" argument of sorts.

Most or all of the evolutionist leading lights in pre-Boas American social anthropology were sho-nuff passionate white racists: L. Morgan, Wm. McGee, J.W. Powell, D. Brinton. From L.H. Morgan, now hear this: ". . . it is time to fix some limits to the reproduction of this black race among us. The black population has no independent vitality among us. In the south while the blacks are property, there can be no assignable limit to their reproduction. It is too thin a race intellectually to be fit to propagate and I am perfectly satisfied from reflection that the feelings towards this race is one of hostility throughout the north" (in speech to House of Representatives in 1850s, quoted in: C. Resek; *Lewis Henry Morgan, American Scholar*).

It is hard to beat that for racism, without joining or organizing a lynch mob and going beyond words.

My 1973 comment was: "This should give pause to comrades who accept the tendentious view that Morgan's specific evolutionary schemata have been rejected by all professional social-anthropologists since 1920 solely, or even primarily, in order to accommodate to the needs of ruling-class ideology."

Does this have to be spelled out more clearly? Comrades know who it is in the party who vilifies social anthropologists wholesale as pliant tools of the ruling class, as "venal careerists," because they won't buy an invalid dogma of dubious value to feminists or anyone. If social anthropologists, Boasians in particular, are such pliant tools, why isn't this evident in their behavior in an area where the ruling class *got down* and meant business? Why were the social anthropologists marching in the opposite direction at the very time when the ruling class was busy corralling psychologists, geneticists, educators, physical anthropologists, historians, and what not in the service of virulent white racism against immigrants from non-Nordic countries and above all against Black people?

Reed is silent on this question. Facts are of interest only to rotten empiricists. Her irresponsible silence on this point is only a small part of her dedication to calumniating social anthropologists and using her authority to

encourage the party to discredit itself by following suit publicly.

And what about Lowie's racism? In his *History of Ethnological Theory*, I found Lowie offering what appear to be shamefaced excuses for "Boas' championship of the simpler peoples and his exposure of race charlatanism . . ." (pp. 136-37) In Boas' "defense," Lowie insists that the "extravagances of [Boas'] opponents do not betray him into equally dogmatic egalitarianism." This is definitely a bit racist—especially for a Boasian! Chicken feed compared to L.H. Morgan, or what can be quoted in reams from Brinton, Powell, and McGee. But bad enough.

## Komchvanstvo

As deep as we are into *komchvanstvo*, with the publication and promotion of Evelyn Reed's antiscientific *Woman's Evolution*, and the ongoing crusade of vilification and misrepresentation of social anthropologists wholesale, we had better learn how to spell the word and what it means.

Reed states that *komchvanstve* [sic] is "a Russian term for boastful swagger, the American equivalent of which would be 'ego-tripping.'" Warm, but not hot. *Komchvanstvo* in Lenin's term for not just any swaggering, but arrogant intellectual swaggering by *communists*, an abbreviation of *kommunisticheskoe chvanstvo*. Worth repeating: it is Lenin's scathing term for amateurish half-baked pretensions in unfamiliar areas of technology and science by communists who think their acquaintance with Marxism gives them an automatic passport into other areas of knowledge where they are actually beyond their depth. Its relevance to the topics under discussion should be crystal clear.

Lenin uses the term, to cite one instance, in his article *O znacheniyu voinstvuyushchego materializma* [The meaning of militant materialism], printed in *Pravda* March 18, 1922; *Sochineniya* vol. 33, Gos. Izdat. Polit. Lit., 1951. pp. 201-210. Among other things Lenin excoriates one A. Timiryazev (son of the famous Russian biologist Timiryazev) who took on one A. Einstein not with the tools of theoretical physics but on a "Marxist" and "materialist" basis.

Ignorance is nothing to be ashamed of. We are all ignorant of some things. Specifically, there is no sane reason why anyone should expect revolutionists to be experts on plasma physics, open-heart surgery and its complications, or social anthropology. But being ignorant while pretensively and noisily bluffing and claiming false knowledge can lead to unprestigious shame and ridicule.



## WHAT THE "LONG DETOUR" MEANS TO US (A Continuation of a Discussion)

By Stephen Bloom, Brooklyn Branch, N.Y. Local

Aug. 2, 1975

In his article "What We Mean by the 'Long Detour'", which appeared in *SWP Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 33, No. 9, Les Evans objects to some of the arguments and conclusions in my article, "For a Further Clarification of the 'Long Detour'" (*SWP D.B.* Vol. 33, No. 3). His disagreements seem to focus on two basic points. Firstly, that I do not fairly state, perhaps do not understand, the position of the LTF with regard to the long detour:

"It is not fully clear to me from Comrade Bloom's article whether this divergent estimate flows from an actual disagreement or from a misunderstanding. His statement of the LTF case leaves out most of the actual arguments that have been presented. . . .

"It is curious on this score Comrade Bloom cites primarily Gus Horowitz's report, which deals mainly with Vietnam . . . rather than dealing at greater length with the LTF world political resolution of January 1974 . . . or the article by George Johnson and Fred Feldman in the April 1974 *International Socialist Review*. . . . (p. 22)"

Les's second objection centers around the way in which he believes I have viewed the detour: "and when we speak of a detour, we are talking about the conditions that permit the working class to fall under the leadership of petty-bourgeois Stalinist or nationalist forces, but the conditions that permitted *the overthrow of capitalism* despite such leadership. Here truisms and abstractions that are good for all time are not useful. What is required is a historically specific analysis of what happened and why." (p. 22, emphasis in original.) Later, Les states that my position boils down simply to the idea that "the detour is just another way of saying 'crisis of proletarian leadership'" (p. 24).

If my original article did not deal with the "historically specific analysis" of the social overturns since the end of World War II, that was for the simple reason that I am in complete agreement with this analysis as presented in the three documents Les mentions, and as reiterated in the article by him. But there are more general conclusions which can be drawn from the specific historical situations which gave rise to these transformations. It was to this question that my original article was addressed.

It is also true that we are dealing "with a new phenomenon in world history" (p. 23) which has arisen since World War II, and is not, therefore, merely synonymous with the crisis of revolutionary leadership; and that by the detour we should mean the "conditions that permitted the overthrow of capitalism despite such (petty-bourgeois) leadership." Having outlined this basic agreement, let us see what exactly those conditions were.

In his article, Les concentrates on the cases in which Stalinist parties carried out such overthrows of capitalism. He points to two factors as being of primary importance: 1) the collapse of the bourgeois regimes in countries occupied by the Axis powers at the end of World War II, and the filling of the vacuum by the Stalinists who were at the heads of the various democratic resistance movements;

and 2) the institution of the cold war, which pushed Stalin into a left turn resulting in the nationalizations in Eastern Europe, and the resistance of the Chinese and Vietnamese, in turn resulting in the creation of workers' states in those countries.

As Les points out, it was not simply the vacuum of leadership of the bourgeois state which led to these overturns, but the cold war policies of world imperialism. Today, as imperialism turns to detente, and the last "hot spot" from this period—Indochina—is resolved, he believes we can conclude that the long detour has come to a close.

But as I said before, it is not sufficient to simply fit the social overturns since World War II into their specific historical circumstances, necessary as that is. We should also see what more general lessons can be drawn from that analysis. Les asks the proper question when he raises the point that we must analyze what was new in the situation after World War II which permitted these events.

Les states that it was the second of the two points—the cold war policies of imperialism—which was the crucial new ingredient. But we should look into this matter a little further, and ask ourselves one more question: Why was it that imperialism resorted to such a strategy?

Here we hit the core of the matter. In fact, the cold war policies were a reflection of the *weakness* of the world capitalist system after the end of the war. Unable to utilize U.S. troops in China, and faced with the need to shore up capitalism in Western Europe, the imperialists were forced to shelve their plans for taking the colonial revolution and the Soviet Union head-on. Later, the development of the nuclear bomb by the USSR further altered the world balance of forces and no doubt stayed the hand of the international bourgeoisie.

What was new in the world political situation after the war was not the crisis of revolutionary leadership. Nor was it the development of severe revolutionary crises, i.e., vacuums of bourgeois governments. These had been characteristic of capitalism's decline for decades before. What *was* new was the inability of imperialism to provide a decisive solution to their own vacuum within a reasonably short period of time, and enforce that solution with the total resources at its command.

Viewed in this light, we can see the long detour as a product of two fundamental factors: 1) the crisis of revolutionary leadership which meant that in all cases, such vacuums of bourgeois governments would be filled by petty-bourgeois forces (immediately following the Second World War this meant the Stalinists who were, by and large, the strongest such force); and 2) the weakness of world imperialism, and its inability to move decisively in *all* spheres to solve its own governmental vacuums.

Now we must ask ourselves if anything fundamental in this equation has been changed? The answer in my opinion would have to be no. Imperialism remains unable to respond decisively in all cases, especially to the colonial

revolution. The political and military debacle in Indochina, and the growing economic crisis will only accentuate this weakness. It was for that reason that I wrote in my original article that the long detour will only be ended by solving the crisis of revolutionary leadership.

Since the ability of imperialism to respond to revolutionary developments is unlikely to improve in any long-range sense, then the factor in the situation which will change will be the ability of the Fourth International to alter the relationship of forces in the leadership of the working class. To state that this has not occurred so far is not by any means to underestimate our potential for so doing. It merely calls attention to the reality, which is that we have not done so as of yet.

If the only manifestations of the long detour had been the postwar instances by Stalinist parties, and if all we were saying in declaring the end of the detour was that this particular series of overturns has come to an end, I would probably have no argument with that position. But when we have spoken of the detour we have also included Cuba, and Les has done this as well. It is exactly the Cuban experience which indicates that there is more to the detour than has been described so far.

Of course, Les does include a discussion of the Cuban revolution in his article. But he treats it in a completely secondary way, as an "isolated example," and the "only example that did not arise out of the Axis collapse of World War II." I believe that Cuba is an integral part of the same process that resulted in the other transformations. If we look at what happened on that island nation we can see exactly the same pattern as in the transformations carried out by Stalinist forces.

Simply on the basis of Les's two criteria: the collapse of the old bourgeois government, leaving a vacuum of leadership, with a petty-bourgeois force leading a democratic resistance; and a response from imperialism with cold-war type policies; the events which led up to the creation of the Cuban workers' state fit right in. The creation of socialist property forms by the Castro regime was as much a defensive reaction to the maneuvers of imperialism as was Stalin's action in Eastern Europe, Mao's response to Chiang's offensive in China, and the struggle of the Vietminh.

To state, as Les does, that "there is no reason to categorically deny the possibility that in some isolated case what happened in the past may happen again," and that Cuba is an example of such an isolated case, misses the essential point. It is true that Cuba is an isolated example in the sense that it is the only one so far which took place after the end of the massive revolutionary upsurge which followed the war. It also took place during a period when imperialism was relatively stronger in an objective sense, but was caught off-guard by the unexpected response of the Castro leadership. However, in its general outlines what occurred there was the same as in the other cases of the detour.

If future social overturns take place led by petty-bourgeois forces, it would be incorrect to view them as isolated exceptional circumstances. They should be seen as resulting from the new historic conditions which arose out of the second world war, and which remain on the scene today. With regard to this point, let me clear up one misstatement of my position which plays an important role in Les's article. On page 22 he writes:

"For Comrade Bloom, the detour is above all a product of the crisis of leadership, of the small size of the Fourth International, and until that deficiency of leadership is rectified the Stalinist and other petty-bourgeois nationalist parties will continue, as they have in the past quarter century, to lead the working class mostly to defeats, but here and there, as the revolutionary crisis deepens, to produce qualified victories."

In other places also, Les describes my approach as predicting a certain number of overturns led by petty-bourgeois forces.

However, I make no such prediction in my article, and I believe it would be foolhardy to do so. That is why I wrote in my original contribution: "I do not believe it is fruitful to speculate on whether or not some such upsurge might succeed in overthrowing bourgeois property relations." (p. 22) To be sure, that statement was made from the point of view that we should not rule out such developments. However, it would apply to predicting them as well. To state that the conditions remain which made possible such transformations in the past (and which also resulted in numerous failures) cannot be taken to mean that these conditions will, of necessity, result in successful revolutions. It is quite possible, of course, that none will take place.

I do not think that we should venture a statement one way or the other in this regard. The various overturns which are a part of the detour have exhibited sufficient freakishness for us to be confident in declaring that it is most unlikely that any of them can be looked to as models for the future. On the other hand, they have shown sufficient diversity in terms of specifics to advise caution in concluding that we have seen, or can now predict, all possible variations of such developments.

I would also like to clear up Les's curiosity concerning my choice of documents upon which I based my article. Since I was objecting to a specific formulation and a specific conclusion, which were most clearly stated in Gus Horowitz's report to the 1973 convention, the article concentrated on that particular point. Also, Gus's report was the first official formulation of this idea of a unified process to be known as a detour that I was aware of. The other two documents Les mentions post-date it.

The LTF political resolution dealt mainly with the specifics of each situation, and to the extent that it discussed the aspects of the question I was raising, seemed in consonance with the Horowitz report. Although when I originally wrote my contribution I did not recall the section in the second Johnson-Feldman article which dealt with this, it too concentrates, as Les points out, on the specific historical circumstances of each of the overturns, and is primarily interested in explaining the role of Stalinism, rather than in the process of the detour. As I have stated, I am concerned with the broader implications of the detour, and the more general historical conditions which created it.

Finally, I would just like to reiterate why this broader view of the detour is important for us. As Les points out, there is no question of tasks or action involved here. There can be no doubt that the future of the world revolution absolutely depends on the construction of mass Leninist parties which can consciously direct the proletariat and its allies upon the road to the overthrow of world capitalism.

Nevertheless, it does appear to me that our lack of the

broader view of the long detour has resulted in confusion in the past within the ranks of the Trotskyist movement, and may well do so again, in the case of future developments. The most recent example is, of course, Indochina. I might point out that the prediction of the end of the detour came before recent events in Vietnam and Cambodia raised the possibility that these countries may be added to our list of such overturns.

By limiting our analysis to the unique conditions which

created the overturns in each of the cases of the detour, we have left the door open to confusion and disorientation when the next event occurred. We have seen this around Eastern Europe, China, Cuba, and now Indochina. The broader view of the general historical conditions which have given rise to the detour, *in addition* to the specific manner in which these were manifest in any given instance, will help to eliminate the possibility of such confusion should similar events take place in the future.

# DRAFT RESOLUTION ON GAY LIBERATION—YES! MEMORANDUM ON THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT—NO!

By Frank Grinnon, Upper West Side Branch, New York  
Local

August 2, 1975

One of the reasons I support the Draft Resolution on Gay Liberation (referred to as the Resolution in this article) by Comrades Beren and Knoll and oppose the Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement (hereafter referred to as the Memorandum), the party's present position, is that the Resolution rejects the Memorandum's political characterization of the gay liberation movement as "peripheral."

Unlike Comrade Lee Smith and other supporters of the Memorandum I do not consider the differences on this point as "quibbling" or as semantic hairsplitting. The differences on the characterization "peripheral" reflect an important difference in approach toward the gay liberation struggle.

Before taking up the meaning of the characterization and the differences, I think it would be useful to take a few lines to define the word peripheral. Particularly because "peripheral" is such a slippery animal, which is handled in different ways by different supporters of the Memorandum, I think we should tie the creature down so we can get a good look at it.

In *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, "periphery," the noun base of the adjective peripheral, is defined as follows: "the perimeter of a circle . . . the external boundary or surface of a body . . . the outward bounds of something as distinguished from its internal regions or center: CONFINES . . . an area lying beyond the strict limits of a thing . . . the regions in which the nerves terminate . . . synonym CIRCUMFERENCE."

Characterizing the gay liberation struggle as peripheral clearly denotes that the gay struggle is at the edge of (perimeter of, external boundary of, outer limits of, etc.) the class struggle. It also carries the obvious connotation that the gay liberation struggle is so far removed from the central issues of the class struggle that it is barely a part of the class struggle, extraneous, not important enough to expend any but the most minimal attention on.

One interpretation of the characterization peripheral by a supporter of the Memorandum, Comrade Lee Smith, attempts to reverse the interpretation of the role of gay liberation struggle given by Comrade Gus Horowitz in his introduction to the collection of essays on the new radicalization compiled from the talks given at the first socialist educational conference in 1970. Smith rather indignantly attacks Beren and Knoll for referring to Horowitz's remarks:

"And, in fact, their draft resolution quotes a phrase from the introduction of *Towards An American Socialist Revolution* in an attempt to place the gay liberation movement 'at the center of [the class struggle's] advance.' The actual quote from Gus Horowitz's introduction applied to the entire radicalization of the 1960s and early 1970s, of which the gay liberation movement was a part. And, at the

time, the struggles that were a part of the radicalization were indeed at the center of the advance of the class struggle. It *was* the antiwar movement, the women's movement, and the prison rebellion, gay liberation, and other struggles that fueled and were reinforced by the radicalization that penetrated the masses and shook up the political life of the United States.

"That radicalization continues to extend itself and to deepen, even as it has contributed to the more profound radicalization now beginning to take place in reaction to the generalized crisis of world capitalism—the radicalization of the working class as a class.

"To quibble about the term 'peripheral' in the context of the radicalization of the working class is just plain silly." (*SWP DB*, vol. 33, no. 7, p. 16).

It is clear from Comrade Smith's remarks that he assigns merely conjunctural importance to the gay liberation movement. It was all right for the early stages of the radicalization, before the main forces of the working class moved onto center stage, but now isn't it just "quibbling" to argue about the term "peripheral" in the context of the radicalization of the working class, or is it "just plain silly"?

He suggests that Beren and Knoll have distorted Horowitz's views by pulling a phrase from context. Let's restore the context and see if that is so. The citation is a long one, but it is well worth rereading:

". . . we see that movements such as the women's liberation movement, the struggles of oppressed nationalities for self-determination, the gay liberation movement . . . are a part of the general struggle against the outmoded capitalist system. . .

"Thus these new movements are not unimportant or peripheral to the socialist revolution, but at the center of its advance. . . So, far from diminishing in importance as the labor movement itself radicalizes, these movements will grow and continue to be a key part of the general process leading to a socialist revolution. To think otherwise is to think that the radicalizing layers of the working class will be completely incapable of identifying with feminism, Black nationalism, gay liberation and progressive standards of social morality. If that were the case, there would be no prospect of the working class indentifying with the goals of a socialist revolution. To the contrary, the radicalization already involves large numbers of workers—as women, as GIs, as Blacks, as Chicanos, as gays, as youth, as antiwar activists—who will play a key role in the radicalization of the labor movement. . . .

". . . What is essential is to realize that the existence of social forces already involved in independent struggle and the deepening of radical consciousness among large sectors of the population will have a major effect in

impelling the working class as a whole onto the field of mass anticapitalist political action. When this occurs, the already powerful radicalization will take a giant leap forward" (pp. 15-16).

I think it is fairly clear that Comrade Horowitz was not referring just to the conjunctural situation that existed in 1970, but rather to gay liberation and other components of the new radicalization *as they related to the coming labor radicalization*. Obviously, Comrade Horowitz did not argue then, nor do we argue now, that these new components, and particularly the gay liberation struggle, are of equal importance to the workers radicalization. Far from it. What we do argue is that the advent of the labor radicalization will not drive gays, students, GIs, etc., from the stage, let alone women, Blacks, and other oppressed minorities.

But perhaps something has changed in our analysis of the new radicalization. Jack Barnes report on the political resolution at the May 1975 National Committee plenum is illuminating in this respect:

"We should review the political resolutions and reports adopted by our conventions in the 1969 and 1971. [See *Towards an American Socialist Revolution*, Pathfinder 1971. . .] The acquisitions codified by those documents laid the basis for this current resolution. There is a continuity in our analysis from 1969 to 1975 that should be studied and discussed" (*SWP DB*, vol. 33, no. 4).

I think we have to reject the notion that the characterization "peripheral" with respect to the gay movement means that the gay movement was only of passing importance or that it will become less important, "peripheral" if you will, because of new developments in the radicalization. The Beren-Knoll resolution points out that in the fifties and sixties, before the gay movement joined the ranks of the new radicalization, it was *peripheral*. But since Stonewall, with the emergence of a new kind of gay movement, one which asserts the full equality and dignity of gays, one which engages in mass action, that characterization has changed. There is no reason to assume that the emergence of the labor radicalization will reverse this process. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that the new radicalization of workers as workers will encourage and give impetus to the gay liberation movement. In this respect the Beren-Knoll resolution is very much in keeping with the analysis of the new radicalization worked out by the party in the last six years.

Another possibility is that the term peripheral refers to

the direct social weight of gays in society (their relation to the means of production) or the "limited scope" of demands likely to be raised in the gay movement. Of course, limited scope does not mean limited impact as the memorandum implies, it simply means that a broad range of demands directed against the institution of the bourgeois family is more likely to be raised in the women's movement than in the gay movement. In this sense it could be argued that "peripheral" simply means that the gay movement is "less important" than the women's movement. If this is what supporters of the memorandum mean by peripheral, then they can have no quarrel with the Draft Resolution on Gay Liberation since the authors of the resolution specifically stated at the outset that their rejection of the characterization of peripheral for the gay movement was based on "agreement that the gay liberation movement is less important than the women's movement" (Beren and Knoll, "Concerning the Draft Resolution on Gay Liberation," *SWP DB*, vol. 33, no. 3, p. 5).

A final possibility is that "peripheral" could be interpreted in a tactical sense, that is to say that the gay movement should not be a "central" focus of our activity in the coming period. Here too there is no cause for disagreement. Comrades should reread the specific tactical suggestions at the end of the Resolution on Gay Liberation. I think they will find them quite modest and in keeping with the overall objectives mapped out in the political resolution.

From the last two points, I think it should be clear that in rejecting the characterization of the gay movement as peripheral I am not claiming that the gay movement is as important as the women's movement or the movements of the major oppressed nationalities, nor am I calling for a major priority to be placed on an intervention in the gay movement. I feel it is important to emphasize this point because many comrades who interpret "peripheral" to mean less important than the women's movement and/or a lower-ranking priority for action assume that it is one of these two positions that we are rejecting when we reject the overall *political* characterization of the gay movement as peripheral.

We affirm the centrality of the gay liberation movement in the sense put forward in *Towards An American Socialist Revolution*. We reject characterizations of the gay movement as peripheral, like the one put forward by Lee Smith, which place the gay liberation movement beyond the pale of the present radicalization and outside the boundaries of the party's analysis of the radicalization.

## AGAIN: WHAT IS THE CLASS BASIS FOR OUR CALL FOR A BLACK PARTY?

By David Keil, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local

July 30, 1975

In two previous articles on the Black party question, I pointed out that there are two different arguments which have been used to try to justify our calling for a Black party without specifying its class character. I point out that the two arguments are irreconcilable and that in my opinion they are both wrong.

The first argument is that a Black party, regardless of whether it is proletarian or of undefinable class character, would be a step away from capitalist politics.

The second argument is that any Black party would necessarily be a working-class party.

In the Lower Manhattan branch preconvention discussion July 26, one comrade clearly stated the first argument and rejected the second. Another comrade said that the first comrade was wrong and based his point of view on the second argument. Other comrades did not see any difference between the two arguments despite the fact that they were counterposed to each other in the discussion.

In my opinion, the first comrade was arguing from the viewpoint, used by the party from 1963 to about 1971, that we support a Black party because we support all manifestations of Black nationalism and a Black party would be a manifestation of Black nationalism.

The second comrade was arguing from the standpoint of a *revision* of this old justification, a revision reflected in articles by Tony Thomas and Gus Horowitz stating that a Black party would by its nature be a proletarian party. This revision is in a good direction, in my opinion, but does not go far enough.

But the NC draft resolution does not clearly state the position contained in this revision. Instead, it attempts to compromise the two irreconcilable positions through the ambiguous wording on page 11, second column, fourth paragraph.

This compromise was reflected in the summary of the Lower Manhattan discussion given by Sam Manuel. The reporter did not even mention the dispute which had taken place two days before between two supporters of the party's position, *on the very basis in principle for our call for a Black party*. Instead, he dissolved the difference by saying that my position ignores the uniqueness of the American revolution.

Unique in some ways, yes—but in what way? In that a non-working-class Black party can play a progressive role? Or in that a Black party would inevitably be a workers'

party? He did not say. Just "unique" in general, in such a way that class criteria become irrelevant to us.

He indicated, however, which side of the compromise he favored, by saying that if the Congressional Black Caucus were to leave the Democratic and Republican parties under special conditions, as I had suggested it might, it would be forced by these conditions to answer the needs of the Black community and we would give it full support immediately. He did not argue that the CBC would in so short a time be transformed from a capitalist political agency into a working-class one. Hence he indicated we should support the CBC regardless of its class character—if it broke from the Democratic and Republican parties. I do not know if this is the thinking of the party national leadership or not.

I conclude from the summary by Sam Manuel that the compromise concerning the principled basis for calling for a Black party is a compromise which really signifies going back to the party's old argument, which is that the class character of a Black party is not of decisive consequence from a principled point of view.

This compromise will not last. It is still a theoretical compromise, since there is not yet a Black party of any significance in existence for us to support. But it is nonetheless a compromise of principles.

I hope that comrades will see that it is mistaken to call for a Black party without specifying its working-class character as a precondition. If this year's convention doesn't change the mistaken position, then the next should.

If a resolution is submitted to the next convention calling for a Black party and arguing that a Black party could only be a working-class party, which is Tony Thomas's position, then it will probably be necessary to submit an amendment to this resolution as I have done this year.

But if a resolution is submitted with *muddled* wording, on this question, reflecting a *compromise* as the 1975 resolution's wording does, then it will be necessary to submit the amendment as a *counter-resolution*, if only to make it clear that even *one paragraph of muddleheadedness* on a principled question is *unacceptable* in a Marxist line resolution. It would also be necessary to take all the steps which follow from that, such as calling for the formation of a tendency and preparing counter-reports.

## IN SUPPORT OF THE DRAFT RESOLUTION ON GAY LIBERATION

By Patricia Fernandez, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local

August 2, 1975

The necessity of defending and supporting homosexuals in a more aggressive manner is imperative, not only because there is a good potential for recruitment, but because of their long history of oppression and suffering.

We all know about the treatment of gays under Stalin, where they were persecuted because they were "remnants of bourgeois society." Castro, on the other hand, persecuted them in a manner that makes the Spanish Inquisition look like a children's game. He jailed them, used wiretaps to trap them, and threw them out of their jobs, depriving them of their most basic rights.

McCarthy was the great American gay hunter and through the witch-hunt he linked them with the communists. In South America, in Chile, President Ibanez, during the fifties, actually drowned hundreds of gays. The Chilean Junta rejoices now in the castration of hundreds of gays, because they consider them "Marxist perverts". One of the many reasons the Portuguese military junta and the CP were going to shut down the newspaper *República*, was because *República* was going to print an internal document of the CP attacking about seventy people from the news media whom they called "traitors and homosexuals".

This is just to mention a few cases of gay oppression.

Any of those movements in which we are not directly involved are very abstract and it takes a special effort to realize their importance and projections. In its beginning, the women's movement was abstract for the party and it took some time to catch up with it and to realize the scope it had. It is still very abstract for most women today and for the majority of men.

The memorandum states that the fact that gay people represent a narrow part of the population, it is therefore a "peripheral" problem. Chicanos are a narrow part of the population, Puerto Ricans are a narrow part of the population and the American Indians are a quite narrow sector of the population and even political prisoners, for that matter. To assess the role of a particular movement or social layer as smaller or having less social weight than others is very different from characterizing it as "peripher-

al," particularly when gays are part of the working class too, and some of their demands are the same as all oppressed people.

By not taking a more aggressive involvement in the defense of gays, by not EDUCATING the masses of workers, which reflect bourgeois ideology, we are giving the chance to those reactionary forces to strike against gay people over and over again. We will not want to bend to the most backward layers of the working class. Conservatism and fear in the face of bourgeois ideological challenge is going to lead us nowhere. As Marxists we should take prejudice *head on*, not bend or capitulate to it.

It is absolutely correct that the party doesn't take a stand on sexuality or aesthetics, etc., in a sense of a full scientific theory. Now, when some comrades argue that they cannot accept the slogan "Gay is good" because, since they are not gay, they don't know whether it is good or not, this reflects a total misunderstanding of the slogan. This slogan is simply the reaffirmation of their dignity, humanity and equality with heterosexuals, nothing more. It is not as many comrades state, a choice between one type of sex from another. It is not taking a position on the sexuality of gays, but taking a position on the DIGNITY, HUMANITY and EQUALITY of gays.

We accept the slogan "Black is beautiful" not because of aesthetics or any other reason, but because "Black is beautiful" is also, as "Gay is good", a reaffirmation of dignity, humanity and equality. We don't go saying "I can't say Black is beautiful because I am not Black, therefore I don't know whether it is beautiful or not". By the same token we don't argue that we can't take a stand on the beautifulness of Black, because that is entering in the sphere of aesthetics. We accept it for the reasons given before.

I feel that the Draft Resolution on Gay Liberation by Steve Beren and Sandy Knoll is more concrete, reflects better the state and needs of the gay movement and better equips the party to intervene in the gay movement and recruit gay militants to the party.

# EMPIRICALLY INVALID ASPECTS OF THE TRADITIONAL MARXIST VIEW OF THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

Robert Des Verney, Upper West Side, New York

August 2, 1975

No human society known to recorded history, past or present, at whatever stage of development or in whatever circumstances, has been reliably described as lacking some form of nuclear family. This places the family within the set of *universals*, of institutions and phenomena common to every known, recorded, reliably described human society (community form, family, fully developed language, rational ideology and irrational ideology [religion], law and custom, sexual division of labor, incest rules, tracing of descent, rights and obligations with respect to specified kinfolk).

The term *nuclear family* used here refers to the aggregate of a mother and her children and her socially recognized husband (who is normally and by expectation the biological and jural father of at least some of the children). Testing the limits of this definition are two intriguing exceptional cases: the Nayar of Kerala (southern India; agricultural and class-stratified) and the Tiwi of Melville Is. (north of Australia; hunters/gatherers), whose arrangements make it virtually impossible for the woman's socially recognized husband to be the biological father of her children.

The human family is clearly distinguished from any bird "families" or gibbon "families" in that the remainder of the father's and mother's "kin" are not recognized and not known in these nonhuman species, whereas all human families maintain explicit ties, with socially recognized mutual rights and obligations, with kin on the father's side and on the mother's side (whether clans are present or not).

There is now available an excellent summary of scientific knowledge on the subject of the human family as a general topic in E. Kathleen Gough's article "The origin of the family," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 33, no. 4, 760-771, Nov. 1971; reprinted in *Explorations in Anthropology*, Thomas Crowell Co., NY 1973, edit. Morton Fried, pp. 289-304. Gough (U. Br. Columbia) is a feminist and considers herself a Marxist (CPish), and her treatment of the subject emphasizes points of interest which comrades would share.

For a non-Marxist non-feminist more traditional cross-cultural treatment, see first two chapters of G.P. Murdock *Social Structure*. For raw data on 565 cultures in a worldwide sample, listing thirty taxonomic features including family structure and type of household, see: G.P. Murdock, *World Ethnographic Sample*, Amer. Anthropol., vol. 59, Aug. 1957.

From the standpoint of diachronic studies (probing into history, evolution) and cross-cultural comparative studies, the universality of the nuclear family in known human societies is an important point, but not the only important point. The setting in which the nuclear family is embedded is equally important.

The nuclear family is usually but not universally a household unit as well, although it is normally spatially

separated from other nuclear families if part of a larger household unit. It is quasi-universally a co-residential unit, *dyslocal* family arrangements in which husband-father and wife-mother reside normally apart being extremely rare (agricultural-pastoral Menangkabau in Sumatra; Nayar; formerly in [agricultural, stratified] Palau and extinct Chamorros of Micronesia). It functions at least quasi-universally as the unit responsible for child-rearing and socialization of the young, but this function is also commonly shared by other kin (especially mother's brothers and father's sisters; by sections of the parents' clans if clans exist, by community groups not based on kinship such as men's and women's lodges and work-groups).

The family is an important production unit in many societies, particularly those hunting/gathering societies in which it is the only stable kinship or conjugal institution. It is nowhere near universally the major production unit, which function may be exercised by extended families, the local community as a whole, various nonkinship organizations. Clans are not production units in any known society.

In some types of human societies, families are the only stable and recurrent kinship organizations (frequency and ease of divorce and separation are not decisive here since those divorcing or separating normally reconstitute new nuclear families and there are no alternative kinship or conjugal institutions). These include industrial societies (capitalist and post-capitalist societies) and many isolated hunting/gathering (H/G) peoples.

Many social anthropologists invoke this fact as evidence that families are the oldest persisting human social unit, or even the original human social unit. But that ignores the Australian evidence: while most H/G societies are tiny isolated groups battered about and crowded out for centuries by more highly developed societies, the Australians numbering perhaps some 300,000 at time of contact (XVI century), more than all other H/G peoples put together, freely occupied a whole continent with no trace of contact with higher cultures (except for slight contacts with horticultural Papuans and Melanesians limited to Cape York peninsula) until the massive influx of Europeans in the last few centuries. All Australians clearly exhibit both nuclear families and weak clans (both patrilineal and matrilineal), with patrilineal migratory hunting bands constituting the local community (XVI—XX centuries' data consistent on last point).

The extinct Tasmanians, who were possibly even more primitive than the Australians, exhibited migratory hunting bands and families, but nothing is known (and most likely nothing will ever be known) of any unilineal descent groups (clans) they may have had. Down-Under evidence hence places nuclear families, but *not* nuclear families in isolation from clans, as an early human institution.



At this point the ethnographic evidence leaves us stranded. [Those who have no use for empirical data may prefer to leave the ethnographic evidence data stranded.] While families and weakly structured unilineal descent clans trace back to pre-history, on the basis of the Australian evidence, there is no reliable way of telling how far back.

Since nothing remotely resembling families or clans (or other human universals such as language, incest rules, ideology, social labor and sexual division of social labor) is found in anthropoid primates or other mammals, families and clans had to start at some point with humans, or hominids in the process of becoming humans. Families and clans had to be preceded by some more primitive proto-forms which have disappeared from sight long before humanity arrived at a level of development comparable to the pre-contact Australians and Tasmanians (who were not only biologically but also culturally far closer to us industrialized peoples than they could be to our pre-human hominid Missing Link remote ancestors, a point that was not clear in pre-empirical XIX century ethnological conjectures).

Many Marxists tend to reject these facts about the family arbitrarily, for reasons of dogma, thus placing themselves in the unenviable position of being materialists who reject material reality. There are extenuating circumstances, but no justification—none whatever—for such an attitude. To reject material reality (material evidence, empirical data) because it is unpalatable to one's views is to reject a materialist outlook, and to reject a scientific outlook altogether. In any case, there is nothing about the facts relating to human families that should be so unpalatable to materialists or Marxists.

\* \* \*

The traditional Marxist view, familiar enough not to have to be detailed here, posits a family that came into existence only recently, with class society, as a socio-economic unit channeling oppression of women in patriarchal society. In Reed's terminology, for instance, we have: family equals nuclear family equals class family equals father-family, oppressive patriarchal family, etc. There is a grain of truth here, a big grain: patriarchal class societies do shape the family situation to their needs, as they shape everything else flexible enough to be bent to their needs (and the family is one of the most flexible institutions known, as should be obvious from its universality).

An important Marxist hang-up is the fear (actually unfounded) that the prestige of the great Marxist thinkers, Marx and Engels, will suffer irreparably for their espousal of Morgan's views (the best approximations to material reality available at the time on this topic, a point readily conceded by any professional social anthropologist) on the family's history, variety, and universality, if we are to admit the awful and unpalatable truth that some of their views were refuted by vile, lousy, anti-Marxist, liberal, antimaterialist [expletives deleted] empiricists like F. Boas and B. Malinowski. Worse yet that materialism and Marxism will be discredited and overthrown, and have to be scrapped, if such irreparably damaging admissions are made.

This hang-up is absurd, and is based on a misunderstanding of materialism. A particular view, argument,

hypothesis, or theory advanced by a materialist and conforming to the most reliable material evidence available at the time qualifies as a materialist view, argument, hypothesis, or theory at the time it is advanced. If the view is refuted, and replaced by a better approximation to material reality, that does no damage to materialism and can do no damage to materialism, even if the scientifically valid refutation was elaborated and authored by an overt enemy of materialism. But the refuted argument, theory, or part of a theory can no longer qualify as a fully valid materialist statement since it is in conflict with recognized material reality, in the light of the best available approximation to material reality.

The British Stalinist materialist philosopher M. Cornforth states the case more lucidly and in less space than I can, so I yield the floor to him: ". . . it cannot be claimed that a theory is true because it is materialist—the truth of a theory can be substantiated only by testing and retesting it in experience. . . . It is always necessary to ascertain the facts, they cannot be deduced from general theory. The general theory . . . guides the inquirer by telling him [sic] *what to look for*; it does not tell him in advance exactly what he will find. . . . However much particular materialist theories may be falsified by events, we can remain sure that the right explanation is along materialist lines; and however well particular idealist theories may evade falsification, we can remain sure that they are nevertheless mere fancies. . . ." [M. Cornforth, *The Open Philosophy and the Open Society, a reply to Dr. Karl Popper's refutations of Marxism*, New World Paperbacks, Internat'l Publ. 1968, p. 48, p. 27].

Caution: Cornforth uses some loose language here: "idealist theories" should not be left confusable with valid theories (not conflicting with logic nor with material evidence) put forth by an avowed idealist or eclectic; and of course theories and views put forth by someone claiming to be materialist may possibly not deserve to be qualified as materialist.

Again Cornforth: ". . . the old atomic theory of matter was discredited by subsequent investigations of the atom. . . . But that does not mean that physics has shown that there is no such thing as matter. . . . The idealists who said it had were simply confusing materialism in general with relics of pre-scientific materialist speculation. Modern physics [. . . and modern social anthropology to some extent—RDV] has replaced pre-scientific speculation by scientific investigation. That does not make materialism out of date, but only out-dates certain speculative materialist hypotheses" [ibid, p. 45. Well said, by Prof. Cornforth, very well stated! Too bad he didn't apply those beautiful and righteous words to his support of Lysenko's "genetics" two decades ago (*Science Versus Idealism, in defence of philosophy against positivism and pragmatism*, Internat'l Publ. 1955, 1962, p. 447), or to his present Stalinist politics today.].

The empirically unsound views in question here center around the universality of the family in the entire spectrum of known human societies, utopian and invalid conjectures on the origin of the family, conjectures that the nuclear family is rigid and brittle and will disappear in short order, and identification of nuclear families with coercive and oppressive class-society families in a biunique equation (nuclear families equals oppressive patriarchal families by definition), with rigid denial or ad-hoc special pleading to avoid facing the fact that nuclear families

flourish in all known human societies including the most primitive known or recorded.

Succinct statements of these empirically unsound views can be found in the introduction by E. Reed to Engels' *Origin of the Family*. . . p. 16-17: "The family in the true definition of the term is a father-family, a socio-economic institution that subjects procreation to male-made regulations, restrictions, and laws. . . ." and ". . . the family is a social institution that arose in a rudimentary noncompulsory form in the last stage of the maternal clan system but, side by side with the development of private property, became the compulsory, patriarchal family of class society."

The situation is very different with Marxist views on the oppressive patriarchal family setup in class society, on the "nuclear family as we know it today." These Marxist views are based not on invalid conjectures as to the origin, universality, and cross-cultural typology of the family, but on an abundance of direct evidence available to all of us who live in class-stratified societies of today, societies which have been under the scrutiny of Marxist study and under the impact of Marxist political action; and margins of error are greatly narrowed. These generally valid views do not depend on or derive from speculations about the unknown or little-known.

Likewise, the political program advanced for freeing women from imprisonment in the isolated nuclear-family setting (free 24-hr child care; marriage, divorce, separation, cohabitation, abortion, and contraception not to be regulated by the state against the interests of women; free and communal laundries, food establishments, cleaning and housekeeping services; free health care; equal pay for equal work) deals with the isolated family setting we are all familiar with, and retains its validity even if some ideas about the origin, universality, durability, and flexibility of the nuclear family in the broad sense cannot withstand examination based on cross-cultural and historical data.

Nevertheless, there are some other invalid ideas entertained by many Marxists on the isolated patriarchal "nuclear family as we know it today." One is that higher divorce rates mean that the nuclear family is "coming apart at the seams," implying its dissolution as a structural type of kinship-conjugal organization, to be replaced by . . . ??? There are many cultures in which divorce and separation are easier to execute, and easier for women to initiate, than in modern industrial societies, and in which divorce and separation rates are higher. But the

remarriage rate keeps up with the divorce and separation rate, and "the nuclear family" continues to thrive splendidly (see: "Family stability in non-European cultures," G.P. Murdock, *Ann. Amer. Acad. Polit. Soc. Sci.*, vol. 22, 195, 1950). For a statistical treatment of divorce and remarriage volume and rates in the US (data to 1970), see: J. Scanzoni, *Sexual Bargaining*, Prentice-Hall, pp. 6-28.

Another invalid idea is expressed nicely and succinctly by E. Reed: "Today even this little stump of a family is being shaken up and broken up before our eyes" (DB vol. 31, no. 32, p. 45, 1973). The "stump" could be what's left over from egalitarian non-stratified kinship-oriented societies in which kinship and conjugal relationships are institutionalized in clans and extended family-networks as well as families. Or it could be what's left over from patriarchal polygynous or extended-family households. In either case the "stump" has no competitors and is the only institution of its type. In what sense it is being "shaken up and broken up" is difficult to see; if divorce rate is meant, the remarriage rate will regenerate more than enough new "stumps" to keep things going.

The "little stump" is performing all sorts of manifold functions in this class society as in nonclass societies, many of its functions are not per se coercive and oppressive, and since it has no competition from any other kind of kinship or conjugal institution in industrial (capitalist and post-capitalist) societies, there is no point in referring to it as a stump or relic presumably on the way out, any more than in pre-industrialized class societies and pre-class nonstratified societies.

How the "little stump" will manage when class societies have been wiped out all over the globe, and socialism instituted everywhere with exploitation (including sex-differentiated superexploitation) and poverty eliminated, is another matter. Given the durability, flexibility, and universality of the "stump" in all hitherto known human societies, persistence of *nonexploitative* nuclear families on a fairly wide scale is not ruled out. The appearance of novel and now-unknown viable kinship and conjugal arrangements differing substantially from any form of known nuclear family cannot be ruled out either, although speculation on the detailed features of such unknown forms would be utopian. We presently have no knowledge of any human society devoid of nuclear families, although nuclear families had to originate sometime and somehow; but we have no experience with a worldwide industrially developed classless and exploitation-free society either.

## SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM AND SOCIALIST SCIENCE

by Eileen Gersh, Philadelphia Branch

July 25, 1975

First, the party is a political organization. Its aim is a political one: to construct a mass revolutionary socialist political party that will lead in the conquest of state power by the working class, opening the road to the construction of socialism. In keeping with its aim, the party adopts political positions that guide its work. It does not take positions on a whole range of scientific, cultural and other questions—to do so would cut across its purpose, dilute its nature as a political organization, transform it into an organization advancing one or another scientific or cultural viewpoint, narrow its appeal, and cripple its ability to mobilize the masses on political questions.

Secondly, this particular problem is further complicated by the fact that the whole question of the scientific investigation of woman's evolution is still in its infancy. Especially concerning cannibalism, little is known, and it is difficult to ascertain what is objectively based and what represents prejudice in what knowledge is available. If we were to attempt to adopt a particular viewpoint on the nature of cannibalism, we would become embroiled in a hopeless tangle of opinions, prejudices and personal preferences with little hope of reaching any scientifically valid conclusions, even if that were withing the purpose of the SWP, which it is not.

I am taking words from Comrade Barry Sheppard (DB Vol. 30, No. 8, p. 6) and also putting words in his mouth.

Where I have written "woman's evolution" and "cannibalism", he wrote "sexuality and the related one of psychology" and "homosexuality". This statement is relevant to the question: Should the SWP take a stand on

Evelyn Reed's *Woman's Evolution*? According to Comrade Des Verney (DB Vol. 33, No. 9, p.20), Comrade Sheppard has already taken a stand on behalf of the party (DB, Vol. 33, No. 4, p. 20). Although the party has not formally taken any such stand, the situation is admittedly ambiguous. Will those serious feminists, among whom Comrade Reed's tour "will help enhance the party's position" (Sheppard, loc. cit.) be able to distinguish between Reed's advocacy of her anthropological theory and the party's position?

In the following, I want to make three points.

1) Although I do not, personally, think that the party should take a stand on Reed's book, I consider the question of whether it should take a stand to be a proper question for discussion in the Discussion Bulletin.

2) Until a decision is reached on this question, steps must be taken to make it very clear that the party takes no position. Comrade Reed should emphasize at each point of her tour that the SWP has taken no stand on anthropological theory—that *Woman's Evolution* is her baby, not the SWP's. Comrade Sheppard's statement should be revised to make this distinction clear.

3) I do not think that the Discussion Bulletin is a proper place to carry on an *anthropological* discussion. Scientists have their own media for discussions of this nature. This is quite different from discussing whether the SWP should adopt the position of advocate withing the field of anthropology. This is a political discussion, the other is anthropological. Much of Comrade Des Verney's article therefore seems to me to be out of place.