

Vol. I #1
March 1968

This is the space for the bannerline.

We left it blank.

Because this newsletter, like its sponsoring organizations, has no name.

We felt its readers, the various radical women's groups and organizations for women's liberation around the country, should decide its name when they are ready. Suggestions will be printed in a subsequent issue. Please send yours in. Reader response on the suggested names will be tabulated and printed before the final decision is made.

In the meantime.... It costs money to put out this newsletter and our treasury is non-existent. This initial issue is being distributed free to all those who have expressed an interest in women's liberation. Subsequent issues will be sent only to subscribers. The rate is \$3.00 for 12 issues. If you can contribute more, please do so. If you don't have that much, send what you can. If you can pay nothing, and still want to receive this newsletter, write us a letter claiming poverty.

March, 1968

voice of the women's liberation movement

Vol. I, No. 1

WHAT IN THE HELL IS WOMEN'S LIBERATION ANYWAY?

With 51% of the population, women are the largest "minority" in this country. A woman must work twice as hard, on half the opportunity, for a fraction of the success, and dignity, and respect, as a man of similar abilities. Then, if she should succeed, she is told she is "unfeminine."

To list all the ways in which our society exploits women would be overwhelming--and unnecessary. There are so many, and they are so endemic to our social organization, that women can be liberated only with a total restructuring of this society. Likewise, because this exploitation is so intrinsic, a restructuring of society can be significant only in so far as it incorporates the changes necessary for women to be liberated.

Women's liberation does not mean equality with men. Mere equality is not enough. Equality in an unjust society is meaningless. Inequality in a just society is a contradiction in terms. We want equality in a just society. And this means the encouragement and opportunity of all individuals to be fully themselves, to explore, express and develop their human potentials to the greatest extent possible unconfined by the narrow bounds of societal stereotypes.

Spread evenly thruout all social classes, women are still one of the most exploited single groups. By organizing women around their very real and very immediate grievances one can work directly on the inherent inequities of our society and do a great deal toward developing the mass base necessary for any substantial social change.

Organizing women is a challenging and exciting potential that has not been tapped by the radical social movement. It is also a challenge to that movement to live up to its own ideals and liberate its women by restructuring itself.

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CHICAGO WOMEN CELEBRATE MARCH 8

International Women's Day was celebrated March 8 by the Chicago chapters with a film, "Salt of the Earth" (to be reviewed next month), and an all-Movement party--the groups' first integrated function.

March 8 commemorates the 1908 struggle of women on the Lower East Side of New York to gain the right to vote, an end to sweatshops and an end to child labor. It is also celebrated in many countries as the anniversary of the South Vietnam Women's Liberation Union, founded in 1959.

"Salt of the Earth," a free-lance effort by the Independent Film Producers made during the early fifties, centers around a strike by Mexican-American mine workers that is almost lost when they are enjoined from picketing by the Taft-Hartly Act. The strike is eventually won when the women, technically not mine workers, replace the men on the picket line--over strong male objections. At the same time the women win new respect, dignity and understanding for themselves, and an inclusion of their demands with those of the union, when the men are forced to take over the women's jobs at home.

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CHAPTER REPORT

Estelle Carol, Chicago

(Editor's note: This is the first in a series of reports on how different radical women's groups were formed and what they are doing. It is hoped these will provide some organizing ideas for women who would like to form similar groups. The group described below was one of the first to grow out of the original Chicago organization).

The Women's Radical Action Project is a group of about 40 students and nonstudents at the University of Chicago formed last fall to discuss radicalism and women.

At first our discussions were very groping. Altho we wanted to be independent, we still accepted many of the cliches we had learned about women's proper role. But, as we gained a group identity and common understanding we could probe more deeply into such questions as the role of women in the radical movement, the conflict between an identity as a woman and as a person, and the relationship between issues of women's liberation and radical action and education.

We want to build the self-confidence of our members so that they can use their intellectual and leadership abilities to the benefit of the larger movement. We also want to organize other women around issues that will make them realize their identity as articulate, intelligent, competent and political human beings...

To do this we had to come to a better understanding of how society prevents most women from realizing their full potential. We had to recognize that this society emphasizes a woman's obligation as mother and housekeeper, and that, at best, most of us will have to integrate this role with the intellectual aspirations of our student years.

Exacerbating this is the fact that a woman must be brighter and more persevering than a man to gain any recognition in the male-dominated professions. Women are taught that their ultimate fulfillment lies in a man. Socially their position--

passive, insecure, unsure of their identity, --is played on by industry to make them good consumers. Further, the agonizing injustice of abortion laws do not even allow a woman to control her own body.

As we began to understand these problems we saw the need to reach other women, and came up with some exciting ideas. We are sponsoring a course (a privilege the university gives its students) on the issues of women's liberation which will require each participant to thoroughly research a topic of interest to her and act as resource person for class discussions. We also hope

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pressions and strengths), political analysis of the objective conditions facing each of us today (corporate power, militarism, poverty, Vietnam, the 1968 elections), and a strategy for organizing women.

We also made commitments to write as much as we can, to talk to people about our concerns, to begin to make other women think about their oppressed status, and to help men, more groups organize.

The lesson of the Brigade was a good one. Women don't have a base in this country. We don't have clearly defined politics, even tho we are an oppressed group. In order for women to begin to develop political consciousness and the power necessary to act on such a consciousness, we must organize.

One of the primary reasons the Brigade failed is that it attempted national action based on a coalition without a base. Federations and coalitions only work when each group represents troops and each has clearly defined politics and strategies. When none of the incorporated groups has any of these, the entire coalition lacks significance and power.

In order for a coalition of women to ever work in the future we as radical women have to organize ourselves so we have a clearly defined sense of who we are and what we represent. Black women are organizing as are white union women. So must we,

We need power; we need a base; and most of all, we need to develop an analysis of ourselves in a society that is oppressive to everybody.

ON THE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

Sue Munaker, Chicago

A representative Movement conference will be held in the Chicago area on March 23-24 or 29-30 to consider the Movement's relationship to the Democratic Convention. The conference, called by an ad hoc committee, was initiated by the National Mobilization Committee.

Major positions which will be suggested to the participants are:

Disruption--The Democratic Party is totally illegitimate and should be destroyed. Therefore the Movement should do everything possible to prevent the Convention from assembling and to disrupt the proceedings.

Electoral Alternatives--The left should propose a concrete political alternative to a Johnson/Nixon race. We should call for creation of a third party and/or a candidate who would run against racism and imperialism. Perhaps in August there should be a counter-convention to nominate our own slate.

Stay Home--Any demonstrations will play into Johnson's hands and cause the Movement to lose support of the average American. We should stay home or organize demonstrations in every city but Chicago as LBJ wants violence and is "setting up the Movement for a giant bust."

Disciplined, Coordinated Demonstrations--Thousands will come to Chicago whatever we do. We should take advantage of this to dramatize to the world that millions of Americans feel unrepresented by a Johnson/Nixon choice while organizing against disruption and violence. A well disciplined local organizing and education campaign should begin this Spring (about the Democratic Party) and build to the summer.

The ad hoc committee appointed an interim committee, whose duties are solely administrative, to carry out the following mandate:

1) Call a large Movement conference, by invitation only, with representatives from constituent organizations (SDS, Women for Peace, etc.), major metropolitan area groups (e.g. the Chicago Peace Council) and concerned individuals (Dick Gregory).

2) Contact people to write papers on the alternative proposals and, specifically, on

strategies for interest groups; (e.g. welfare, women, draft resisters).

3) Organize pre-conference regional meetings for discussion of the perspectives and to be sure all ideas and interests are represented at the conference.

4) Be responsible for the general administration of the conference.

5) Develop an agenda for the March conference which will provide for democratic decision making on a general strategy for the Democratic Convention and establish machinery for developing and carrying out that strategy.

6) Call the conference under the names of the interim committee with other names attached as a call to the conference. Members of the interim committee are: Carlos Russell, Caroline Black, Earl Durham, Tom Hayden, Corky Gonzales, Lincoln Lynch, Bob Greenblatt, Rennie Davis, Dave Dellinger, and Sue Munaker.

One idea proposed as part of the fourth alternative is to devote each day of the Convention to a specific Radical women should begin to work out a strategy of action with this in mind and other strategies if this course is not adopted. Send your ideas to the newsletter.

More information can be had from the March 23rd Convention Office, 407 S. Dearborn, Room 315, Chicago, Ill.

MALE CHAUVINIST OF THE MONTH AWARD

by unanimous decision of our distinguished panel of judges the Male Chauvinist for the month of March is declared to be:

Warren Hinkle III,
Editor of Ramparts

for contributions to the cause of the oppression of women too numerous to describe herein but obvious to anyone who has read the February issue of the "Playboy of the left."

First runner-up is hereby awarded to whoever conceived the cover photo depicting "political woman" as having two tits and no head.

RADICAL WOMEN AND THE RANKIN BRIGADE

Pam Allen, New York.

The Jeanette Rankin Brigade made very clear to radical women our lack of organization and our lack of program to take advantage of the opportunities which the Brigade presented us.

This was especially evident when a significant minority of the women at the March, angry at what they felt was a sell-out by the Brigade's leadership, made two abortive attempts at organizing civil disobedience--carrying signs in defiance of a police edict and confronting Congress on the Capitol steps. Both attempts failed because no one was clear about the reasons for the actions or committed enough to do them alone if necessary.

But the anger which lay at the base of these actions remained and was carried over to the Congress. There, a caucus called by the radical women of New York and Chicago to discuss methods and purposes of organizing women was attended by many of these women.

We had come to talk and had no ready program for these women to channel their feelings into constructive action. So, they left our caucus, and, unable to carry on a debate on the floor of the regular Congress, called a Counter-Congress in an adjoining room.

These women left the Congress because they were interested in more than words. They were angry and wanted to "do something." Several of the radical women who attended their Counter-Congress felt the mood was that they did not want to talk about long-range organizing, but short-range action. An attempt to organize the Counter-Congress failed because we could not offer this kind of program.

They wanted action, not rhetoric, and we had no action to offer. We did not know how to channel their energy so we met together to do some hard thinking on where we wanted to take ourselves, as well as other women. We felt it important to set up contacts so that next time we would be prepared.

We learned a great deal from our experience at the Brigade. We became very aware of how disorganized radical women

are and of our tendency to come to a moderate action with a great deal of anger and no clear plan of action. We now realize that we must differentiate between militancy for its own sake and militancy which has a goal.

Altho we missed an opportunity to do some valuable organizing because we were not prepared, I think we used our energies well by dividing into two groups. Some of our women attended the caucus to discuss structure and organizing while others went to the Counter-Congress to talk to the militant women there.

As a result we did firm up organizational plans and we did reach some new women. Perhaps we shouldn't expect more from our first time.



CALL FOR A SPRING CONFERENCE

Marilyn Salzman Webb, Washington, D.C.

Radical women did not come to Washington to participate in a Jeanette Rankin Brigade which we all knew was going to be moderate, ineffectual and absurd. We came to talk to each other.

We came to see if we could build a movement of women capable of preventing such fiascos as the Brigade portended from re-occurring. We came to see if we could form an organization with which radical women could identify and a program which would be effective.

We came because we, for the most part, are women who have been involved in the Movement for years and share its ideals that no people can be free, and that no social change can come, until all people are free. We wanted to organize for our own equality within this broader struggle because we see ourselves colonized in the same way Fanon has described the Algerians. Our enemy is not men, but an oppressive system that pits group against group, denying each self-control and self-confidence.

We came because we, as radical political people, have learned from the black movement here and the women of Vietnam that the only way we can be a political force is to build our own movement. We must develop ourselves personally, politically, and as a power base if we are to be respected.

We met for two days and developed a program for the next few months. We hope to hold at least four regional organizational conferences of radical women this Spring to begin to develop program and analysis. The conferences should be set up by each region so that they reflect the interest of each region, but we would hope to share working papers and perhaps some speakers.

Two areas, however, seem to be common to all concerns. First, we must develop a dialog about the life-styles we want to lead in the future, barriers to leading them and how to eliminate these barriers.

Second, we need to identify those areas where it is relevant, and crucial, to say "no" to the system. Some particular issues connected with this are: women's roles (op-

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Altho women in the Movement have long been aware of their secondary status within and without the Movement it is only recently that they have begun to do something about it. Since a small group of women began their first searching meetings last fall, the movement for women's liberation has grown to a nationwide network of women who recognize the interdependence of radical change and women's liberation.

Our political awareness of these twin concerns has developed as we sought to apply the principles of justice, equality, mutual respect and dignity which we learned from the Movement to the lives we lived as part of the Movement; only to come up against the solid wall of male chauvinism.

It is time that Movement men realized they cannot speak the language of freedom while treating women in the same dehumanizing manner as their establishment peers. It is time Movement women realized this is a social problem of national significance not at all confined to our struggle for personal liberation within the Movement and that, as such, must be approached politically.

The time has come for us to take the initiative in organizing ourselves for our own liberation, and in organizing all women, around issues which directly affect their lives, to see the need for fundamental social change.

As women radicals we are involved with political issues because we realize that we cannot be free until all people are free. But as radical women we are not interested in forming a women's auxiliary to the Movement. Our interest is inthoroly integrating that movement; particularly its leadership and policy making positions. To this end we feel it is necessary to create women's groups to organize other women into the Movement and to organize ourselves to take power.

While we are aware that men are not free either, we, as women, have special problems, within and without the Movement; which we must talk about among ourselves. Only women can define what it means to be a woman in a liberated society and we cannot allow others, by our inaction, to do this for us. It is up to us to meet the challenge to define, and organize, ourselves.—Joreen

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to sponsor a campus wide conference which will draw many apolitical women and where we can present ideas on female consciousness and wider political issues.

Other ideas include organizing wives and girl friends or draft resisters into a group similar to WRWP, leafletting shopping centers and factories where women work with literature on Vietnam and women's liberation, and, possibly, organizing women around the abortion issue.

These are just some ideas; we still need to do a lot of talking. We need to formulate exactly what radical women want to accomplish. We are still unsure of how to show women how they can become an indispensable part of the radical movement. But we're organized, and we're growing.

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