

NEWS & LETTERS WOMEN'S LIBERATION COMMITTEE -- 1900 E. Jefferson, Det. Mich.

WHO WE ARE

Women's Liberation has sprung up spontaneously among women all over America in the past few years. It "Speaks in many voices" — it is, potentially, a revolutionary mass movement, as it cuts across the lines of class and race. We believe that women's oppression is the oldest form of class oppression — based on the division between mental and manual labor — and it will take more than the abolition of capitalism to free women. We cannot wait til "after the revolution" and be "given" freedom — we have to be an active, self-developing subject in that revolution, if a truly human society is to result. We are "kicking back our heads" and fighting oppression at whatever point it touches us.

We are black, white, worker, student, housewife. Some of us have been working in the Women's Liberation movement for several years; others are new to the movement. Some of us are members of News & Letters; all of us are working together to determine the direction and actions of this group, and we welcome new women into it. We got together in our first conference in February of this year because we felt very strongly the contradictions that permeate 1971. A serious challenge faces the Women's Liberation movement: to meet in theory what has been happening in our activity — to be both reason and force in revolution. To help meet this challenge the News & Letters Women's Liberation Committee was formed.

News & Letters Committee is a national organization of Marxist-Humanists dedicated to the establishment of a totally free, totally human society, in which each individual is self-determining, controls her/his own life. We believe that this can only come about through the self-organization of the masses of oppressed groups in this country: women, blacks, youth, workers, national minorities — all people who are actively fighting for their freedom. Thus the necessity of an independent women's liberation movement. News & Letters, at its foundation in 1955, singled out women as one of the forces of revolution. Its monthly newspaper, News & Letters, is edited by a black production worker, and contains stories, both about activity and theory, by participants in freedom movements. Last year, News & Letters published "Notes on Women's Liberation: We Speak in Many Voices," a collection of articles by many different women, as a contribution toward developing theory for the movement.

The founder of News & Letters Committee, Raya Dunayevskaya, is the woman who re-established the American roots of Marxist-Humanism, as well as the Humanist ground of Marxist philosophy. Based on self-development of the ideas as well as of the activity of the masses, Marxist-Humanism bears no resemblance to "communism" (which is really state-capitalism) as in Russia, China or Cuba. The most basic principle of our philosophy is that each person be free to control her/his own life; that the division between mental and manual labor, between the thinkers and the doers, be abolished. No country in the world embodies this philosophy. The position of women in all existing societies gives lie to the idea that any are really free. Capitalist social organization at the point of production corrupts every society, transforming all human relationships into object relationships.

We do not have any program or blueprint for the future, but we have looked closely at the history of America, and of the women's movement in America, and we feel that a Marxist-Humanist women's liberation group must adhere to the following principles:

1. Listening to the voices of those struggling for their freedom. This is crucial. It is from the ideas of the masses of women that a true definition of Women's Liberation will flow. It is especially crucial to listen to the ideas and watch closely the activities of black and working women, because they suffer the oppression of this society on many levels. We believe this will expand the movement rather than limiting it. We consider welfare rights organizations and groups of women trying to unionize their shops to be Women's Liberation as much as the groups that call themselves that. We want to help all these groups come together, as well as to reach women who are not in groups.

2. Self-development. We are concerned that every woman develop herself through the activities of her struggles and the working-out of theory, toward the goal of total freedom and a new society based on human relationships.

3. Uniting theory and practice. It is imperative that the Women's Liberation Movement work out theory for today. Theory must be derived from practice, or it will be unreal. Practice alone, without theory, soon reaches the despair and mindless activism so common throughout the Left. As serious revolutionaries, we must combine two in a dynamic relationship.

Concretely, we have undertaken the following activities:

1. Participating in the struggles of women workers fighting sex discrimination on the job—against both management and union bureaucracies. In the last year, many of us picketed for months in support of a strike of women clerical workers, and we have been working with women service workers fighting for upgrading, equal pay, and equal treatment.

2. Working out theory, through meetings, discussions, activity, reviewing literature. Expressing our ideas at meetings and in written articles.

3. Helping other women write down their stories and ideas for News & Letters, for publicity for their struggles, and helping them establish their own newspapers on their jobs.

4. Corresponding with women who have bought our pamphlet, "Notes on Women's Liberation," throughout the world, so we can keep in touch with what is happening both in practice and theory in Women's Liberation.

5. Writing regular contributions—theoretical articles and reports of activities—for News & Letters.

We invite you to join us.