

Women's Liberation Speaks With Many Voices

Heinz women workers win fight with boss

Harrisville, Pa.—I don't know much about Women's Liberation, but somebody needs to liberate me from some of the women I work with. When I first started working at Heinz, we were working on the 11th floor and the boss told us we were going to start working on the 2nd floor to make things easier for the women. Instead it made it harder and more dangerous.

One of the problems was the pressure cooker, which are huge. They have five of them. They have five tubs and they put 700 to 800 tubes in a tub, and put them in the pressure cooker. The women are supposed to push the tubes around. This is men's work. It's not for women.

Some of the young women complained and told the company they wanted to push the tubes. The older women didn't want anyone brought in because they were afraid it would take money out of their pockets, since it is piece work and it might slow them down if they had to wait for someone to come push the tube.

COMPLAINT FILED

One day I saw a man in a black coat and hat come in and recognized him as the head of our union. He came over to ask the girls if they had any complaints.

One of our complaints is that when the tubs come out of the pressure cooker, the water gets all over the floor and it's easy to slip and fall. We complained about pushing the tubes.

They told the girls to vote whether or not they wanted someone to come and push the tube. The girls voted yes and our boss was real angry with us. He told us that if nobody was there to push them for us, we were not to put our hands on them. We were just to stand and wait for a man to come and push them.

WORKERS HARASSED

We knew they were going to try to get back at us, and since we lost money on our piece work, sure enough, one day we pulled chickens and filled the tubs and had 60 chickens left with us. That day they had only one man who was supposed to help us and to help another group of workers, too. They were supposed to have five men.

There were men generally supposed to go to lunch when they have pushed up our last tub to be fixed. This day they didn't let him go to lunch. When we came back from lunch the tubs were still there, and he was still there. As soon as we came back, they sent him to lunch so we just sat down to wait.

Some of the girls asked the cooks to do it for us, but they refused because if they started once, they'd always have it to do. The older women told us to push the tubs up. But we refused, because we know if we did it once, we'd always have to do it.

We decided we weren't going to lose that much money. That was just what they were waiting for. We sat for almost two hours, and when the man came back, the tubs were still waiting for them. After that, we never had any more trouble on that score. But the women still need to be liberated at Heinz.

Women won't wait until after revolution for their freedom

New York, N.Y.—Women all over this country and the world are male chauvinists. We have accepted the attitude towards women that comes from the male society because we've been taught it. We're kidding about our oppression. We don't even know about ourselves.

There is a lot of feeling on the part of women that the question of women's liberation is not important, and must take the back seat to other people's liberation. Many people, women and men, would admit that women are oppressed, but don't believe that women are a force for change, that women are a Subject.

Some people believe that women can liberate themselves only by working for other people's liberation, in another movement, and that maybe somewhere, some time, some men will get up and say, "What about women's liberation?" but women are half of the world's population, and if we don't think that half of the world's population as women has been a force for liberation throughout history, it shows how little we think of ourselves as women.

MANY VOICES

We have much too narrow a definition of what women's voices, speaking for their liberation, are. Women's liberation is not simply those who call themselves women's liberation groups. There are the voices of young, white women, and that's one of the voices of women's liberation, but that's not the only voice. This voice is new on the scene, but there are other voices that are not new at all, that very few people have spoken about.

Some have called themselves Welfare Rights Organizations, and believe me, the Spring in New York, where these welfare rights workers took their kids out of their schools, and walked down Fifth Avenue, and got their

Marx on women; excerpts from 'Private Property and Communism'

"Private property has made us so stupid and needed that any kind of object is ours only when we have it, i.e., when it exists for us as capital, or when we possess it directly—eat it, drink it, wear it, live in it, etc.—in short, use it . . .

"The relation of private property remains the relation of the community to the world of things. Finally, the movement of counterposing universal private property to private property is expressed in the marital form that marriage (which, of course, is a form of exclusive private property) is counterposed to having women in common. Hence the woman becomes communal and common property. We might say that this form of communal women expresses the secret of the state regime and unshakable communism . . .

"The secret of the relationship of man to man finds its unambiguous, definite, open, obvious expression in the relationship of man to woman, and in this way, the abstract, natural relationship between the sexes. The direct natural necessary relationship of man to man is the relationship of man to woman.

"Private property is only the necessary expression of the fact that man at one and the same time becomes objective for himself, becomes an alien and inhuman object. . . . The positive transcendence of private property, i.e., the conscious appropriation of human essence and being, of material things created by and for man is to be conceived not only in the sense of direct one-blood enjoyment, not only in the sense of direct, one-blood enjoyment, but also in the sense of direct, one-blood enjoyment. Man appropriates himself as an alienated essence in the form of: hence, as a whole man. Each of his human relations to the world—seeing, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, thought, perception, experience, wishing, acting, loving—is about all organs of his individuality, like the organs which exist directly in the form of communal organs, are in their objective relation or in their relation to the object, the appropriation of it. The appropriation of human actuality, its relation to the object, is the appropriation of human actuality. (Full essay appears in MARXISM AND FREEDOM, See ad, Page 2.)

Women paid less than men for harder work

Detroit, Mich.—The factory I work in makes small parts for the big auto companies. The majority of the workers are women. There is no union and conditions are terrible.

The men make much more money than the women, but the women are doing much harder work. The guys drive around in little fast-but trucks seeing how fast they can go. We have to work around machines.

We only get about a five-minute break after working five hours. We get a half hour for lunch, and then another five-minute break in the afternoon. If you get off on three o'clock on an eight-hour day, you can only have a 15-minute lunch break. There is no work-time before lunch or after work.

MACHINE BREAKS
The best thing about the job is the machine breaks. I was working on a machine that was supposed to be fixed. I was working on it for about 10 minutes more, and the part flew off again.

Your supervisor is making an average of 600 parts an hour. But they don't take him across the line. It takes for the foreman to close a machine down, even though it may take 15 minutes for the foreman to get everything checked, to make sure there are no more parts there, etc.

The majority of the workers in the plant are women, but there are no women foremen. The foreman that works with the women—and I don't know if this is mentioned or not—is a very good foreman.

Some of the women get all excited up to come to heads banded for it—that was the voice of women's liberation.

When the women in Charleston fought for their rights, I was down there and I saw what they did. They fought before the national mobilization, they cooked in their kitchens, and in the morning they came to the church and brought what they had cooked. They brought the chickens which were to have been their family dinners and cooked in the kitchens of the centers all morning. They fed a couple thousand people that were down.

CHARLESTON'S BLACK WORKING WOMEN
And then they went home and put on their white uniforms—their nurse's aides uniforms—and came back. They fed thousands of people into the streets of Charleston, which were lined with police and guns. They did this the following week, and the week after, and they had been doing it many weeks before that.

These women were saying three things: I'm black and I'm proud of it. I'm a worker and I'm proud of it. And I'm a woman and I'm proud of it. They fought and won their rights. And when they won, people had to look at them as all three. They won the dignity to be looked upon as what they were, as whole people who had fought to be whole people.

WOMEN NOT A CLASS

Women's liberation may have a lot of distortions in it; that is very apparent to all of us. There is a New York group that actually would prefer to kill off all the men. There are some middle class white women who wanted to repeal the laws limiting working women's hours, laws that working women had fought long and hard to win. We cannot say that let's reorganize and disorganize. What is going on is the nature of the struggle

work. They kind of enjoy the fact that the foreman pays attention to them.

There is no union, or even a grievance committee. It's even pretty common to be in whether we are paid by the hour or by the piece. I was hired in at the hourly rate, but they said I'd get a raise—depending on how well I was producing.

NO WORKERS RIGHTS

When I went in to apply for this job, they had three misprinted copies of "Workers Rights." I didn't get a copy, but they wouldn't allow them out of the office. They said they had no other copies.

In the "Workers Rights" paper it said that, after two weeks, you should be paid over \$3 an hour. One woman before me, working there the five years, was paid \$2.50 an hour. She was a black woman, and she was a mother.

When I hired in, the foreman came over to show me how to run the machine. I ran it that way for about five minutes, and another woman worker came over and showed me how you're really supposed to run the machine.

If the "Big Brother" is everywhere, they have someone sign up all over the place saying "Don't waste material" and "A good thing is a good worker." What really gets on my nerves is that every time they mention "worker," they say "man," and here we are—a majority of women in the plant.

of women for their own liberation, it tells us first that women are not a class, and naturally there are going to be distortions in the various voices that arise from the movement. We look at it for the lessons it can teach us.

If we look at the black movement, we recognize the validity of the black nationalism, but we do not say they speak for all black people. We look at black capitalism and recognize it as a threat and no answer for black people. But we also recognize that it comes out of the oppression of black people in the U.S. Let's look at Women's Liberation in that light.

What it means to a woman to be free, is not to want to be a man, or become something that she isn't. It means to become a whole person, and to be looked upon by others as a whole person. But nobody is going to look at you as a whole person unless you look at it that way yourself, first, because that is what makes people listen.

TO BE A WHOLE PERSON

It's about time for us to stop fighting for everybody's liberation except our own, and to recognize that our liberation is tied up with the liberation of other people.

Our voices of liberation, just like the black voices of liberation, just like the Chechenov voices of liberation, breed others throughout the world. This is what we mean when we talk about movements and the dialectic.

And this is why we say, "we will not wait until later." The black movement says, "Freedom NOW"—and we have to make it clear that we will not wait until after the revolution to have the problems of women's liberation cleared up by some one else. We either talk about our own liberation now and do something about it, or we deserve what we get.