

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES. UNITE!

The Workers' Advocate

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December 20, 1992

Women's commissions in the revolutionary movement in Soviet Russia: Zhenotdel, 1919-1930

The Bolshevik revolution and the emancipation of women, part 2:

The following article gives the views of a study group in Chicago of comrades and friends of the Marxist-Leninist Party. It concerns the early revolutionary period of the Soviet Union, and with some of the later process of degeneration. Part one appeared in our issue of May 20, 1992. We have added a few reference notes in square brackets.

This article discusses some of the work of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the fight for women's emancipation and in the organization of women workers and peasants into the revolutionary movement. It concentrates on the work of Zhenotdel (*zhenskii otdel* — the women's section, of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party), formed in 1919 and disbanded in 1930.

Prehistory of Zhenotdel

To understand Zhenotdel, it is useful to discuss some of its prehistory. The issue of women's liberation had been a historical current in the Russian revolutionary movement, for instance with the Narodniki movement of the 1860s and 1870s; women revolutionaries of this period, such as Vera Zasulich, were among the best-known of Russian heroes. Likewise, the fight for the social emancipation of women was an important current of the revolutionary movement that led to the victory of the Soviet revolution in October 1917. Through the early 1900s women were an increasingly important section of the working class. By 1917 they made up almost 40% of the employed workers. Often employed in the lowest paying dirtiest work, they frequently were little more than beasts of burden. Furthermore, women workers took an active part in the 1905 Revolution. And in 1917, women pouring into the streets of Petrograd on International Women's Day, demanding peace and bread, set off the February Revolution.

There were a number of issues which faced the Bolshevik Party in organizing women workers and peasants into the revolutionary movement and advancing their struggles for emancipation. These include winning the support of the class-conscious section of women workers for the Soviet Revolution; mobilizing those women workers and peasants who remained outside the revolutionary movement; and

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Behind the violence at the Cabrini-Green high-rise

Below is the lead article from the Dec. 1 Chicago Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-Chicago:

Public housing and the crime problem

The tragic shooting death of young Dantrell Davis on October 13 in Cabrini-Green has again focused public attention on the state of public housing in Chicago.

Public housing residents want to know why they are subjected to the constant threat of violence. They want to know why the Chicago police drive by "the projects" never investigating gunfire, seldom answering 911 emergency calls.

They want to know why the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) neglects the properties it's responsible for, boarding up apartments instead of repairing them.

They want to know why public housing has become a means of ghettoizing and impoverishing black people instead of helping them out of poverty. They want to know why living in public housing means zero or less economic opportunity, why the economic "opportunity" that capitalism offers them means either selling drugs or panhandling, welfare or working in a sub-human sweatshop for less than

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minimum wage. Yes, we all want to know why.

Richard Daley, the Mayor of Chicago, Vincent Lane, Chairman of the CHA, and Matt Rodriguez, the new Chief of Police have no solution to these problems. Instead, their response has been to continue the Reagan/Bush "war on drugs and gangs."

Within a week after the shooting, Mayor Daley announced his 12-point program to "clean up" public housing. While Daley's plan rejects Lane's call for National Guard troops, it does so in order to implement "more efficient" repression. The police sweeps, evictions and lockdowns will continue. The institution of restricted access and other security measures will continue. The only thing "new" in Daley's plan — more off-duty Chicago police to patrol, tenant patrols and shutting down some buildings.

The big capitalist news media tries to make a big deal of Daley's plan, hiding the real face of this brutal repression and claiming that the police are bringing peace. However the recent truce between the gangs had nothing to do with police repression but was brought about by community activists and politicians and mass grief over the killing of children.

CHA residents certainly need safety from drug dealers and snipers, [but] the sweeps and raids and lockdowns are nothing but persecution of CHA residents. People are thrown out on the street while the cops ransack their apartments, and the poor are supposed to be grateful for this extra attention from the police! The "war on drugs" never seems to touch the drug kingpins; it's really just a war against the poor.

Is this a program to clean up public housing or eliminate it? CHA tenants are worried. While we can not say definitely if the city plans to eliminate public housing, a lot of evidence points in that direction.

One astonishing feature is that the most obvious facts constantly elude the CHA bureaucrats. Any CHA resident could tell the bureaucrats that the gang, gun and drug problem has grown in proportion to CHA neglect of the tenants and buildings. It doesn't take a genius to see that fixing up the apartments and keeping the projects fully occupied will be a major stride towards guaranteeing their security.

The building at 1157 N. Cleveland, the one from which the fatal shot was fired, had only 11 out of 68 apartments occupied. Many residents were convinced that the CHA was deliberately letting buildings go to hell as an excuse to close them. Now, as part of the big master plan, four such low-occupancy buildings will be closed and sealed at Cabrini-Green. Still, when the police showed up to move those 11 families, it came as a shock since they were given no advance notice.

The way the CHA treats its tenants is surely cause for

concern about its real agenda. While Lane says he is concerned about the safety and well-being of the tenants, he is on record as being for demolishing high-rises. He calls rehabbing them "patching here, patching there". After years of neglect, years of nickel-and-diming the projects to death, awarding lucrative contracts for shoddy repair work and slowly and slowly evicting the majority of tenants from many buildings, now Lane has come up with a "radical" solution — *cure cancer by killing the patient*.

Out of this kind of concern, organizations of the homeless which tried to occupy and rehab vacant apartments (with their own money), have been treated viciously by the city government. Activists and laid off steelworkers who repaired CHA units and made them livable were arrested. The homeless who moved into the rehabbed apartments were evicted and some arrested.

Out of this kind of concern, the tens of thousands of people on the waiting list to get into CHA apartments have been snubbed and ignored. People have found that the simplest way to get into an apartment is by finding someone who is moving out and taking over the rent payments. The CHA bureaucracy has cared so little about their tenants they didn't know, before the police sweeps began, who was living in their buildings. Of course, after the police sweeps, the CHA still didn't know who their tenants were because they kicked out many people just because they didn't have their names in their records.

This decades-long deterioration of public housing is symptomatic of the deterioration of the living conditions of black people. Vince Lane paints rosy pictures of the future of public housing — mixed low-rise and high-rise, mixed income, mixed race, scattered sites. Of course, there is no concrete plan for improving public housing — certainly there is no additional money being set aside for housing the poor — just speeches before the TV cameras. He can not answer the pressing question of the poor: "Where are we going to live?" But, more fundamentally, he can not answer and sweeps aside the question of how are we going to eliminate the grinding and degrading poverty in which far too many of our brothers and sisters are forced to live.

Poor people in this city do, indeed, have a crying need for affordable, safe and decent housing. Many people thought that public housing would answer that need. Today, some people believe that tearing down the high-rises and building scattered-site public housing will answer that need. But, if the history of the last four decades proves anything, it is this: without a fight against poverty, without a fight of the poor, supported broadly by working people to eliminate poverty, public housing can never be anything but a means of warehousing and exploiting the poor, of containing and controlling them and of maintaining people in poverty. This fight must set a standard, a level of life and living below which we allow no one to fall. □

Notice

The *Workers' Advocate Supplement* is going over to a new publishing schedule. Instead of usually being published monthly, it usually will come out every one and a half months. Note also that no issues of the *Supplement* were

published between the July 25 issue and this present December 20 issue, mostly due to work for the Fourth Congress of the MLP. □

How to keep the clinics open in Chicago

From the Dec. 1 Chicago Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-Chicago:

"Pro-Life" fascists thwarted once again!

On Nov. 7 over 400 pro-choice activists stepped forward to defend clinics which perform abortions against attacks by the anti-abortion fanatics of Operation Rescue. OR boasted for a month before hand that it would shut down at least two clinics.

The anti-abortion bigots showed up at the Albany Clinic, 5086 N. Elston, at about 6 AM. Since they arrived before large numbers of clinic defenders got there, the antis took the doors. Within a short time, however, large numbers of clinic defenders showed up. The police stated that it would take them some time before they would clear the doors. Meanwhile the staff and clients of the clinic wanted to get in. The pro-choice activists decided to take matters into their own hands and they cleared the doors. One of the leading anti-abortion fanatics Joseph Scheidler was chased down the street by protesters shouting "Shame, shame, shame!" He had to be whisked away in a police car. Clinic workers soon arrived and even though the antis had glued the locks, they managed to break a window and get the front door. Patients were escorted inside on time for their appointments.

After the defenders took the door, the police finally started arresting the "antis." But the police were angry that activists took matters into their own hands and looked for excuses to arrest pro-choice defenders. One was arrested when she went to relieve another activist who was carrying a sign. Somehow the police officer took this as being threatening. A lawyer was arrested when she asked the police for the names of the other activists arrested. The

cops showed their hatred for the pro-choice cause by their treatment of activists under arrest. One was thrown face down on the street. Two activists had their hands bound so tightly with handcuffs that they were numb for hours. A total of 5 clinic defenders were arrested along with over 100 anti-abortion attackers.

Mass action at Albany made this clinic defense a definite success. Unfortunately another clinic was left undefended and was shut down for some hours in the afternoon.

We workers and poor should support and participate in the struggle to defend the clinics. The anti-abortion fanatics like to hide their real intentions behind a lot of religious preaching and talk of the sanctity of life. But their efforts to ban abortion give a glimpse of how, in order to satisfy their own bigoted beliefs, they would rather see women die. Worldwide, botched abortions are one of the leading causes of death of child-bearing age women. Banning abortions here would force women into having dangerous backalley abortions where many women would certainly die.

Any restriction on abortion rights especially hurts working and poor women. The rich can afford what it takes to get an abortion if they need it. And being poor doesn't mean we have no need to plan our families. Abortion is a method of birth control of last resort. It should be the woman--and not the government or the church, and not their financial condition--which decides whether or not to have a child.

These and other reasons show that the fight for abortion rights is necessary to protect the well-being of women, especially poor and working women. No matter whether one's beliefs on abortion prevent one from considering it for oneself, we should all stand for the right of a woman to choose such an option. Join in the pro-choice actions and help defend women's clinics! □

Pro-choice forces in New York dwarf "chain of life"

The anti-abortion fanatics suffered a fiasco in New York City this past July when they held a campaign of clinic blockades. You could hardly see the 20 or so blockaders in the sea of thousands of clinic defenders. So the anti-abortion fanatics sought to stage a comeback on October 18, when they held their second annual "life chain."

However, just like at the first chain last year, they were outnumbered many times over. This time they didn't even try to set up their "human crucifix" at Fifth Avenue and 34th Street, but just tried to stay out of the way. After all,

more than 5,000 defenders of women's rights came out to denounce them. Rallying at Columbus Circle, the pro-choice activists marched across town to Fifth Avenue and then down to 34th Street. There were many new activists who first got active in clinic defense during July, and also quite a number of high school and college students. The march was lively, with chants such as "Right to Life, your name's a lie, you don't care if women die!" and "Abortion is health care, health care is a right!" □

In the name of 'historical necessity': Another apologist of Columbus

Steve Peterson sent us the following editorial from the October 17, 1992 issue of The People, journal of the Socialist Labor Party, with certain passages underlined, and his October 22 letter of protest to The People.

Columbus Controversy

As the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of America (from the European perspective) passes, a controversy has peaked: Should the event be celebrated or mourned? Should Columbus be lionized as a hero or demonized as a cruel conqueror and symbol of European rapaciousness?

Modern-day historians have shattered some myths about Columbus that many Americans were taught as school-children. It is now better known that most educated people of Columbus' time already knew that the world was round, that Columbus was not on a primarily scientific mission and was motivated largely by avarice, and that he presided over the enslavement of, and atrocities perpetrated against, the natives of Hispaniola.

But ironically, some of these more accurate historical accounts adopt an ahistorical and one-sided perspective. For one thing, if Columbus was not quite on the cutting edge of 15th-century geography, he still deserves credit for possessing the courage required to put theory to the test.

As to his treatment of Native Americans, it betrays a lack of understanding of history to judge Columbus by 20th-century moral standards. Columbus was a product of a period when feudalism carried a developing mercantile capitalism within its womb. It was the period of the Spanish Inquisition; European ruling classes frequently wreaked terror and cruelties upon their own ruled classes. Columbus' treatment of Native Americans was a product of those conditions and was not out of sorts with the time.

It is a sad but unavoidable fact of human history that, since the breakup of primitive communism and the advent of ancient slavery, all human material and social progress has been made possible only by exacting a terrible price on the lives of conquered peoples and exploited classes. This is so not because humankind in general, or "Europeans" in particular, are naturally evil, but because the underlying material conditions of scarcity did not permit material and social progress to take place any other way.

Like slavery and feudalism, the horrible subjugation of Native Americans was a necessary step in social evolution. That does not make it "good," but it was essential in bringing us to the present stage of industrial capitalism—where it is now possible to eliminate scarcity for all, and bring about a new phase of social progress, in which class rule and all inhumane conduct can finally be eradicated.

Columbus fulfilled a historically necessary mission. If he had not played the role, someone else would have, with the

same end result. To make more of him than that, to either credit him or blame him for having personally "changed" the course of history, is to attach too much importance to one man, who reflected both the best and the worst of his society and his time. □

In reply:

October 22, 1992

Your editorial of October 17, which you sheepishly named "Columbus controversy," grossly understates the extent of the racism, barbarisms and genocide known to have been committed by Columbus and his bands of cutthroats and thieves against the indigenous peoples of this hemisphere. From a Marxist or scientific point of view there is no "Columbus Controversy," the man, as well as the society he represented, are guilty as charged and should be roundly pilloried.

You did point out correctly, in passing, that he was "motivated largely by avarice and that he presided over the enslavement of, and atrocities perpetrated against the natives of Hispaniola." It is altogether fitting and useful to unmask the "heroes" and myths of "Western Civilization" and show them for what they really are. But then you do an about-face and pat him on the back "for possessing the courage required to put theory to the test." Armed with your logic why not praise Hitler for building the autobahn and ending unemployment in Germany or praise Truman for putting the atomic bomb to the test over the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? I submit to you that it is totally out of line for an organization that calls itself revolutionary to engage in apologetics or cover-up on behalf of tyrants and murderers. Leave that job to the many well-paid scribblers and other defenders of Western colonialism and imperialism.

Next you proceed to reproach those of us living in the 20th century who presume to judge conduct that occurred in the 15th century. You say that the vile treatment and savagery inflicted upon indigenous peoples by Columbus was, well, just the way they did things back then, so don't be so critical of the old boy. But of course this is an outright absurdity, as anyone living in the age of Imperialism without having their head buried in the sand, can easily attest. In fact the barbarisms of the 15th century pale in comparison to the magnitude of the atrocities committed in the 20th century. Or have you forgotten, to name a few, World War I, World War II, the U.S. war against Korea, the U.S. war against Indochina, the U.S. war against El Salvador and Nicaragua, the U.S. war against Iraq and the 500 years of continuous warfare against the indigenous peoples of the Western hemisphere?

Support bilingual education!

From the Dec. 1 Chicago Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-Chicago:

Bilingual education in Illinois has been threatened by the soon to be President of the State Senate, James "Pate" Phillip. In a press conference after the November 4th election Phillip pledged to cut funding for bilingual education saying, "let 'em learn English"

There was a strong reaction against Phillip's racist remarks from educational organizations and from the Latino community. Then, on November 13th an angry group of 50 parents, students and educators demonstrated at the State of Illinois Building downtown against any attack on bilingual education. The protesters demanded a face to face meeting with Governor Edgar and Mr. Phillip. State and city police were called in, but some protesters managed to force open the door to Phillip's office suite before the police stopped them. Phillip agreed finally to meet representatives later in the month, but he has refused to change his position against bilingual education.

Some facts on bilingual education

More than 50,000 students in Illinois public schools are in bilingual education programs. Most of the students are Spanish speaking, but programs also exist in Polish, Arabic, Korean, and 20 other languages. The total budget for bilingual programs is around \$48 million; only about 3.1% of the total education budget. About \$28 million goes to Chicago and about \$20 million to the suburbs and down state. The programs are aimed at teaching English, while at the same time, the students receive instruction in their other subjects (math, science, etc.) in their native language so they don't fall behind the other students. Bilingual education is a basic right and a part of the fight for equality for the immigrants and minorities. Bilingual and multilingual education works in many countries and benefits all students. In Chicago and elsewhere a long hard fight has been waged to establish bilingual programs and to try and improve them. Even now, the existing programs are not sufficient for all the students who need them.

A two-fisted attack on the workers and poor

James Phillips racist hot air against bilingual education is really a two-fisted offensive. On one hand, it is part of the general attack against education for all the workers and poor. Phillip, just like the other politicians for the rich, want to continue to slash funding to public education. No

matter how many pretty words they spout about the "importance of education", COT, CUT, CUT is all they ever do! So what if the kids can't understand anything the teachers say? So what if there aren't enough books or desks? So what if there's a 70% drop-out rate in some Black and Hispanic high schools? Just keep raising the salaries for the top politicians and bureaucrats, and of course keep the tax breaks and benefits for the super-rich.

On the other hand, Phillip's remarks and threats are also a part of the continuing racist campaign against all minorities and against immigrant workers. Does the state have a budget crises, well, according to this racist campaign, it must be because too much money is spent on printing ballots in Spanish and bilingual education! Is there a problem with violence in this country, well it must be the fault of African-Americans! Never mind that the problems really come from a system of capitalism that puts mega-profits for the few above all else. This racist campaign works to divide the different nationalities and ethnic groups. Blacks against Whites against Latinos against Asians and on and on. It works to create hostility and hatred instead of unity.

The working class needs unity

For years the living and working conditions for the workers and poor in the U.S. have gone downhill. Unemployment and poverty are increasing. Education, health care, the environment are all in crisis. We can only fight back against the capitalists' offensive against us with a united mass movement of workers and poor. But real unity can only be built through the fight for equality - against racism, against anti-immigrant chauvinism. Unity does not depend on us all speaking the same language. It does not depend on us all being the same race or religion. It depends on us all fighting together for the interests that we have in common as workers. The capitalists will do anything, they will tell any lie, they will commit any crime — just to try to keep us from uniting because they are so afraid that one day the workers and the poor will get organized and really begin to fight for some justice. Why, we might even rise up and get rid of their precious capitalism once and for all!

We need to unite and fight for more educational programs for all our children and against cuts that will hurt any group of students.

Support Bilingual Education!

No Cutbacks in Education!

Unite against Racism!

□

You have one-sidedly and undialectically taken the indefensible position that the "only morality" of the 15th century was that of the Spanish nobility, the feudal exploiters. In your analysis, what has become of the morality of the oppressed, in this specific case of the Arawak and Taino people, of those who stood up and fought against exploitation and cruelty; what about class struggle? Your editorial reveals a lack of a class or proletarian viewpoint of morality. But morality is partisan in the sense that it is representative of the interests of a particular class. There

was a war of morality then, as there is today, just as there is class war over economic and politics. The SLP, by accepting the bourgeois conception of morality instead of proletarian morality has, either wittingly or unwittingly, given a certain moral justification to the slaughter of native Americans. This is nothing less than crude and vulgar Marxism.

Respectfully,
Steve Peterson □

Italian workers and youth condemn fascism

The Italian political scene continues to be marked by mass action in the streets. Militant workers are in revolt against their trade union leaders, who are selling out the workers to a cutback-minded government. With growing unemployment, in the midst of a recession, the bosses want cutbacks but the workers say "fight back!"

In this crisis fascist groups are crawling out of their holes to try and divide the workers. The fascistic Lombard League headed by Umberto Bossi has scored some startling electoral successes, and this has led to a big increase in violence against Jews and immigrants.

But thousands of militant workers and progressive youths are joining forces to oppose the fascists. On October 10, Turin was shut down by workers and students who filled the streets and marched on city hall shouting "Here we are with our red banners! Go fuck yourself, Umberto Bossi!"

In late October a demonstration of 50,000 fascists in Rome marched through the African quarter and Jewish ghetto, scrawling threatening racist graffiti and plastering

yellow Stars of David on Jewish-owned businesses. A group of some hundreds of Jewish youths, together with a few concentration camp survivors, gave their reply: on November 5, they attacked and ransacked the headquarters of the fascist Western Political Movement, which had organized the racist demonstration.

This action galvanized progressive people across the country and helped ensure a big turnout for the next event, a demonstration against the fascists on November 9, anniversary of the Nazi's notorious 1938 *Kristallnacht* rampage against Jewish homes and businesses in Germany. Some 200,000 people in cities across the country marched against fascist terrorism. Tens of thousands of workers and youths demonstrated in Rome, and there were also marches in 30 other cities. In Rome, Palestinian leftists linked arms with Jewish youths to denounce the fascists. In Milan, tens of thousands of high school youths bounced through the streets shouting "Jump if you're not a fascist!" □

1-16-95
DISCUSSION

Earth First! and the population bomb

Below are two letters from Steve Peterson of Los Angeles concerning an exchange of views he has been having with Earth First! Following this is his article on the population bomb and a reply by Earth First!, reprinted as they appear in the Earth First! journal. Then we print another article by him and a reply by Earth First! from a later issue of the Earth First! journal. The pull quotes and no babies graphic are as in the Earth First! journal.

2 September 1992

Dear Friends:

Enclosed are copies of the polemic I've been having with Earth First! I felt like establishing some communication with an environmental group and preferably with one that is actually doing something other than simply relying on the solemn promises of some EPA (read: Every Polluters Assistant) bureaucrats. It seems that I was under the mistaken impression that EF! was at least rethinking some of their callous, anti-human notions regarding "overpopulation." Indeed, it's evident in their *I Wish It Were a Dud*, so-called rebuttal, that they have not repudiated the unscientific, Neanderthal ideas of their founder, David Foreman.

The *Population Bomb is a Dud!* article was reprinted in the *Supplement* of 20 February 1991. ... We ... felt it might be instructive to reprint this polemic in the *Supplement* to point out the muddled and backward conceptions that EF! and, no doubt, many in the environmental movement still cling to.

Sincerely,
Steve Peterson

9 October 1992

Dear Friends:

This is a copy of Earth First's latest reply which appeared in their September 22 journal issue. As you can see by their graphic below, and in spite of an earlier statement that Malthus was all wet, they (Earth First! and/or Don Smith) still cling to and perpetuate the Malthusian notion that babies and not a specific economic, political and social order are chiefly responsible for the ills which plague humankind and the "rest of creation". Such utter rubbish! And what great apologists, witting or unwitting, they are for the bourgeoisie.

Sincerely,
Steve

Population is not the cause of problems
→ new system
→ necessary to prevent future

Population bomb is a dud! by Steve Peterson

Have you noticed that the quality of life on this planet has been in a big nose dive? Hunger and famine are endemic to many populations. Breathing the air and drinking the water can be hazardous to your health. Oil spills defile our beaches and wreak havoc on wildlife. Poverty, unemployment and homelessness are increasing. Warfare destroys the lives of millions of people.

According to some, all of these social ills can be blamed on a single source: overpopulation. While it's probably safe to say that if left unchecked, the population would, at some time in the future, exceed the Earth's carrying capacity, today population per se is not "the ultimate threat to mankind," as it is commonly portrayed. This notion became popular in the early 70's following the publication of *The Population Bomb*, by Paul Ehrlich. Actually what this book boils down to is nothing but a crock of warmed-over Malthusian stew.

In his *Essay on the Principles of Population*, published in 1798, the Reverend Malthus purports to show why the poor we shall always have with us. He begins by conjuring up his most oft-quoted dictum that while human population increases geometrically, i.e., 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, etc., food resources could be expected, even under the most favorable of conditions, to grow only arithmetically, i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, (*Essay*; vol. 1, p. 106) Malthus then proceeds to "demonstrate" that the condition of the poor cannot be improved due to their lack of "moral restraint," which causes them to multiply beyond the means of subsistence. In fact, "the common people...are themselves the cause of their own poverty ... The society in which they live and the government which presides over it are without any direct power in this respect..." (*Essay*, vol. 2, pp. 170-1).

But contrary to the simple-minded and class-biased assertions of Malthus, human reproductive behavior is very complex. It is profoundly influenced by cultural values, gender relations, religious beliefs and standards of living. What Gandhi said about the role of British imperialism in India applies equally to U.S. imperialism and its neocolonies, namely, that if you strip the people of nearly everything meaningful in their lives and reduce women to mere breeding factories, population rates will soar.

...today population per se is not "the ultimate threat to mankind..."

Malthus's unscientific notions, especially regarding food production, have been proved to be dead wrong. In 1798 the U.S. population was about 5 million and there was more than enough food for everyone. Today the population is about 250 million and there is still more than enough food. This is the situation despite the fact that over the past 40 years more than 4 million farms have gone out of business and that every year about 1 million acres of farmland are turned into highways, housing developments and factories.

In 1798 the *Essay* was received with open arms by the British ruling class as it relieved them of responsibility for the suffering and poverty of the working class; a time when the French Revolution was spreading seditious ideas about liberty, fraternity and equality. Even today, these discredited ideas of Malthus are promoted by the ruling class and their high-paid scribblers as part of their ideological smokescreen intended to shield from public scrutiny the real material basis of the social ills which plague humankind. For example, from the learned lips of congressman Tony Beilenson in his *Special Report on the Environment* of July 1990, we are told that, "starvation, poverty and virtually every environmental problem we face today," can be blamed on population growth. From the executive director of Zero Population Growth we learn that the "invisible force driving global environmental deterioration [is] people, too many of them" (*ZPG Reporter*, April 1990). And from the Michigan chapter of the bourgeois feminist organization NOW, we see another example in the theme of their pro-choice TV campaign which ran ads based on the idea of saving all the money that would otherwise be paid to raise welfare kids. These ads appealed, not to the defense of a woman's right of choice, but rather to the resentment of the bourgeoisie for every penny spent on the poor. These kind of Reaganite appeals can only serve to dampen the struggle for women's rights by turning off millions of potential allies who can see through the thinly veiled racist bug that it represents.

Given the high level of technological development that exists, the reason people are impoverished and go hungry is that under capitalism everything, including food, is a commodity that can be bought only if you have money. With socialist production planned to meet human needs and not for sale and profit as under capitalism, all the people could share in the abundance of life's necessities while want, misery and starvation would be relegated to the dustbin of history.

I Wish It Were a Dud!

by Don Smith

Steven Peterson has dusted off an old line of thought, lugged it up from the cellar, and tossed it onto the table to

set us overpopulation phobes straight. Ho hum. Do we have to go through this again?

First of all, let's dispense with good ole Rev. Malthus. He was an idiot and his theory of poverty is bunk. Marx buried him long ago. What needs examination is the assumptions made by Mr. Peterson, as reflected in the following statement: "In 1798 the US population was about 5 million and there was more than enough food for everyone. Today the population is about 250 million and there is still more than enough food." No doubt about it. We can produce enough food to feed the masses in the US and in the world for that matter. But do we really want to? Do we really want more people treading on the earth, even if they have full bellies? The thought nauseates me.

Since we do have the industrial capacity to feed everyone can it then be assumed that we don't have an overpopulation crisis? We have the ability to eliminate poverty and starvation with technological efficiency. But the problem here is all too obvious to the Earth First'er. What of the rest of creation. Should the population of humans continue to grow in proportion to the industrial capacity to care for all of them? If so, what will remain of wildlife habitat and of nature that is relatively unimpacted by humans? What of the increasing emission of industrial waste. This is the crisis the earth faces now, a much bigger crisis in the scheme of things than that faced by human poverty and starvation, though these are serious matters.

**Do we really want more people
treading on the earth, even if they
have full bellies?**

So what if we could feed everyone. Are we to assume that we could also shelter everyone, provide health care, transportation, adequate luxury goods, etc.? Are we to assume that the quality of life, as defined by the amount of accumulated goods, is to be made available to everyone on the same scale as feeding everyone? Get with the program man, the problem is overdevelopment, not underdevelopment. Do you overstand?

Putting the earth first means putting people's needs in perspective. It means looking at the big picture, including other life forms. It means looking at humans from an evolutionary perspective rather than simply a human developmental perspective.

The problems we face concerning too many humans have to do with the ecosystem's integrity, with biodiversity, with nature's (and this includes people's) evolution. The problems of feeding, clothing, sheltering, educating, training, moving, caring for, governing, etc. the masses are, albeit important issues, secondary to doing our part as a species in maintaining nature's integrity rather than destroying it. If we don't do this then all the technological and political efficiency that we may attain is for nought. While I appreciate Mr. Peterson's concerns, this Food First perspec-

tive just ain't where it's at.

Earth First!

Reply to "I Wish It Were a Dud!"

It saddened me a bit to discover that Earth First! is still dragging around some of that old David Foreman Paleolithic, anti-human, racist baggage with which your group has come to be identified. Even he, of late, has become a little shamed for issuing such eco-brutalist rubbish as, "...the worst thing we could do in Ethiopia is to give aid — the best thing would be to just let nature seek its own balance, to let the people there just starve...." (Cited in *Socialist Review* Vol.18, No.3 July—Sept.'88, p.14) Don Smith, speaking for EF!, obviously agrees with Foreman when he says, "We can produce enough food to feed the masses in the U.S. and in the world for that matter.... We have the industrial capacity to feed everyone.... We have the ability to eliminate poverty and starvation.... But do we really want to?" Now hold on a minute, please. Just who is it that constitutes this unidentified collective "we" mentioned in these statements? Is it really you, me and our friends, or the Rockefellers, Mellons, DuPonts and their capitalist associates, i.e., those who make the day-to-day decisions regarding what and how much will be produced and how it will be distributed or even dumped down a drain? Since the capability to eliminate poverty and starvation and much of their attendant misery now exists, as Mr. Smith concedes, the burning question for anyone with a drop of humanitarian concern would be to figure out exactly what it is that prevents this from being accomplished, and not "do we really want to," as EF! queries. And exactly what does it mean "to let nature seek its own balance" in a world already despoiled and ravaged by a system of colonialism and imperialism, carried out in the interests of a mean-spirited, parasitical, dollar-worshipping class of industrialists and bankers (sic).

The reason that things are the way they are is because the people who "own" and run this planet have decided that this is how it must be for the sake of their profit margins. If the world's once pristine water systems must be turned into lifeless sewers, if the air we breathe becomes fouled with toxic chemicals, if entire ecosystems are brought to the edge of extinction and if millions of people are forced to scrounge in garbage heaps for survival, then so be it, declareth the capitalist class and their apologists; the Profits must be served, sayeth Mammon, their god. It is essential for those who are willing to take a serious

stand against the way things are to keep in mind that this is a class divided society and in the real world, we are not "all in the same boat." That while a small number of people stand to profit immensely from the crimes they commit against humanity and the environment, most people will suffer because of these very same crimes.

I must ask EF!/Don Smith please, reveal to the rest of us which people who have decided should starve and be deprived of the necessities for a full, meaningful life. Perhaps it is the Earth Firstlers who will be first in line to join those they have deemed expendable. After all, since the thought of "more people treading on the earth, even with full bellies" nauseates Mr. Smith, he ought to consider that from someone else's perspective, he and his friends also constitute "more people."

While Mr. Smith correctly points out that it was long ago that Marx debunked Malthus' overpopulation theory, he neglects the fact that neo-Malthusian ideas, including Mr. Smith's, are still heavily promoted by those who will blame anything and everything except their beloved capitalist system for the social ills which plague humankind and all of "creation." In the same vein of this myth-making is the fallacy that simply because the earth's population would decline, that, ipso facto, society would somehow be transformed and flowers would bloom, birds will sing and the earth would be cleansed. But in its very foundation, capitalism is a system of exploitation driven by the profit motive, an insatiable thirst for capital accumulation and the dog-eat-dog necessity of driving competitors into ruin. Under capitalism, whether the population is 2 or 10 billion it will remain a veritable hell on earth for a majority of the people and the "rest of creation."

Finally, it seems amazing that EF!, a group which claims to be somewhat knowledgeable about the ways of the earth, could either ignore or cover up for the existing political and economic relations which dictate how things will be carried out in the real world. But facts are stubborn things and the fact is that much of the "Third World's" most fertile land is controlled by imperialist agribusiness, including farming and petrochemical industries, with its heavy emphasis on export-based commodity production, e.g., bananas, coffee or cotton, while at the same time sacrificing food production which would serve the needs of the domestic populations. And it bears repeating, since EF! failed to respond to this point in their "rebuttal," namely, that if nearly everything meaningful is stripped from people's lives and women are relegated to the status of breeding factories, birth rates will soar. Conversely, as the old age goes, if the people's needs are provided for, birth rates will decline.

Sincerely, for future generations.
Steve Peterson

Don Smith replies:

I'm hard pressed to understand why thoughtful and social change advocates like Mr. Peterson insist on holding to this *orthodox* perspective on overpopulation. I might be in agreement with him were I living in the 1930's. However, any good Marxist understands that as history proceeds, so must theory.

When addressing the overpopulation issue, misunderstandings seem inevitable. Critics of the overpopulation thesis insist on arguing whether poverty creates overpopulation or vice versa. This ignores the larger question: aren't the lives of other species just as important as people's right not to starve? Whether poverty exists or not, the rest of life suffers tremendously when existing alongside five billion humans. This is no more acceptable than human starvation—even though its acceptance has been a trademark of human arrogance, and continues today even in the minds of many otherwise progressive folk.

I understand the ramifications of human suffering in the third world (I spent four years as a director of a human rights organization), and I hold no apologies for capitalism. After all, I'm too poor to afford such apologies. Nor am I a misanthrope. I believe social issues are inextricably linked with the goals of environmental radicalism and wilderness defense. To think otherwise is inconceivable to me.

To argue that other species and habitat have equal footing with humans does not imply a lack of compassion for human poverty. It is not a matter of choosing between preserving nature or eradicating poverty. It is a matter of doing both. But to preserve nature's biodiversity requires a drastic decrease in human population.

Also, my rebuttal to Mr. Peterson reflected my own



Above graphic accompanied Don Smith's reply to Steve Peterson in *Earth First!*'s Journal

thinking, not that of *Earth First!* No single *Journal* writer speaks as the voice of *Earth First!* As a non-organization with diverse perspectives, no such voice exists.

As for the criticism directed to Dave Foreman: while justified, I think it was overdone. A lot of political angst was played out at the expense of Mr. Foreman. □

TCBS #5 (2,3,4,6 also)
2 sessions
1-30-93

More on the material basis for socialism in the modern world (6)

Below is a letter from comrade Rhonie of Detroit. Earlier contributions to this discussion from other comrades appear in our January, February, April, May, and July issues.

Workers' communism (Commentary and analysis of trend)

First, let me give my views on workers' communism and what I feel it entails.

Workers' communism should place constructive, productive labor in the forefront of the struggle to eliminate the exploitation of man by man. Though I am still a student of Marxism-Leninism, two things on which to base workers' communism seem apparent to me. 1) Workers' communism must have as its basis the electibility and right to recall of labor management and the political staff of soviet rule. Not only politicians but managers of labor should be elected and recalled by the masses as necessary to ensure popular rule. 2) Labor should have the vote on economic matters and wages should be done away with. Planning should give way to pay based on family size (within limits) and a system of remuneration based upon costs: labor should have as its remuneration payment that is subsistential not in a strict sense but allows them to fully enjoy life until money is phased out. The above on labor remuneration means that labor should be given payment that allows it to reasonably enjoy life in an economy that is planned and then marketized and computerized as money is phased out and only used among business establishments ruled by laborers as they are taught to manage as well as labor as money is phased out.

Of lesser importance is the linking of town with country: this can be achieved by incorporating town with country in new communities that are part of newly created industrial regions which take advantage of natural conditions and climates and resources.

The above is just a way of saying remunerate labor properly and divide its natural prerequisites. Labor should be a tool of laborers and enhanced to take advance of natural resources. But, no, do not restrict the spread of other branches of industry into regions where they were not previously; rather, place different forms of labor in each region as necessary to enhance labor activity and prospects for that activity. Proper remuneration until money is gradually transferred to inter-business accounting, and regionalization (another way of saying communalization) and localization, is the best way to attain a truly communist society in which democracy plays a leading role.

Leadership is not what is driven for or should be striven for. Only bourgeois reactionaries and revisionists keep harping on "guiding principles" and "leading" roles. They,

the communists, i.e. the Marxist-Leninists should be the propaganda head of the movement. But this does not mean that propaganda should become the leading determiner of revolutionary developments. It is the masses who must determine when communism is to be implemented and how rapid should be its advance. Propaganda should be at the service of the masses to guide them. Theoretical conclusions may be either right or wrong; it is practice which confirms theory not theory that is proved by practice. Co-operation between theory and practice is what is to be sought after.

It is important to remember dialectics and the great philosophical analysis of Plekhanov, Marx, Lenin and Engels. Plekhanov stresses that dialectics is quaternary, not tertiary, in his attacks upon revisionists. Marx and Engels write dialectically and show in their work *The Holy Family* how idealism distorts dialectics, which is a viable theory in the hands of materialists. Lenin points out the revolutionary features of dialectics and stresses that it is concatenation, the unity and struggle of opposites that is the main criterion of dialectical and historical materialism.

Let us now go a step further and put this concatenation to revolutionary use. Let us eliminate the unity and struggle of opposites by putting labor in ever more control of management in all spheres.

Let us begin analyzing the stand of the Marxist-Leninist Party on workers' communism.

Philosophical considerations are not stressed, and that is the main fault with the articles at my disposal. Practical matters are covered but not philosophically. That leaves it to the reader to use his own knowledge of dialectical and historical materialism to come to relevant conclusions.

What I feel is a main factor of all economic systems is not addressed: the divorcement of labor from management under capitalism and state-capitalist revisionism means the creation of a dialectic that is the key to the whole problem — labor/management of labor. Labor not having a say in political economic issues is the same as pitting labor against management in this most important sphere; the dialectic thus becomes labor—political/economic management.

Capitalism and state-capitalism create separate bureaucracies which subjugate labor. In the July 25, 1992 issue of *The Workers' Advocate Supplement* on pages 8-16 comrade Joseph of Detroit hints at the same throughout his article (perhaps he is smart enough not to say so directly). He critiques state-capitalist revisionism, apologizes for the critique, then examines joint stock companies as a new phenomenon of capitalism, saying it is not private ownership per se but joint private ownership.

One may use this same conclusion to cleverly deduce

that state-capitalism is nearly the same form of ownership. More to the point comrade Joseph says that management has the enrichment of its strata as a prerogative. He only hints at this but as is obvious to anyone who can read his suggestions carry a lot of weight.

Yet he does not quote philosophically, only practically. Yes, it is a practical consideration that labor becomes divorced from management as soviet rule is abandoned. But never does he say this, or that such creates the dialectic of labor in struggle with political/economic management; and, that is the main consideration to be grubbed from all that I have examined on this issue.

The writing of comrade Joseph is purposive yet it lacks real depth. Whether this is purposive or not is up to your discretion; all I can say is this: his views and practical considerations open up new ground for the students of Marxism-Leninism.

* * *

In the *Supplement* of July 20, 1991 is the article that started the continuing discussion within the Marxist-Leninist party on prospects for workers' communism: "The technical and cultural [basis] for workers' socialism in the modern world."

This article makes one poignant point [about] the Great October Revolution: in its given situation (lack of development of industry and preponderance of agricultural labor) "the law of division of labor exerts itself. Society is going to need a class of administrators, etc. freed from the drudgery characteristic of that stage of productive labor, to organize the most basic industrial activity. (It is requisite that a developed society have a firm industrial foundation.--Rh.) As this class will be needed for a long period of time, because the conditions requiring it could not be changed quickly." (*Supplement*, Volume 7, #6, July 20, 1991, p. 26)

The former Soviet Union was extremely backward and this created the conditions for the rise of a bureaucratic caste. Furthermore, "Marx and Engels' (made) observations about capitalism creating the material, economic conditions necessary for abolishing class divisions,..." (*Ibidem*, p. 25) Marx and Engels did not view a backward society such as Russia as ripe for revolution. Had more advanced nations embarked upon the socialist road with Russia (only Mongolia did contemporaneously and it was not advanced either) there may never have been a bureaucratic caste in the former Soviet Union.

The main feature of this article is that it espouses hope for revolution in the west. This fact is lost track of in the subsequent discussion. Although the article makes many tangent points it neglects to mention that no developed capitalist country has wholly gone over to socialism and that it was the liberation of eastern Europe from fascism by the Soviet Red Army that facilitated the rise and collapse of state-capitalism in the eastern bloc. Of course that is not to be expected of an article based on modernarity and technical advances but it would have given the article a duality of view that was only winked at with the mention of development of the October Revolution.

Back to the analysis and praise of this fine article. Perhaps the most important point made in this article is this: "*The abolition of class distinctions is not simply possible, but necessary.*" (*Ibidem*, p. 25)

The modern advance of technology has ruled out rule by the few and has led to the necessity of the concatenation of theory and practice.

Furthermore, during the initial stage of socialism the "economy requires a very high level of mass consciousness to succeed. Such a planned economy cannot be a 'technocracy' run by a caste of 'benevolent specialists.' History (has revealed) that every separate administrative class uses their leverage to organize themselves as a privileged, exploiting elite. In modern conditions, this would mean a form of state capitalism." ("The Technical and Cultural Basis for Workers' Socialism in the Modern World," *The Workers' Advocate Supplement*, vol. 7, #6, July 20, 1991, p. 25)

The author goes on to say in the next breathe that control by labor of the administrative processes becomes necessary to eradicate capitalism in all its forms although he said administrative control is not possible at first. The transition to socialism requires the training of the masses to rule in their own behalf. (*Ibidem*)

What is most obvious is that capitalism itself, as it strives to perfect its system of profiteering, gradually reduces the drudgery of labor by perfecting technology that cuts the costs of labor; although this results in the laying off of laborers it also points to the necessity of shortening labor hours and the further reduction of labor hours as this technology is put at the service of labor. This leads to a necessary reduction in labor hours, of course. But it should not lead to the reduction of only two hours of labor time, as the author suggests, but, rather, to two hours of labor and two or more of administrative work.

"Capitalism creates: the technical capacity to reduce labor that is mere drudgery to a minimum....In other words, the capacity now exists to eliminate people being confined to jobs that only stunt and destroy the human personality." (*Ibidem*, p. 24)

This is another most cogent point. Marx and Engels and Lenin all mention the stultifying effects of arduous labor. Now that technology has advanced to the stage that it has, there is no reason to believe further advance impossible. But, despite all of this good news, how is the revolution to be effected under the changed, more technological conditions? The author never touches upon this point satisfactorily. He only says that revolution is possible and necessary, not that more technicians, laborers, engineers must be drawn into the movement covertly and overtly. The article is narrow in this sense, there is no divulgence of tactics to be used in these more technocratic times. But, is not it obvious, to be revolutionary also entails the use and advocacy of revolutionary tactics, not mere theoretical considerations and commentary but the actual theory and practice of revolution, doing such even when revolution is not immediate.

The author of the piece of literature discussed in this section asks "Is the USA ripe for workers' socialism?" and answers affirmatively. But, he cites the issues of the underclass and technical and engineering laborers. The author says these would be hindrances upon the advance of workers' socialism and that these issues will be resolved only through coercion.

This is and is not a sticking point in this work on the possibilities of workers' socialism. The author overrates illiteracy, admitting that it is mostly functional—easy to eradicate—and underrates the bourgeoisification of the technical and engineering strata. I will quote no statistics but it should be obvious from previous revolutions that the more "comfortable" a strata is within society the more resistant it is to change. What he says is true: "There are vast armies of white collar strata (engineers, accountants, technicians) who are nearer to blue collar workers in economic and social level." (*Ibidem*, p. 26) But these "armies" are kept at a level of comfort that increases when they relate sociologically within the economic basis of our class society. These mid-level people associate with one another necessarily and distance themselves from the laboring masses, with exceptions, of course.

Ours is a society that does not encourage interrelations. The media does not portray unity in opposition but, rather, narcissistic associationism. When was the last time an accountant shook a laborer's hand in any product of our media. I have not seen or heard of engineers being classed with laborers, etc. etc. But, oftentimes, accountants are classed as executives by the media and reality is not harsh enough to dispel this myth. Some accounts are executives but this is not the general rule; some engineers are executives, but this is not the general rule.

Simply stated, American role models are given as being the rich and the sociological ramifications of this are enormous. For all its advances American society has backward points of view forced upon them, and this counter-revolutionary propaganda leads to mistrust and alienation in the USA.

A main point of this alienation is the lack of opportunity to labor. The author of the piece under consideration is correct when he estimates unemployment at 15-20%. But he is incorrect when he states that "there can be an immediate 100% reduction of social outlays" to "the huge domestic 'military' apparatus." (*Ibidem*, p. 28)

What is needed is the turning of social outlays for police terror into spending on a truly popular militia, one that labors and protects and serves. The gradual reduction of labor hours makes it possible for there to be the holding of two jobs where previously one consumed eight hours. A system of bonus remuneration could be initiated, and where previously police work was its own form of labor it takes on a dual nature: it defends what it helps produce and punishes those who do not produce or violate socialist norms. Even under socialism there will be crime as some will seek to subvert others to enrich themselves or overthrow the system.

Furthermore, the author of the article under review does not suggest what to do to transform and shrink the regular military and of what use to make of the military-industrial complex. Also on page 28, the author makes the point that there is "a gigantic waste of scientific and engineering personnel and of production workers in the defense industry." Furthermore "something like 2 million people are removed from productive labor while in the armed services." What this suggests is that the drive for socialism would become more humanitarian if, after civil war has ended and war becomes less likely (10-20 year period) and even during the threat of war, the military and the military-industrial complex is forced to produce for home and abroad while it ensures whatever country's safety. The military and the military-industrial complex could be given a job of a dual character: national defense and national subsistence/international defense and international subsistence.

Gradually the military and its industrial complex could be eradicated with only a minimal number of specialists retained as regulars and irregulars to ensure the national and international maintenance of socialism and its growing over into communism.

One major fault of the article is that it says nothing of participation by the military and the militia in the implementation of communism. Of course, the author only mentions Marx and Engels in this article, although he only paraphrases them. My examination of Marx and Engels has impressed upon me that they neglect military/political concerns in the main, their main military/political concern being the impossibility of a peaceful transition to socialism where there is a police state and standing army. Lenin and the Bolsheviks were the ones who stressed that the military had an active role to play in the revolutionary process.

One major triumph of the article is that the author's vision of workers' socialism firmly rests on the teachings of Marx and Engels, for instance: "What is mainly lacking is job training, a comprehensive net of good childcare, and the transformation of the bulk of household labor from private economy to social economy: neighborhood laundries and cafeterias....These are urgent priorities for a society on the road to socialism." (*Ibidem*, p.1 28)

Engels makes a commentary along the same line, and the author's inspiration in the work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*

...the peculiar character of man's domination over woman in the modern family, and the necessity, as well as the manner, of establishing real social equality between the two, will be brought out into full relief only when both are completely equal before the law.... (This will make it evident that for women to be truly liberated) the quality possessed by the individual family of being the economic unity of society be abolished. (Quotation taken from *The Workers' Advocate Supplement*, volume 6, No. 7, August 15, 1990, p. 38, column 2)

Another cogent point is made by the author of this piece when he asserts that the masses must "have a role in devising, see as their own,..." the planned economy of their society. ("The technical and cultural basis for workers' socialism," *The Workers' Advocate Supplement*, volume 7, No. 6, July 20, 1991, p. 31)

The author also points out that planning takes place in industry during the reign of capitalism on a large scale. This creates the necessary prerequisite for the introduction of planning on a broader scale.

Finally, on page 32 of the *Supplement*, the final page of this issue, the author says that post revolutionary capitalist society must help the underdeveloped nations. This is a good proposition but it neglects the former state-capitalist countries. As they now embark upon reconstruction and the implementation of new financial centers they too must lend a hand to the developing countries.

An interesting sidelight to these articles is that none of them stress that the buying and selling of America makes revolution imperative. The national debt is ballooning at the rate that it is, \$13,000 a second, because various foreign interests—all but the debtor nations, the underdeveloped nations—find it to their advantage to buy into a situation in which it becomes ever more dangerous for the American people to revolt. All but the upper echelon of American capitalism is being sold. As the American future becomes more and more bleak, debt will necessitate revolution but revolution will be suppressed by foreign powers that stand to make big gains for their home and abroad economies.

In the *Supplement* of February 20, 1992 appears the second installment of the discussion on "...the material basis for socialism in the modern world". Comrade Fred of Seattle begins with an analysis of the Soviet mode of socialism. Among others he makes the point: "The Soviet model shows that distinct asset-owning property units (private property) are not required for the creation of value, nor for creation of a particular class that manages the circulation of value." (Page 4) He does not say that bourgeois property relations existed in the Soviet bloc. He only implies that they may have further on, but he touches upon something very insightful: "this inherently means that value is created and surplus value is appropriated by the owners of property." (*Ibid.*)

This brings the following into clear focus: value is the basis of private property relations and the surplus value expropriated by capital can only be eliminated if value itself is abolished. The division of labor is based upon this value relation and is dependent upon this relation. Furthermore all the above points to the elimination of money and monetary relations as well among the consuming—not business—economy.

Does socialism mean the abolition of class distinctions? No, they do not, and comrade Fred rightly makes that point. He states on page 5 of the *Supplement* of February 20, 1992, "while everyone would be an employee during

the socialist stage, that would be 'strata' differences that would be more or less class distinctions."

But, that would be true only of the initial stage. The furthering of labor democracy would see remuneration of various laborers becoming more egalitarian as such things as family size are taken into consideration and labor variation becomes more real as the hours of labor are gradually reduced. There should be bonuses for this dual labor (managerial-productive, administrative-productive, service-productive). But, as I did not say during the previous section, bonuses should be token, only for enjoyment purposes, not enrichment.

Comrade Fred makes a more glaring mistake when he argues that Marx's view that the new society should abolish the distinction between necessary and surplus labor means for him what amounts to an increase in consumption. (*Ibid.*) This does not mean for him the rebuilding of America to enlarge geographic spheres of labor—regionalization that links states, localization that links town and country.

And comrade Fred must be censored for coming to the conclusion that "a communist or Marxist theory of socialist economy and of the socialist state that is anywhere near adequate for today does not exist." (*Ibidem*, p. 6) This theory is extant if one remembers that Marxism is not a dead letter. The writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Plekhanov upon close examination give an answer to this apparent lack of theory. Recalling Plekhanov's attacks upon revisionist theories of the dialectical triad school one must remember that dialectics is quaternary. Recalling Marx's and Engel's use of the term negation of the negation (Marx primarily) one must remember the unity and struggle of opposites. Lenin points out the revolutionary side of dialectics in this *Philosophical Notebooks*, despite the fact that quaternarity escapes him.

With the above in mind one has to determine what is the main opposition to capitalist and state capitalist relations; it is property and value as Fred stated earlier. The supposition that must have preponderance is which is the creator of the other in the dialectical syllogism; obvious property creates value and vice versa. 1) Property ownership creates value above a subsistence level; 2) This relation leads to the expropriation of surplus value and the negation of social ownership of what is consumed sociologically; 3) surplus value expropriation grows as property expands; 4) property expansion creates a surplus value that acts as a brake upon it, the negation of the negation! Social ownership of what is consumed sociologically becomes further divorced from property as it becomes impossible to consume what is produced; such leads to production crises and stagnation in any type of economy.

Such a conclusion is wrong only if consumption of value expands as labor is remunerated more equitably and the hours of labor are reduced accordingly.

Now, once again, a dialectical consideration; state rule as opposed to popular rule. According to extant Marxist

theory 1) the state suppresses counter-revolution as it is the dictatorship of the proletariat; 2) the proletariat grows over into the state as all labor is proletarianized, that negates the states as an object of oppression; 3) the proletarian state yields power to communes; 4) the introduction of communism means the breakup of the state and its replacement by communes, this is the negation of the negation; the proletariat organizes itself in communes as opposed to states (this does not rule out intercommunal cooperation).

What happens under state capitalism is that all labor is not proletarianized, i.e. is not remunerated in the same fashion and along the same guiding principle: proletarianization. Above all else this stops revolution in its second stage or leads to a shortening of this moment in the syllogism and its new direction into a much longer moment that shortens the syllogism to a third stage triad: bureaucratism.

On to other issues: comrade Fred is right when he says that the MLP lacks "an analysis of the 'mechanics' of the value-run economy and therefore a theory of alternative 'mechanics.'" Furthermore "it seems there are interconnected realms of a) scientific principles and theory of integral management (or coordination of complex economy), b) economic and political institutions needed to implement them, c) social relations of class which embody the institutions and give a policy content to economic development." (*The Workers' Advocate Supplement*, volume 8, number 2, February 20, 1992, p. 7)

My commentary on this front now follows thusly: Fred's jargon is too verbose despite its correct points of departure. A) What is needed to carry the revolution to its conclusion managerially? B) What must the state do, be, and become? C) which of the classes is to lead the revolution to its conclusion politically?

Point A is answered with one word—proletarianization. point B can be answered with this complete sentence: the

state must abolish counter-revolution; be a proletarian democracy based on mass rule politically and economically; and, finally dissolve itself into communalism. Point C requires that the following be kept in mind: there is labor, and non-labor that subordinates labor to itself. Labor must in all senses be primary. Value and property are created by production relations, whether production relations serve the laboring or non-laboring masses. The elimination of non-labor, labor that does not produce value is possible only with the concatenation of management and labor, administration and labor, service and labor.

The following dialectical syllogism can serve as the basis for a theoretical outline to be put in practice as the duality of value-creating labor and property substantiation negate each other. 1) Value-creating labor assists the substantiation of non-value producing labor. 2) With the remuneration of value-creating labor being augmented to sustain families on one income (two by choice) as labor hours are reduced, non-value creating labor is increasingly diminished—this is the first negation. 3) non-value producing labor is concatenated with value-producing labor. 4) Token remuneration for non-value producing labor and full remuneration for value-producing labor leads to the negation of the negation. No longer does value-producing labor sustain non-value producing labor; the concatenation of the two makes for the possibility of communism.

It needs to be now stated that mass participation through the vote and participation in the political-economic administration is needed for the syllogism to work. The vote must be given on matters pertaining to economic planning and gradually replace economic planning solely by a political-economic administration; the vote must be given on who is to sit on the primary board of political-economic administrators and there must be subordinate participation of the masses in the managerial aspect of administrative decisions.

The end. □

Acme Steel kills furnace plant worker

From the Dec. 1 Chicago Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-Chicago:

Tuesday morning, Nov. 10, at Acme Steel's blast furnace plant, James Roach was killed when a valve on a 36-inch coke gas line failed to close properly. He was hit with a blast of carbon monoxide that probably killed him instantly. Exactly why the valve didn't close may never be admitted by the company. Maybe it was because there was debris in the valve; maybe it was because the hydraulic system was leaking and low on fluid; maybe both; maybe something else.

The fact that does stand out crystal clear is that it was Acme Steel's company policy that killed James Roach. Time and again Acme chooses to keep production going rather than fix things. The hydraulic leak, for example, was known about for months, but they "don't have the money to fix it." The previous Friday there was a major breakdown in this same area. The company decided to just do a temporary patch up and try to keep running. Now with OSHA breathing their neck, all of a sudden the company is making a huge emergency effort to fix everything right. The whole hydraulic system that controls these valves is being renovated with new valves, new lines, etc.

The owners of Acme Steel did not put a gun to James Roach's head and fire it, but they killed him just the same. From the top down the message to the bosses all down the chain of command is "We can't stand down time. We have to keep production going." This is the attitude that killed James Roach and has killed others before him. Acme has numerous committees where ordinary workers sit with management and discuss ways to improve things, and lots of fancy words are spouted about labor-management cooperation, but decisions are made based on profits, not "concern for the workforce". For them "cooperation" means the workers cooperate to make the maximum profits,

not to make the place safe.

This time Acme's decision to try to keep production going is costing them a lot of money in downtime, in extensive repairs, and perhaps compensation for the man's widow. However, there are lots of other situations at Acme where dangerous conditions are allowed to continue because the company thinks it would cost too much to fix them right.

Acme Steel is not alone among corporations in placing profits ahead of workers' lives. Just about every worker in any industrial plant in this country can recognize a similar company attitude. The *Sun-Times* reports that in 1991 at least 2,800 workers, and maybe as many as 10,000, were killed on the job (*Chicago Sun-Times*, Nov. 19, 1992, p. 60).

This is the normal way our economic system works. Capitalism is based on the constant search for the highest return on investment. Safety is a cost. Having an accident can also be costly, but many times companies get away with allowing unsafe conditions to persist for years and years. It's all a mathematical formula: how much does it cost to improve safety against how much would an accident cost times the probability that an accident will take place. Workers' lives and health are worth nothing in and of themselves. It's just a question of how much cash an accident might cost the company.

This is why the *Chicago Workers' Voice* stresses that our only defense is our own movement, our own struggle, our own organization. To defend ourselves, to protect our very lives, we have to get organized by and for ourselves. The rich and all of their hangers-on are not interested in our welfare. They only want to keep us quiet so that they can continue making the maximum profit off of us. Anger and sadness at the death of James Roach and the deaths of so many workers should be turned into organization and action! □

Cutbacks at Boeing

The MLP-Seattle agitated against the concessions demanded by Boeing in its recent contract negotiations with the IAW (see the October 1 Workers' Advocate). Boeing has had a decade of record sales and profits, but it is seeking to squeeze the workers. It dropped its demand for big health cutbacks, but insisted on making the two-tier system even steeper than before, and it got its contract offer ratified by production workers on October 2. But that still left the terms for the 'office workers' (technical workers, engineers, and general office workers) who are either in SPEEA or not organized. The MLP put out another leaflet for the technical/engineers negotiations, and distributed it at union informational meetings of SPEEA. The union hacks of SPEEA are also faced by a decertification effort from TEDS (techs and engineers disgusted with SPEEA), which is interested in the IAW instead.

The following two articles were among those contained in both the leaflet distributed to the production workers and the later leaflet to the technical and engineering workers.

International competition and company propaganda

The local press has reported that 2,000 Boeing workers have already been laid off this year (both production and office). Various economic trends mean that more layoffs in the future are possible. According to Boeing, competition in the international aerospace market means that workers must make concessions in order to keep Boeing competitive, and this is the only way to save jobs. This is simply self-serving propaganda. The truth is that concessions will not affect the economic trends that threaten job security at Boeing.

The main economic trends are:

- 1) Boeing has lost the partial monopoly on commercial jet production that it previously held and will never regain it.
- 2) The federal debt crisis means that Boeing will not be able to increase the government subsidies it receives beyond the current level.
- 3) Rationalization (making the work process more efficient so that less workers and materials are needed for the same output) will continue.
- 4) Subcontracting a larger portion of work abroad will continue because of different factors—sharing investment costs with other companies, lubricating aircraft sales, and cheaper labor costs.
- 5) The aerospace market remains just as volatile as ever. Today's layoffs have been directly triggered by the world

recession's impact on aircraft deliveries and the federal budget cutbacks on the B-2. No worker should forget the crash of 1970-71, when over 50% of the workforce was tossed aside.

Concessions Can Not Reverse These Trends

The sacrifice of wages, benefits and jobs will not reverse or even slow down noticeably any of these trends. Judging by Boeing's track record, any cuts in benefits or wages would fatten Shrontz' \$2 million salary and similarly disappear into the black holes of executive perks, bureaucracy and waste, dividends and cash investments. But this would not convince Boeing to stop pursuing more profits through rationalization and subcontracting. Still less would concessions control the volatile market conditions.

What the economic trends really show is the need to fight Boeing for real protection from layoffs. Severance, retraining funds and medical coverage is needed for all laid off workers.

Strikes are a powerful lever to block concessions and bring some job security. The basic reason for this is the high cost to the company from interruption of its revenue. This can be seen in the 1989 strike. Boeing was forced into a 8% higher wage/bonus/COLA settlement than its "final offer" before the strike. The company lost a large amount of cash reserves during the strike. And the ripple effects of the strike forced Boeing to pay 10% bonuses to 40,000 techs, general office and engineers.

International unity of aerospace workers

The economic trends stacking up against aerospace workers make the seeking of a broader unity essential. One thing is solidarity between production and office workers.

Another factor is international unity of labor. Significant aerospace work is done in Western Europe and Japan; China and Russia may soon enter the market also. The ABCs of trade unionism is to replace competition between workers with solidarity, in order to strengthen their position against the employers. The growing internationalization of the aerospace industry means that a unity of workers must also be built internationally. This means coordination with and assistance to the struggles of European, Japanese, etc. workers.

The Baker machine that controls District 751 [of the International Association of Machinists] is not up to the challenges of the unfolding situation. It makes no effort at coordination with or assistance to office workers. Far from working for international unity of workers, it still waves the old flags like "buy American." This is a cheap way to pretend to look out for the interests of the union membership; its real effect is to undermine viewpoints of working class solidarity and struggle.

Government subsidies for Airbus? Boeing ought to know

One of the more whimsical yarns of the company propaganda is the charge that "Airbus [built in Europe] gets government subsidies," without mention of Boeing, as if Boeing doesn't get any. Of course, the story continues that in order to make up the difference, Boeing workers must give concessions. Boeing wants some sympathy points here, but the only one who deserves sympathy is the person that would believe such a tale.

Boeing enjoys billions of dollars of government subsidies each year in the form of tax breaks, the Import-Export bank funds, and a variety of subsidies paid through military contracts. The tax breaks include over \$1/2 billion of exemptions from Washington state taxes alone, and the exemption of 15%—30% of Boeing's profit on foreign sales from federal tax. (*Seattle P-I*, 2-21-91; *Seattle Times*, 9-9-92)

The military subsidies are huge. To cite a couple of recent examples: the R & D for the new automated technology that is being used to produce large composite parts on the 777 was very expensive—and paid for by the U.S. Air Force through the B-2 contract. Last year, Boeing charged the Air Force \$27 million to pay for clean up of some of Boeing's illegal toxic waste dumps under the military contract clause of "ordinary and necessary business overhead costs." (*Wall Street Journal*, 10-31-92) Boeing's original leap ahead into commercial jets was paid for by the federal government via KC-135 contracts.

Boeing's exemptions from state taxes are a big reason why public schools in Washington state have the third lowest funding of all states in the country. And this bloated corporation has the audacity to complain of Airbus' "unfair" subsidies. It's in the workers' interests that Boeing stop pigging out so much at the public trough and start paying its taxes. □

CQI: The \$300 million empire

The Boeing company has long been its own, strange world. A place known for elaborate hype, banner campaigns, and unsurpassed outstanding excellence. A place where whole departments sprout and grow like mushrooms as managers build their empires. A place where decisions are often determined by the outcome of turf wars between departments. A place where an endless number of people seem to always be strolling by, heading nowhere, while every second and each drop of sweat of the assemblers is measured on barcharts. A place where traditional union solidarity usually hibernates and even the union officials talk of "the world's greatest aerospace company."

Boeing's Continuous Quality Improvement program seems a mystery to many workers...yet somehow strangely familiar. What is familiar about CQI is the fact that it has all been seen before. What contributes to its mystery is that different aspects of Boeing tradition have been combined under one super and allegedly permanent campaign, with the volume turned up full blast. In this article we will try to demystify CQI by looking at its separate aspects, and allow workers to appreciate its full humorous value.

Three features of CQI stand out: 1) propaganda to convince workers to voluntarily sacrifice their interests; 2) its own bureaucratic empire; 3) methods to cut costs by reducing waste of labor and materials.

Propaganda

Measured by tons of paper and miles of videotape, CQI is far and away the main vehicle for Boeing's propaganda about international competition. Rarely does CQI directly call for sacrifice of workers' interests, such as calling for medical cuts or a wage freeze. Instead of threats, CQI makes a soft and round-about delivery. The CQI talk about increased efficiency is apparently harmless. But the real brainwashing is the logic that we must help the company compete in order to save our jobs. From this logic, justification of all concessions flows. We refute this logic in the article on international competition [see elsewhere in this issue of the *Supplement*].

Cut bureaucracy but save the bureaucrats?

In practice, CQI operates just like the bureaucracies it is supposed to eliminate. CQI teams spend months studying how to sweep floors or answer the telephone—and draw flow charts which show how hundreds of thousands of dollars have been saved with their new methods. CQI teams play the old game of blaming other departments or shifts for problems. And they even invent new unnecessary procedures and rules, and unneeded paper forms to fill out on top of what already exists! Training classes teach workers new rhetoric to use while they continue following the same old procedures that fly in the face of the common sense of a 3rd grader. Relatives and other incompetents climb up the CQI ladder to establish comfortable careers. CQI managers wage turf wars against the other empires over control of new work.

The Boeingization of CQI reflects the fact that bureaucracy is largely inherent in the capitalist exploitative relations. When all the parts of the company operate on the basis of a few gaining privilege from the work of many, the result is very strong indifference to how one's own work impacts someone else. This shows up especially in the relations of each department to others and each level in the chain of command to others.

There are two methods used to compel other departments and levels to do something even though they are indifferent to the results. One is bureaucratic rules and

procedures, mounds of paper. The other is favoritism—distribution of privilege arbitrarily so that those who are rewarded “owe something” to their benefactor and are somewhat loyal to the directives coming from another level. (Favoritism takes many forms—nepotism, racism, anti-woman discrimination, etc.—but the aim and results are the same.)

If CQI were to make a dent in the biggest inefficiencies and waste, it would have to challenge bureaucracy and favoritism. This means it would not only bump up against vested interests with power, but would undermine the glue that holds the company together. The result is that CQI automatically gets channeled into non-controversial issues—like how to sweep the floor. This way not only are the other empires happy, but the new CQI empire is happy too, having found a safe niche for itself. Truly a “win-win” situation.

From the very start, CQI was a self-contradiction: a program to eliminate bureaucracy but save the bureaucrats. In fact, CQI was initiated by the most bloated of bureaucrats, with the aim of increasing their largess. Millions were spent on CQI for years before any worker ever heard of it. Seminars were held at plush hotels for managers. Lower-level supervisors complained afterwards that they had eaten so much rich food at these events they became ill. Later, the perks of CQI trickled down Reagan-style through the ranks. By the time CQI got to the production workers it was in some cases little more than infrequent lectures about more productivity and the standard Airbus propaganda.

After management perks, the main focus of CQI is on the technical and higher-skilled production workers. It is true that these are the least efficient portions of the work process and constitute the vast bulk of costs. But a fundamental cause of the problems in these spheres is their divorce from the mechanics who actually build the planes, move the parts, etc. After indifference, the greatest source of the technical inefficiency and chaos lies in this gulf between mental and manual labor, and a similar gulf between creative and repetitive labor.

Here again, capitalist exploitative relations restrict the scope of CQI. To minimize training costs, keep wages relatively low, and force high output despite indifference,

corporations segregate as many workers as possible in repetitive, regimented tasks for their whole eight hours. CQI itself in many cases seeks to find “better” ways to enslave workers with nothing but repetitive, simple tasks, especially in some of the office work.

Jobs

Even though it is bureaucratized and most of its activity is irrational, CQI in combination with new technology will contribute to work rationalization. The amount of waste at Boeing is staggering, and probably outdated by world standards. It is clear that managers who know little and care less about the actual work processes under them are powerless by themselves to improve efficiency. Thus, the company's desire for worker involvement seems straightforward. It shouldn't take a math whiz, however, to figure out that increased efficiency is a factor that directly eliminates jobs.

Productivity, of course, is not the only factor bearing on jobs—there is also market share, total size of market, and amount of subcontracting. Changes in these other factors may hide the effects of rationalization for awhile. During the past 20 years, the generally growing aerospace market counteracted the job reduction caused by rationalization. Now however, we face a shrinking aerospace market. And there is no way that Boeing's market share can increase to offset this.

What stand should workers take toward CQI?

As far as efficiency and cutting costs, the amount of change will be determined by management, not workers. The CQI program of “use another bureaucracy to cut bureaucracy but save the bureaucrats” has its own barriers which limit how far it goes. To put it simply, we couldn't make CQI work any better if we wanted to, and our job security is threatened with or without cost cutting. The stand of aerospace workers in this situation should not be infatuation with the CQI rhetoric, but focus on struggle for job security protections such as retraining and stronger seniority. Let the bumbling bureaucracy baptize itself as “born again” CQI missionaries. □

At the University of California: Teaching assistants strike

Several thousand graduate student teaching assistants went on strike November 19 at the University of California at Berkeley.

The Association of Graduate Student Employees stopped work to demand formal union recognition by the Berkeley administration. This is the second strike organized by the union: in 1989 they struck for two weeks. The current strike came in the face of a 20% reduction in library staff and the treat of other budget cutbacks.

The strike by the 3,500-member union is reported to have disrupted most of the classes at the university. The TAs' action has highlighted the fact that most classes on this campus are taught not by the high-paid professors, but by low-paid graduate students. About 60% of the UC

Berkeley's undergraduate classes are taught by graduate student TAs, who are paid \$6,000 a semester.

Over the years, this is increasingly becoming the pattern at most U.S. universities. Campus administrations rely on graduate students to do much of the teaching. With colleges facing growing budget cuts, this trend is likely to grow. But in many states, graduate students have organized and won recognition for their unions. TAs in California believe it is high time their rights were recognized.

Teaching assistants also began a strike in late November at the UC campus in Santa Cruz. That campus was the scene of a recent sit-in outside the Chancellor's office by students protesting budget cuts. On November 9, police in riot gear attacked them using clubs and mace. □

Women's commissions in the revolutionary movement in Soviet Russia: Zhenotdel, 1919-1930

Continued from the front page

fighting the incredible backwardness of Russian society which was a major brake on the participation of women in the revolution.

The emancipation of women meant a fight to break down the barriers to women participating in the workforce and in the politics of society. It meant developing the conditions for women to be educated. It meant breaking down the patriarchal relations prevalent in the countryside and the authority of the church. It meant carrying out a broad social and economic transformation which would include developing conditions where the family was no longer the economic unit of society.

The history of Zhenotdel needs to be looked at in light of these tasks.

Issues involved in organizing Zhenotdel

There were discussions and plans within the Bolshevik Party for at least two years prior to the formation of Zhenotdel in the autumn of 1919. The discussions were over how and in what form to organize women. It was agreed to be necessary, but there were various issues.

The Bolsheviks declared themselves not just for women's legal equality but for social emancipation. They considered legal equality to be only a beginning, opening the way for a much broader struggle. Lenin, the foremost leader of the Bolsheviks, stated:

"Take the position of women. In this field, not a single democratic party in the world, not even in the most advanced bourgeois republic, has done in decades so much as a hundredth part of what we did in our very first year in power. We actually razed to the ground the infamous laws placing women in a position of inequality....But the more *thoroughly* we clear the ground of the lumber of the old, bourgeois laws and institutions, the more we realize that we have only cleared the ground to build on, but are not yet building." (*A Great Beginning, Collected Works*, vol. 29, July 1919, pp. 428-9)

The Bolsheviks were opposed to the conception of the bourgeois feminists of the time whose basic program was merely winning the right to vote and the right to property. Alexandra Kollantai, a prominent woman Bolshevik, stated:

"Access to the ballot box and the deputy's seat is the true goal of the feminist movement. And the more politically conscious of the working women are aware that neither political

nor legal equality can finally settle the 'woman question.' As long as a woman has to sell her labour power and suffer capitalist slavery, she will not be a free and independent person..." (Holt, p.52)

Kollantai outlined a series of urgent demands, including a shorter working day, higher wages, better treatment in the factories, maternity protection, better conditions for the hundreds of thousands of servants, equal rights to land for peasant women, breaking up the power of the landlords, etc. Without these conditions there could be no talk of the emancipation of women.

Therefore, the Bolsheviks recognized that the emancipation of women had a definite class basis. There could be no liberation of the mass of women unless they were also liberated as workers and peasants. "Women will only become free and equal in a world where labor has been socialised and where communism has been victorious." (Kollantai, cited in Holt, p. 52)

The Bolsheviks realized it was necessary to take up special work among women workers and peasants. This seems to have come from various angles. Lenin and others held that the emancipation of women was impossible without women workers and peasants themselves fighting for it. As well, the fact that women workers were an active part of the revolutionary movement may have been implicitly recognized and a factor pushing ahead the discussion of special organizing among women workers and peasants. Another justification for special work among women was to overcome political backwardness among some wide sections of women in order to increase support for the revolutionary movement. (See Kollantai's article, *The Woman Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia*, 1921, pp. 163-64)

Another issue that came up was whether or not a mass organization for women to fight for their liberation was needed. The Party decidedly went against the idea of a mass organization of women workers and peasants. They seemed to think that this would necessarily have a "feminist" nature, and they were against a special women's Party organization for they felt this would split the male and female proletariat. What was eventually established was a bureau for agitation and propaganda among women connected to the Secretariat of the Central Committee.

Questions

It does seem to us that, in the conditions of Russia at the time of the revolution, a mass organization to fight for women's emancipation, open to both women and men, and

focusing on the activation of working class and peasant women both into struggle on particular women's issues and into the general revolutionary movement, might have been reasonable. Russia was a country of incredible backwardness. For instance, most women were illiterate. Women in the factories were treated as beasts of burden. In the countryside women were considered to be little more than slaves to their husbands and fathers. Furthermore, women workers and peasants were active in the revolutionary movement on a series of questions including questions which affected women in particular. These factors could call for a mass organization to organize women into the revolutionary movement and to fight for women's emancipation.

We also questioned why the Bolshevik Party did not decide to organize a mass organization after the Civil War [which lasted from mid-1918 to most of 1920]. The new Soviet regime obviously had problems maintaining the mass forms of the revolution such as the Soviets. To us, the various conferences of women workers and peasants and the delegate system of Zhenotdel did have various characteristics of a mass organization to fight for women's participation in the revolution and for women's liberation.

Events leading up to the creation of Zhenotdel

The eventual creation of Zhenotdel begins with the revolution of February 1917. The spark for the February revolution was a mass demonstration of women workers demanding peace and bread in Petrograd on International Women's Day. As women workers poured into the streets, the Petrograd committee of the Bolshevik Party delegated Vera Slutskaya to draw up a plan for work among women. Her proposal included a bureau to coordinate agitation among women and to revive the newspaper *Rabotnitsa* (*The Woman Worker*, first begun in 1914 but lapsed during the war). Apparently Slutskaya made it clear in her report that this bureau was to be for "purely agitational work," and that "no kind of independent women's organization will be created." (Hayden, p. 152)

Kollantai proposed the creation of an actual women's department of the party at the 7th All-Russian Conference of the Bolsheviks held in April 1917. However, the proposal was rejected. Instead, the chairman of the conference suggested that "it is necessary to create a technical organ for the direction of agitation among women." (from the minutes of the Congress as quoted by Holt, p. 114)

Rabotnitsa resumed publication in May 1917. To understand the work of *Rabotnitsa* and other forms which were developed to organize among women workers and peasants in this period, one needs to understand that the Provisional Government established in February 1917 had failed to take any significant action for women's emancipation, except to grant them the vote. This is one of the indictments of this government and one of the factors showing the need for a more thoroughgoing revolution. This question was among the issues spreading discontent with the bourgeois and petty

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bourgeois parties which came to power in the February Revolution, and it provoked a turn towards the program of the proletarian revolution. Such a revolution was necessary in order to bring about the conditions where a fight for women's emancipation could be waged successfully. The work carried on through *Rabotnitsa* and other measures is an example of how the organization of the proletarian revolution was carried out, and how the particular issues facing women workers and peasants were a part of it.

We gleaned some idea of the work in this period from Alix Holt's anthology of Kollantai's writings. It included articles from *Pravda* stating that women needed to ensure equality in practice and to ensure that such freedoms as were granted by the constitution did not pass them by. *Rabotnitsa* carried articles encouraging soldiers' wives to demand greater benefits and to send delegates to local soviets. There was agitation to support the strike of 8,000 laundresses in Petrograd. It was stressed that this strike had importance to the working class as a whole. The need for organization on the part of the women and for solidarity on the part of the other workers was stressed. There were other articles criticizing the trade unions for not taking up the issues of equal pay, agitation for maternity protection, and participation of women in the trade union movement. (Holt, pp. 115-6)

The *Rabotnitsa* editorial board also "convened factory and district meetings to discuss general issues of importance to female proletarians, such as the eight-hour day, the democratic republic, and confiscation of landlord property, as well as 'women's issues' such as protection of female and child labor and equal civil and political rights for

women." (Hayden, pp. 152-53)

Opposition to the slaughter of millions and the mass starvation and deprivation caused by World War I was a key factor in the demonstrations of women workers in February 1917. *Rabotnitsa* organized a campaign against the war and high prices in June 1917. This cut against the Provisional Government and the bourgeois feminists who were supporting Russia's continued participation in the war.

In September, the women's bureau called a conference of working women in Petrograd. Delegates assembled in late October — "five hundred delegates representing eighty thousand women from factories, workshops, trade-unions, and unions of socialist youth and Party organizations." (Hayden, p. 153) The October Revolution interrupted the conference, but it reconvened in mid-November. Deliberations provided the basis for legislation on maternity protection.

This gives some idea of the work leading up to the victory of the October Revolution of 1917.

The October Revolution opened the way for a fight for women's emancipation

The Soviet regime which came to power in October 1917 took a series of immediate steps forward. The Bolsheviks declared the complete legal equality of women. They enacted decrees providing protection for female and child labor, social insurance including pregnancy leaves for women workers, and equal rights in marriage including the right to divorce. The first constitution of the Soviet Republic not only confirmed women's right to vote but also to be elected to office. Abortion was decriminalized in 1918 and legalized in 1920.

At the same time Bolshevik leaders declared that this was only the first step and considered that a social and economic transformation must take place. They called for a fight against the conditions which made most women domestic slaves and against the influence of the priests and religion. However, the Bolsheviks were only able to take a few steps along this path when the Soviet regime became involved in a life and death struggle with counter-revolution.

The women's commissions

The initial victory of the Soviet Revolution and the immediate steps towards women's emancipation taken by the new Soviet regime had opened up an even broader fight for women's liberation. In November, 1918 the First All-Russian Congress of Working and Peasant Women was held. It was a pivotal event in the eventual creation of Zhenotdel. Women were coming into the revolutionary movement in large numbers. Three hundred delegates were expected at this Congress, but 1,147 came. Anecdotes report on how unexpected was this large turnout and on the difficulties of suddenly accommodating that large a number of people.

"The work of this Congress covered many topics, including mobilization of women in support of the Civil War; involvement of women in the Party, government, and trade unions; problems of education and social welfare; and the creation of institutions to socialize household labor of women." (Hayden, p. 156) The Congress shouted approval when someone proposed outlawing the word "baba" (peasant grandmother/old hag). Proposals were adopted which laid the basis for the formation of Zhenotdel. Among these proposals was that a commission be attached to each party organization to be responsible for conducting agitation among working women. A special commission was to be established in Moscow led by Inessa Armand, A. Kollantai and Vera Moirova.

Following this Congress there was a lot of work to involve women in civil war efforts [from mid-1918 to latter 1920 local and foreign attempts to violently overthrow the revolution resulted in a bitter civil war]. The need to organize women workers and peasants in defense of the revolution was recognized as essential. Kollantai addressed women's meetings to persuade Party members and unpaid volunteers to set up and staff women's groups. Leading women cadres were sent across the land in brightly postered propaganda trains to recruit women to the war effort. The women's commission sent Kollantai and Samoiloa to the Ukraine and Vera Moirova to Kiev.

This work seems to have had success. In her article, *The Woman Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia*, Kollantai states that women workers and peasants were involved in the Civil War from the beginning, but that by the end of 1918 this activity became more organized. Over 73,000 women served in some capacity in the Red Army. They served as political propagandists and as medical workers; they worked in Saturday and Sunday work brigades; conducted campaigns against epidemic diseases; and organized aid to families of Red Army soldiers and homeless children. (pp. 169-71) They organized feeding stations and childcare; posters in the Ukraine urged, "Be a mother not only to your child but to everyone's children." (Porter, p.339) Kollantai reports that "the proletarian women of Petrograd not only provided 500 Red nurses and medical orderlies for the front, but also served in their thousands in the machine-gun companies, in communications, in sapper companies, and labored selflessly in the cold autumn weather to dig trenches and surround Petrograd with barbed wire....The industrial centers in particular sent a large number of women to the front." (p.171) There were even women commanders.

There had also been discussion at the Congress of canteens, communal laundries and clothes-mending centers. By 1920, 90% of the population of Petrograd were eating communally, and 60% of the population of Moscow registered at the canteens. This appears to be a measure linked to the severe situation caused by the civil war, i.e., the only way to organize food distribution. But at the time, this was also seen as a measure to liberate women from the slavery of housework. The centers were described as

"socialist" and even "communist" measures, ushering in an era when women would no longer be tied to the home and the kitchen.

The commissions in this period were also involved with the protection of mother and child, inspection of labor conditions, especially having to do with women and children, and the elimination of illiteracy.

Shortly after the First All-Russian Congress of Women Workers and Peasants, the Bolshevik Inessa Armand proposed a method of encouraging women to become politically active. At women's meetings in the winter of 1919 delegates were elected to serve for three months as "apprentices" in various government departments and soviets. This began the delegate system which was a feature of the commissions then and later of Zhenotdel. Armand envisioned the delegate system as a means of political education. Women would be trained to take part in the administration of society. To encourage other women, they were also to go back and report to the conferences that elected them. The idea was to learn how government worked and to become involved in its tasks.

Hayden reports that "Initially elections for *delegatki* were conducted in the cities and towns, among women workers on the factory level, workers in *kustar* (handicraft) industries, and in urban districts where the constituency might include housewives, domestic workers, seamstresses, and other women who could not be reached through the factories.... Usually *delegatki* became involved in activities related to social welfare, such as the creation of day nurseries, public dining rooms, hospitals, maternity homes, children's homes, and public schools. Sometimes *delegatki* undertook more general types of assignments, such as serving in the people's courts, even in the capacity of judges." (Hayden, p. 158)

By the time of the 8th Congress of the CPSU in March 1919, the women's commissions had received thousands of letters from women all over Russia begging for material help and support. According to Porter, Kollantai's speech stated that the Party would have no success in recruiting women with general political appeals. "We have to conduct a struggle with the conditions that are oppressing women, and emancipate her as a housewife and mother. This is the best approach toward women — this is agitation by the deed." (Porter, p. 338) Specific proposals for work among women were adopted: each party committee should ensure that its organizational meetings were attended by delegates from the Women's Commission, and political education courses for women should be set up. A resolution was passed which committed the Party to giving every support and encouragement to the work of the Women's Commission.

The creation of Zhenotdel

Zhenotdel was formed in September 1919, during the civil war. Porter claims an impetus was that the 8th Party Congress resolution had prompted a flood of complaints

from women that their work was being undermined and undervalued; therefore, the status of the Women's Commission should be elevated into a nationwide, Party-sponsored department. Also Armand had been arguing for a women's bureau as in the pre-war German Social-Democratic Party.

One of the first things Zhenotdel did was to issue an instruction requiring every enterprise to have at least one delegate apprenticed in the factory inspectorate. One of the consequences of World War I and then the civil war was tremendous social dislocation. Women workers became an even greater percentage of the workforce. By 1920 women were 42.2 percent of the industrial workforce in Petrograd. (Hayden, p. 155) This seems to be a major basis for this instruction. The role of the delegate "was to pay close attention to the conditions of women workers, seeing that laws were carried out concerning the length of the working day, night work, overtime, protection of the right of mothers and pregnant women, and sanitary and safety conditions in the factories. The *delegatki* were also supposed to organize meetings and lectures centered upon protection of labor and conditions of work in the factories." (Hayden, p.159)

At the same time, since millions of men were mobilized for the civil war and large numbers died, millions of women found themselves solely responsible for their families. Hayden reports that "In 1920 Krupskaja [a prominent Bolshevik, married to Lenin] wrote that the years of war had forced women to become more independent, while sexual relationships had taken on a temporary and informal character, more 'candid' than the old bourgeois marriage relations. She added, however, that as a result of the hardships of war, prostitution was rampant, illegal abortions often resulting in illness or death were widespread, and hundreds of thousands of children had been abandoned. Krupskaja felt that the state must move rapidly to aid destitute mothers and children, providing health care, day nurseries, and children's homes, where children could be properly cared for." (p.159)

In November 1920 a commission to fight prostitution was revived. This Zhenotdel commission, in collaboration with government departments, stipulated that all women found prostituting themselves on the streets would be taken to the Commissariat of Labor, where they would be encouraged to attend courses of study, helped to get jobs, or sent to recuperate at sanatoria. Only if a woman repeatedly was found guilty would she be sentenced to a period of hard labor. A series of meetings were organized in Moscow to help women of the streets find work and seek medical attention.

Porter claims that the 1919-20 Zhenotdel delegate became a familiar and popular figure in the villages and towns of Russia. She claims that by the time of the 2nd Conference of provincial Zhenotdel organizers, bureaus had been established in virtually every province in European Russia. The 1921 article by Kollantai states that there were 70,000 delegates representing three million women. This gives some picture of the work of Zhenotdel during the

Civil war.

Zhenotdel during the NEP

At the end of the civil war, the Bolsheviks needed to reassess their work, including that of Zhenotdel. As already pointed out, Zhenotdel delegates were involved in organizing the communal kitchens, laundries, etc. during the civil war. With the easing of this crisis, the number of such facilities severely diminished. [The war was over, but the country and economy were in ruins from years of war, civil war, famine, and devastation, and the working population was exhausted. The working class could not restore and develop the economy on the basis of civil war institutions, and it could not directly introduce socialist large-scale production with communist relations of production and distribution. In this situation, the Bolshevik Party turned eventually to what was called the "New Economic Policy", or NEP, in an attempt to develop a method of transition to socialism. See the description of the transition to NEP in *Some theoretical questions concerning Soviet history* in the August 20, 1991 issue of the *Supplement*, pp. 8-9] Under NEP, state funding was largely withdrawn, but it seems unlikely that such measures could have been maintained. Through the 1920s, Zhenotdel organizers and delegates were involved in organizing what facilities remained. For example, there were creches and public dining facilities at some of the large factories. Hayden reports that in 1925 in Leningrad, there were 53 child care centers in the factories serving 2,270 children. (pp. 169-70)

Jessica Smith reports that in 1927 the Three Hills textile factory in Moscow had an impressive "chain of kindergartens and day nurseries". But she also states, "Here I saw also another side of the picture, workers' wives living in crowded quarters swarming with children who could not be accommodated in the day nurseries because there was still not space enough for all the women themselves working in the factory." (*Woman in Soviet Russia*, p. 13) It seems that nurseries and dining rooms were available to some workers at the most prosperous factories; our reading indicates that they were mostly funded by the factories themselves. They were not available to the working class as a whole.

Another issue at the end of the civil war and the entry into NEP was that women in large numbers were thrown out of the workforce.

By 1921 there were large-scale dismissals of workers, and a large percentage were women. Many workplaces shut down. As well, men returned to the workforce from the civil war, while the number of industrial jobs was down. All this added up to a difficult situation. *Kommunistka* (Zhenotdel's theoretical journal) projected that, in the initial wave of adjustment to NEP, one-third of all women workers — 900,000 women — would lose their jobs. According to Hayden, articles appeared in *Kommunistka* describing that in many instances there was the "groundless firing of women workers' based only on

'prejudice' and not on any kind of defensible economic, social, or political consideration." (Hayden, pp. 163-64, quoting *Kommunistka*, nos. 16-17, pp. 12-15)

Smith reports that some trade unions did pass resolutions against the large-scale firing of women. She also reports that the labor code at the time placed various restrictions on the firing of women (pp. 16-17). Hayden reports that this was at the urging of Zhenotdel. But she states that Zhenotdel admitted that it was impossible to enforce these regulations. (p.169)

How did Zhenotdel deal with this situation? Hayden says, "Since unskilled workers were the first to be laid off, and women workers were for the most part unskilled, the Zhenotdel organized meetings of women workers to explain to them the skills required for different trades, and it tried to find ways of raising their level of skills. In addition, the Zhenotdel organized unemployed women into artels, where they did things like sewing and knitting articles of clothing for sale." (p. 164) She also states that in 1924 "Zhenotdel agreed to lift the ban on night work for women in order to give employers as little excuse as possible to lay off women workers." (p. 169) Smith also discusses that raising the level of women's skills and organizing artels were major means of dealing with unemployment.

Hayden quotes a report from a national meeting of Zhenotdel organizers held in 1921: "Many people are stating that there are dangers that the new economic conditions are not only destroying any possibility for work among women, but also that will strengthen the enslavement of working women. In connection with all these questions, there arose the inability to coordinate our work with the changing economic conditions. Work began to decline, doubts in the usefulness of the zhenotdels were born." (p.164-65, quoting *Kommunistka*, no.1 (18), Jan. 1922, p. 2)

Questions

We had a series of questions relating to NEP. It seemed to us that by the mid to late 20s the economic situation in the Soviet Union had somewhat stabilized. We thought that by that time some discussion of organizing daycare services, dining rooms, etc. for the working class as a whole could have been taken up. But we have found no indication that it was. By the late 1920s general social programs were often opposed or downplayed by Stalin's regime.

By the 1930s more factory daycare programs and cafeterias were set up. [This was no longer the NEP period, but that of the Five Year Plans. Industrialization and collectivization take place, but the questions arise, on what basis and with what type of social relations? See *Some questions of Soviet history*, in our issue of July 20, 1991, for some description of this period.] But they do not appear to have been aimed at lightening the burden of domestic work so as to free working class women to take part in society more fully. They seemed to be much more aimed at making women's labor available for capitalist

industrialization.

And the connection of day care and dining rooms to the factories meant that a certain stratification of the working class took place. If you worked at a more prosperous factory you got the services. But there was not organized work to make them available to the class as a whole.

We recognize the extreme difficulties in the economy of Soviet Russia of that period, the drastic decline in production, the fact that large sections of the population had gone back to the countryside because industry was at a standstill, etc. We recognize that the contradictions of the regime with the peasantry had become severe. We recognize the purpose of NEP in getting the economy going at that time and establishing a compromise with the peasantry. However, we had questions as to whether NEP went too far in concessions to the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. We question whether more restrictions could have been put on the bourgeoisie in this period.

As well, we question whether a more direct struggle for employment and improving the working conditions of women workers should have been waged. That is, we question whether organizing to raise the skill of women workers and organizing them into artels was enough.

These issues require a lot more investigation and study.

Work among the peasantry

The end of the civil war inaugurated a period of increased work of Zhenotdel among the peasantry. Hayden relates this turn to the difficulties of dealing with the conditions facing women workers. It's possible that this was an issue. And it's possible that Kollantai's description in her 1921 article is overoptimistic about the successes of communist work among working class women. "It is now not individuals, but masses of women workers who are joining in the task of constructing the Soviet republic. As yet, the peasant woman is only timidly following in their wake. The women among the urban poor have become conscious of their rights and have bound their future to the future of communism. The Party's task is to find the way to the mind and heart of the peasant woman." (Kollantai, *The Woman Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia*)

It is clear that the increased work in the countryside was backed by the leadership of the CPSU. In 1923 Stalin wrote an article in *Kommunistka* stating that Zhenotdel's aim must be to draw into the construction of Soviet life the millions of peasant women. (Porter, p. 436)

However, no drawing of women into constructive work nor fight for the emancipation of women in Soviet Russia could succeed without breaking down the patriarchal system and other backward conditions facing the women peasants. And it appears that there was objective motion among peasant women. After all, World War I and the civil war had caused extreme social dislocation in the countryside. Many women were then solely responsible for their families and for working the land. They were not satisfied with the

same old ways.

Porter states that the number of women peasants recruited by Zhenotdel increased markedly. By the end of 1923 30% of the delegates were workers and 40% peasants; by July 1925, 63% peasants and 18% workers. (p.436) In 1926 half a million delegates were elected throughout the country, 64% peasants, 20% workers. The remainder were housewives, office workers and domestic servants.

Jessica Smith gives several anecdotes of the difficulties of this work and the successes relating to the campaigns for literacy, the increased participation of peasant women in the soviets, the cooperatives and other areas.

In the East

After the civil war Zhenotdel also increased its activity among women in the East. In the spring of 1921, 20 or so Zhenotdel workers set off for Azerbaijan, Turkestan, Bashkiria, the Crimea and the Caucasus. By the end of March, 45 Muslim women, most from Turkestan, attended a preliminary conference in Moscow to discuss the best way to change the Muslim laws. It was decided to set up clubs, literacy classes, and nurseries in the Central Asian regions and provide an example of the benefits of the Soviet regime.

In June 1921 at the 2nd Comintern Women's Conference, delegates from the East threw off their veils. Kollantai wrote: "That moment when the delegates of the eastern Soviet republics walked in and raised their chadris (veils) before the conference was a symbol of our victory in joining the women of the East to communism." (Louise Bryant, *Mirrors of Moscow*, in Porter, p. 394)

According to Farnsworth, Zhenotdel grew rapidly in the East. In 1924 there were 5,000 members in Central Asia; in 1925 there were 15,000 members. The first workers were Russian urban women. Also there were a number of organizers who were from Tatar, Kazan and Crimea where the position of women was freer, women were unveiled and many women spoke Russian. These organizers carried on agitation in home visits (when men weren't home), at funerals, streets, marketplaces and baths. They sometimes veiled themselves like the local women.

In waging a campaign against the veil, they, Farnsworth claims, among other things appealed to Mohammed's original writings. In any case, the Mullahs counter-acted with "progressive Muslimism" which lured women away from Zhenotdel organizations. In 1927, 100,000 women threw off their veils, burned them, etc. in Bukhara and Uzbekistan. By the next year, all but 5,000 had re-veiled themselves; but by 1930 there were no veiled women in Bukhara. The government could not issue a law against the veil, but issued protective laws for women who unveiled. Zhenotdel also waged a campaign against "kamsol," breast binding among Kalmuks, and another for cloaks for Caucasian women [i.e. women from the mountainous Caucasus region in the southwestern Soviet Union] who did not have them and froze in winter.

In addition to regional Zhenotdel offices themselves, women's clubs were set up. Red Corners, Red Yurtas (tents), Red Chums (boats) were organized, depending on local conditions. These might contain recreational activities, a medical consultant, a legal consultant and a newspaper reader. Dramas, films and lectures were given. There were also Lenin Corners where political propaganda, exhibits and pamphlets were available. There were 1,927 red yurtas in Kazakhstan alone.

In addition to these features, many large conferences were held, drawing peasant women from the furthest regions of the East together with the proletarian women of the West. And International Women's Day continued to be a huge and often dramatic celebration.

During this period Zhenotdel houses became refuges for battered wives, rebellious women, rescued child brides, etc. The reaction involving many men was led by mullahs and nobility. They called Zhenotdel "jinotdyel" (devil's chancellory). There were rumor campaigns against Bolshevism spreading slanders about orgies, sharing women in common, and using kolkhozes as houses of prostitution. An earthquake was blamed on de-veiling. Many women organizers were killed. Women leaving a Baku women's club were set upon by wild dogs and men threw boiling water at them. An eighteen-year-old Uzbek woman activist was mutilated and thrown into a well. A Muslim woman in her 20s was hacked to death by her father and brothers when she appeared in public in a bathing suit. Stites reports that there were three hundred such murders in Central Asia in the first three months of 1929. (p. 187) There were, however, exemplary trials held for murderers of women, and the government eventually classified such crimes as counter-revolutionary offenses (in 1929).

This work to liberate women in the countryside and in the East is one of the most notable features of the work of Zhenotdel. It reflects that the struggle of women for their emancipation was a major current of the Russian Revolution. Despite whatever problems, it reflects the vigor of the revolutionary movement at that time.

This gives an indication of the kind of work Zhenotdel was involved in from the end of the civil war to the mid 1920s, and in many ways it was quite impressive.

Controversies within the CPSU(B) over this work

It does appear that all through this period there were problems within the Bolshevik Party towards the work to mobilize and liberate women, and towards Zhenotdel in particular. At several Congresses there were complaints that the Bolshevik Party was not paying enough attention to the work among women, and that regional centers were deliberately hindering it.

At the 9th Party Congress (1920) Martynova complained: "It is essential that the party committee pay serious attention to this work and not be limited by the taking of only one resolution. What should the participation in the work consist of? Looking over the protocols of the party

committees you see that, if once in a half year this question is put for discussion then this is an advanced committee, but in the majority of cases the comrades assign a worker who is by far not responsible but rather a rank and file communist woman, and on this quit themselves" (See her remarks, our translation from stenographic reports.)

After this, a resolution put forth by Martynova was approved. It stated that "The 9th Congress of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) considers the work among the female proletariat one of the tasks of the moment which cannot be put off and an essential part of our general party work." The resolution called for "organizing women's sections among our party committees where they don't exist and strengthening their work where they do exist....in this providing these sections with responsible organizers and leaders from among the best party workers." (Our translation from stenographic reports.)

The 10th Congress (1921) called for more cooperation between Zhenotdel and agitation and propaganda departments of the Party. Hayden says that after the 10th Congress the Central Committee "repeatedly issued circulars instructing its local organizations to stop 'liquidation' of the women's departments." (p.164)

However, in 1922, at a time of general austerity and cutbacks to deal with severe economic conditions, the government withdrew money to pay women apprentices in the government, soviet and Party departments; Zhenotdel staff was reduced from 40 to 21. (Porter p. 417) According to Porter, in the first year of NEP several local women's departments were arbitrarily disbanded. There was an incident of a local Party organization refusing to allow Zhenotdel to hold delegate elections, and various party organizations in the Moscow region called for Zhenotdel to be liquidated. (Porter, p. 417)

At the 11th Congress (1922) complaints were raised that Zhenotdel directors were generally not invited to meetings of heads of central committee departments. Its directors were told to wait in the hall until the subject under discussion concerned women. Smidovich, the director of Zhenotdel at the time, called for disbanding Zhenotdel if more support was not given. The 11th Congress did call for more support for Zhenotdel.

Porter claims that by the end of 1922 there were a number of non-party women's publications. (p. 426) There may have been dissatisfaction arising from the problems brought on women during NEP, loss of jobs, decrease in funds for daycare, laundries, etc. In this period, Vera Golubeva, the deputy director of Zhenotdel, suggested that men and women outside the party could form themselves into special societies to work on the problems of women. She proposed experiments in communal living as a first step (possibly originally Kollantai's idea).

In January 1923 *Rabotnitsa* was revived, apparently to deal with some of this. The 12th Congress (1923) also tried to deal with it. It reconfirmed that Zhenotdel should have equal status with other Central Committee departments. It stated that "the continuing and becoming more complicated

conditions of, this work in the face of the slowing construction of institutions to lighten the conditions of the women workers, creates some soil for feminist deviations. These deviations can assist the creation of such specialized societies, which, under the flag of improving the daily life conditions of women, in fact would lead to the splitting of the female part of the laboring people from the general class struggle." (our translation from stenographic reports)

The 12th Congress did call "to strengthen the work of the assigned organizations in the matter of improvement of the daily life of women along with the improvement of the position of the working class as a whole." The 12th Congress resolution also notes what it calls "the significant separation of the work among women workers and women peasants from the general party work and the inadequate inclination and activity flowing from this to a large degree of the Zhenotdel workers towards general party work." (our translation from stenographic reports)

The resolution proposes methods to resolve this: "The Congress proposes to the Party committees to get rid of these phenomena by putting into effect the full leadership of the Party committees of the work of the zhenotdels and by making then up of qualified women party workers." (our translation) The resolution further supports the delegate system and work in the East.

We are in no way able to assess the different controversies and debates in relation to Zhenotdel at the Party Congresses. It is clear that the work among women and the work for the emancipation of women were issues of discussion at each party congress through the 1920s.

There are also references in the literature to ongoing difficulties in the relations of Zhenotdel to the trade unions. In the autumn of 1919, Kollantai wrote a letter to the Politburo on the "pressing question of the relationship between trade unions and the women's sections, in view of the heated discussions which are disrupting our work." (Porter, p. 346)

Smith gives examples from this period of work of Zhenotdel in Ivano Voznesensk, where there were a large number of women textile workers. As background to discussion of the problem with the trade unions her description of the work of Zhenotdel is interesting. She describes that 2/3 of the 126,000 textile workers in the district were women, and of these 26,000 were peasant women who had come to work in the factories for the first time in the last two years. Zhenotdel faced many difficulties, including the harsh life of the peasants. Yet 30,000 of these women were reached in one way or another by Zhenotdel and over 8,000 were delegates. Hundreds of women were studying in the political circles, and 3,000 women were members of circles which considered household and other questions of immediate interest to women. Smith states that in two years the number of women elected to soviets in this area increased to 23%, the number of women shareholders in cooperatives from 48,000 to 70,000, and the number of women in the Communist Party from 18 to 23.

After giving this background ~~Smith~~ recounts a discussion with the daughter of a Zhenotdel worker. The daughter reported that originally all work among women in the factories rested on Zhenotdel. As a result, the factory committee often failed to take initiative and refused to put subjects of special interest to women on their programs. When women came to meetings they were met with: "Well, let's hear what the babas have to say." Because women were afraid to express themselves it was necessary to organize special women's meetings. This person thought this had some good effect but led to a we/they attitude. Therefore, a decision was made for a change of method. She stated that the trade union congress voted to place responsibility for work among women on factory committees as a whole. This congress instructed unions to include questions of special interest to women on their general program. She thought that this had a healthy effect. The unions became more active in drawing women into their work. Her conclusion was that Zhenotdel prepares the ground for union work. (Smith, pp. 55-57)

It appears that the relation between the work of Zhenotdel and the work of the trade unions was never adequately settled. There is evidence that a similar situation existed in the local soviets, where soviet leadership coopted control of the Zhenotdel delegatki.

The end of Zhenotdel

Zhenotdel was officially dissolved at the 16th Party Congress in June 1930. In 1929, the Secretariat had been reorganized to suit the new period of industrialization and collectivization. Special departments (Jewish, village and women's) were subsumed under 'Agitation and Mass Campaigns'. Stites states that "the furious pace of industrialization and collectivisation beginning in 1928 posed tasks of mass mobilization which were, in the minds of some, much too imposing to be handled by Zhenotdel. One Party figure, according to Kaganovich, felt that 'Zhenotdel was no longer a center of progress, but rather a brake to it' ". (p. 191) Kaganovich, in reporting on the decision to abolish Zhenotdel, stated that the conditions which gave rise to Zhenotdel no longer existed. He acknowledged that Zhenotdel had done important and necessary work, but there was no need for it because there was a solid cohort of liberated women, and a special organ was no longer needed. The Party as a whole would assume this work. (Stites, p. 191)

There was evidently no debate leading up to the decision to abolish Zhenotdel. At the Congress, it was presented as a fait accompli. Kaganovich commented that "some comrades had applauded the abolition of Zhenotdel as long overdue, while others had lamented the decision" but he disagreed with both in his support of the decision. (Stites, p. 191) Party minutes do record at least one strong protest. Preshovya Kudelli, an original editor of *Rabotnitsa*, protested that although working women had essentially contributed in building the new economy, they still enjoyed

none of the benefits promised to them in their homes, and that women struggling to combine work/homelife/political activity suffered from an impossible conflict of interests. She stressed the need for workers' communal living arrangements and accused the Party of hypocrisy in enforcing collectivization on the peasants, when neither the workers nor the leadership lived collectively. (Hayden, p. 172)

The afterlife of Zhenotdel

Zhenotdel did not completely die out. Zhensekots, successors of local Zhenotdel organs, and delegate meetings were retained in rural areas until 1934. Women's departments were maintained in certain non-Russian regions into the 1950s. Cultural, political and professional women's organizations remained, as did mass campaigns, and International Women's Day. *Kommunistka* was abolished, and Party press discontinued women's pages. *Rabomitsa* remained until 1934.

The activities that remained were tied to the general tasks of the nation and Party, e.g., the slogan for 1930 International Women's Day was "100 percent collectivization." (Stites p.192) Local organizations served mainly to transmit Party directives on production quotas and to mobilize women in support of the 5-year plans. After 1930, the Red Clubs and Tents were open to men and concentrated on work training. Delegate meetings were essentially replaced by women's "production conferences."

Summary of changes in women's status

By 1930 there had been some significant gains towards fighting for the emancipation of women. Women had legal rights. Large numbers of women were again employed. Major gains had been made against illiteracy. Maternal and child services were extensive; labor protection laws were again enforced. Significant gains were made against the veil and other outrages. In 1927 34% of university students were women, and women comprised 45% of the trade school students. Party membership was about 13.5% female in 1930. Women members of the All-Russian

Appendix A: Zhenotdel directors

Inessa Armand (1919-1920);
Aleksandra Kollantai, deputy director.

Aleksandra Kollantai (1920-1922);
Vera Golubeva, deputy director.

Central Executive Committee of the Soviet government and the USSR Central Executive Committee was 20.1% in 1929. Women's membership in rural and urban soviets and distribution centers was 20-25% at this time. However, there were few women in leadership positions, and no women in the highest governing bodies, the Politburo, Secretariat, Council of People's Commissariats or the Presidium.

Discussion

Impressive as some of these statistics are, to us this was only a beginning, opening up the possibility for an even broader fight for the emancipation of women.

Socialism will require such a fight including equalizing the conditions of men and women workers, raising the level of pay and skills of women workers, continuing the fight against patriarchal conditions in the countryside, organizing to socialize domestic work, and other fights. This would mean advancing the fight for the emancipation of women. It's possible that in 1930 some other form besides Zhenotdel was needed. But this is not what the issue was. The fight for the emancipation of women was given up.

By the 1930s it is clear that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was not organizing the working class for socialist construction nor approaching the working class in a revolutionary way. Instead, they built what became a state capitalist economy. The state capitalist economy required the participation of women workers; there was a labor shortage. But measures did not go beyond that. The emancipation of women and the building of socialism took a backseat to the capitalist industrialization and collectivisation programs and the consolidation of Stalin's regime. In fact, the Soviet leaders insisted that "the victory of socialism" had completely liberated women.

It is a historical tragedy that many of the gains women made from the revolution were only temporary. This is part of the larger tragedy of the betrayal of socialism by Stalin and the Bolshevik Party. □

Sof'ia Smidovich (1922-1924)

Klavdiia Nikolaeva (1924-1927)

Aleksandra Artiukhina (1927-1929)

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