

# YOUNG SOCIALIST DISCUSSION bulletin

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THE RHODE ISLAND ELECTION CAMPAIGN by Daniel Fein	3
THE CHARACTER OF THE YS ORGANIZER by Glenn Jenkins	5
A CRITICISM OF TWO ASPECTS OF THE NEC RESOLUTION ON THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT by Bob Geb	6
THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE ABORTION LAWS: REFORM OR REPEAL by Pam Edwards	11
REPORT ON OHIO REGIONAL WORK by Leslie Dork	13

These discussion articles and resolutions were written for the Young Socialist National Convention to be held at the Manhattan Center in New York City, December 27-31, 1970. They were written by members of the Young Socialist Alliance from around the country.

Similar resolutions and discussion articles will deal with other activities in which young socialists are involved. They are being circulated prior to the convention to assure the fullest possible discussion on political perspectives and activities before the convention meets.

Young Socialists from around the country are invited to participate in the written discussion and urged to attend the convention. Contributions to the discussion and inquiries can be sent to the Young Socialist Alliance, P.O. Box 471 Cooper Station, New York, New York 10003.

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THE RHODE ISLAND ELECTION CAMPAIGN

by

Daniel Fein

The Providence local ran a very successful election campaign this fall in Rhode Island. (There is no Socialist Workers Party branch located in the state.) Jeff Powers ran for governor, Joe Traugott ran for lt. governor, Dan Fein ran for U.S. senator.

The Rhode Island Peace and Freedom Party also ran candidates in the elections. They ran a slate of seven candidates, with the U.S. senate office being the only office we were both contesting. Results of the election were Traugott-- .65% of the vote; Powers-- .39% and Fein-- .37%.

We made the decision to run a campaign in early June. Deciding so late was a mistake, because the candidates found themselves writing position papers, making posters, or sending out a mailing later on in the campaign, when they should have been on the road campaigning. The size of our local during the summer was ten. Half of the summer comrades had joined the YSA in the preceding six months.

Most of the local's energy during the summer was directed towards getting enough signatures on nomination papers. Rhode Island requires 500 signatures from qualified voters in order for a candidate to appear on the ballot. The local was mobilized three or four times a week to go to shopping centers and collect signatures. To collect signatures, we found the best opening line to be, "Are you registered to vote in Rhode Island?" Most responded. If they answered "No," their signature would not help anyway. If they answered "Yes," they would usually stop, give their attention, and we could explain that we needed their signature to help three independent candidates get on the November ballot. Approximately 2300 signatures were collected for each candidate. About 950 of the 2300 were considered "good." (If one registered to vote as John Smith, but signed our nomination papers Mr. John Smith, it was disqualified.) By August 13, the candidates became official, so we began the work of making up literature and getting the candidates known to the public.

When the school year began, our local was up to full strength with twenty-two members. Our campaign committee consisted of the three candidates, the organizer, and two other comrades. The campaign committee met once a week to write our brochure, write position papers, plan campaign activities, and plan fund

raising. We had a campaign committee chairman, who made the day to day decisions. Other comrades in the local were busy in antiwar and women's liberation work.

Because the Socialist Workers Party had never run for statewide offices in Rhode Island, we were somewhat of a novelty and therefore very "newsworthy." The coverage we received by radio, television and the newspapers was far more extensive than we ever expected.

Due to the equal time provision and the fact that we were official candidates, our candidates were given numerous opportunities to appear on radio talk shows throughout the state.

A very positive aspect of our campaign, which helped with our publicity, was our professionalism. The best examples were our brochure and our twelve page booklet of position papers entitled, "Human rights . . . Not Property rights." Both were very attractive and well written. We sold over 1500 of our booklets for 10¢ apiece. We found it to our advantage to sell the booklets for three main reasons: 1) We made \$80.00; 2) when people pay 10¢ for something, they read it; and 3) they were very easy to sell because of the attractive cover. (Easier than Militants.)

Press releases were put out almost every day. Candidates delivered the releases to the local newspaper, radio stations, and television stations. Through this practice, all the candidates got to know almost twenty reporters, news directors or newscasters. We also phoned in live statements to radio stations to be used on the news. We found that getting into the media depended crucially upon which newsman or newswoman received our releases. With sympathetic ones, we got in every time; with unsympathetic ones, we had a 50% chance. We made a point of figuring out everyone's work hours and then delivered releases when sympathetic newsmen and newswomen were working.

For the last two months of the campaign, the candidates were working on the campaign full time and did all the campaign work, with the exception of some campaign sympathizers.

A portable sound system, attached to a car, was used by the campaign to hold spontaneous rallies. The candidates, along with two or three campaign supporters, drove to spots where many people congre-

gated. We stopped the car and a candidate climbed on top of the car with the microphone and began a campaign speech. The rest sold buttons, Militants, or distributed brochures. After all the candidates spoke, we drove off and found another good spot. We got the largest crowds on Sunday afternoons in Roger Williams Park, the largest park in Providence. Most audiences were simply curious--no open hostility, no applause. We also held spontaneous rallies at noontime in the mall in downtown Providence. These rallies were our largest, and attracted about 200 persons. The sound car was also used to simply drive through neighborhoods blasting, "Bring all the troops home now. Vote for the Socialist Workers Party on November 3. Elect Jeff Powers governor, Joseph Traugott lt. governor, Daniel Fein U.S. Senator."

A Socialist Support Group was set up at the beginning of the school year. Traugott, the candidate for lt. governor, was assigned to head the group. Eight persons attended the first meeting--seven high school students and one Brown University student. The support group helped put up stickers and helped out with the sound car the first week. At the next meeting, the following week, only two supporters came, and after that we got either one or none. The Socialist Support Group never materialized. Had the one in charge been someone other than a candidate, with no other assignments, we might have fared better. Occasionally a supporter would come to our office and volunteer some time. After the second meeting of the Socialist Support Group, this was our sole source of outside help.

Candidates spoke at seven colleges and universities throughout the state. We spoke at three high schools. I addressed the state AFL-CIO convention. Powers got 13 minutes of prime time on television because his two opponents debated on TV without his presence. We got many of our speaking engagements by finagling into meetings originally set up for just the Democratic and Republican candidates.

The total cost of the campaign was \$500.00. We were able to collect \$270.00 in contributions, half of which came from comrades. We made \$80.00 from our booklets, so the remaining \$150.00 was paid from the local's treasury.

The campaign was used very successfully in building the antiwar movement, the Black liberation movement, and the women's liberation movement. Due to the publicity we received, the SWP and its program are well known in Rhode Island, especially in Providence. Through the campaign, the YSA has become the largest and most influential leftist political group in Rhode Island.

We have become the socialists in Rhode Island. The campaign went a long ways toward legitimatizing the Socialist Workers Party, which means it will be difficult for the government to crack down on us in the future.

Although we recruited only two persons to the YSA directly from the campaign, we built up a very large periphery from which we hope to recruit sometime in the future.

The talks and workshops about electoral politics at Oberlin were indispensable for me. Without Oberlin, my job as campaign manager and candidate would have been very difficult, and the campaign would have suffered.

The main lesson for the YSA from our experience is that a small local, with at least 15 comrades, can run a good campaign and should run campaigns. All campaigns should sell a booklet like ours giving our positions on all the major issues. This booklet is an excellent recruiting device because if someone reads it and agrees with it, he or she is about ready to join our movement.

Providence

November 15, 1970

THE CHARACTER OF THE YS ORGANIZER

by

Glenn Jenkins

"It is imperative that we prepare ourselves organizationally to take advantage of the burgeoning opportunities for recruitment coming up, and meet with Bolshevik professionalism the thousands who will be joining us." The YS Organizer, 10-28-70

That sounds good, but it doesn't do much to build the Young Socialist Alliance. The quote was taken at random. The article in which it is found, as a whole, is a useful, informative one. I use it merely as an indication of the basic character of many of the articles in The YS Organizer.

The YS Organizer was originally projected as an action bulletin. It was to be used to publish reports from the field for the perusal of comrades on a national scale, and for concrete contributions from the National Office. Unfortunately, a great many contributions have been partly or wholly valueless. They are oppressed with formula statements about the YSA, and overly generalized about the current radicalization. The question is not whether those statements are true or false, but of the character and purpose of The YS Organizer.

When I open a Young Socialist Organizer I expect to find local reports on various aspects of our work, learn from other comrades' experience, and apply what I can to the local situation. I don't appreciate reading the "ideal" Tasks and Perspectives report, or a "Where is America Going"--short course.

There is much in The YS Organizer worth absorbing and the quality has improved noticeably since its inception; still, worthwhile information must be culled from the esoteric, and reading it becomes a chore. There are few of us so slow that we must be told over and over and over again of the great possibilities existing for our movement.

The International Socialist Review is supposed to be the theoretical journal of our movement. The lines of emphasis have been drawn between The Militant, the ISR, and The YS Organizer. It is a realistic division of labor--let's work to make each publication the best possible.

Denver

November 22, 1970

A CRITICISM OF TWO ASPECTS OF THE NEC RESOLUTION ON THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

by

Bob Geb

I wholeheartedly support the general political line of "The Struggle for Women's Liberation: Strategy for a Mass Movement." The key sentence in it in my opinion is on p. 8: "The struggle of women is a revolutionary struggle in its own right." We feel the same way about the struggle of workers and the struggle of oppressed nations and nationalities; in conjunction with our orientation toward mobilization of the masses of the oppressed sectors, these brief expressions of our approach to politics serve as a very precise definition of Trotskyism. Within the context of support to the NEC resolution, I wish to make criticisms of two aspects of the document.

\* \* \*

In arguing on p. 8 against the CP's defense of the family as a supposedly revolutionary institution, the NEC admits that "no other means exists in capitalist society for the care of children and for companionship in this alienating environment." I think this admission is unwarranted, at least in the form in which it is stated. I think that the NEC is only trying to argue against the notion that individual solutions can be found within capitalist society, and this is quite true; nothing save socialism will end anybody's oppression. However, much better means than the family can be found, to be used for the care of children, and even more so for companionship, as part of the effort to minimize the debilitating effects of this oppression, prior to the revolution.

The sorts of personal relationships that are appropriate for individuals in our society vary tremendously; some of these are obviously very different from the patriarchal family. Homosexual living groups are appropriate for many people; it is especially common that women find such arrangements to be liberating, since for many this is the fastest and most efficient way to eliminate dependency on a male or males. For many other people, living groups of three or more, which are simultaneously heterosexual and homosexual, are very fruitful. In both these cases there are serious legal obstacles, especially serious for revolutionaries, for whom legal threats are in general the most dangerous. However it is in principle quite possible that the laws in question will be repealed or rendered unenforceable, well before the revolution. It is already the case that these obstacles are not overriding

for all individuals. The fact that more and more people are choosing alternatives to the one-male-one-female tradition, is wholly healthy and very much to be defended; in particular the Stalinists and other defenders of the family, should be exposed for their general Puritanism and the criminal inadequacy of their defense of the right to choose alternatives to the one-male-one-female tradition.

But we do not even want to allow the Stalinists and liberals to get away with the claim that a one-male-one-female living group is necessarily the monogamous family. The pairing family of preclass society was not the family in the modern sense. Likewise, even now a one-male-one-female group, even with children, if there is no tyranny of the parents over the children, if there is no male domination, if the division of labor, responsibility and privilege is democratic and equal, if there is no channeling of the children into traditional sex roles (typically the lower-class males are given toy trucks, the upper-class males erector sets, and all females are given dolls), if there are absolutely no restrictions on the sexual freedom of the woman and the children, etc.--then this is not the monogamous family, either. And if a living group does not differ from the traditional model in at least these respects, then it is indeed a monogamous family, it is what the CP, PL, and the Panthers support but what we know to be quite reactionary and the worst way available to try to cope with the need for child care and companionship.

Again, I don't think the NEC meant to deny this. Still I feel that it is necessary that this concept be fully clear.

\* \* \*

My second criticism I feel is more serious. In the NEC analysis of the family, I find an omission of the most basic facts about the family structure. While I'm not sure that I disagree with anything the NEC wrote about the function of the family, I strongly object to the omission I mentioned. I feel that this disagreement leads to an at least potential disagreement about what conclusions to draw from this theoretical point; again, I have no quarrel with the conclusions the NEC draws, but I have a serious quarrel with the NEC's omission of a conclusion I would draw.

On pages 8 and 9, the NEC analyzes

"The Role of the Family" in bourgeois society. The main thrust of the NEC analysis is that the family is already a thoroughly and hopelessly reactionary institution; the NEC polemicizes with the Stalinists on this score. On this, I support the NEC totally. But I think that in presenting its theoretical analysis of the function of the family in capitalist society, the NEC omits any mention of its central function; I feel that important practical questions hinge on this omission.

The NEC mentions three basic aspects of the function of the family; let us note them one by one:

1) "The family provides the capitalist system with a way of escaping the costs of public services such as free childcare, care for the aged, etc..." (emphasis added). As with anything else, the bourgeoisie makes what profits it can off the oppression of women. PL believes that the basic reason for the oppression of women, is the profits that are made from it. Our movement has traditionally considered the profit-making off women's oppression to be an afterthought (even if an inevitable afterthought). As important as this consideration might be, we should be able to agree that it is not the primary reason for the existence of the family. If it were, then it would be at least conceivable that the family be abolished under capitalism.

2) "The family is the agent for inculcating bourgeois ideology and morality into its members...." (emph. added). This much can also be said about the schools. But, even under capitalism, the schools can be revolutionized, and be changed from media for reactionary propaganda, into media for revolutionary propaganda (cf. the red, black, brown, and feminist universities). The CP, PL, the Panther Party, and others, agree that the family, too, can be revolutionized in the same way; we disagree. But until we've explained why it is that the family, unlike the schools, is hopelessly reactionary, we haven't yet gotten to the essence of its function.

3) "It is through the family that women's oppression is justified...." (emph. added). That is, sexual inequality outside the family, is explained by sexual inequality inside the family. This is true enough; this is why the family is the central question for women to deal with. But the purpose of the family is not to justify inequality outside the family; this is again only an afterthought. What, then, is the basic function of the family?

Marx and Engels considered the differences between monogamy and polygamy to be secondary. The essence of the structure of both forms of the patriarchal family, is this: that the woman, or women, are "mere instruments of production," (The Communist Manifesto), owned, at least in effect, by the patriarch (in modern terms, the husband). Within the family, women are used for a whole variety of types of production, but one and only one type is the essential type of production which defines the basic nature of the family-- the production of heirs for the man's wealth. Thus, in Origins, Engels writes: Monogamy arose from the concentration of considerable wealth in the hands of a single individual--a man-- and from the need to bequeath this wealth to the children of that man and no other.

In describing the England of a century ago, Marx and Engels consider the family to exist primarily just in the wealthy classes. They write that:

In its completely developed form this family (the monogamous family) exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians...

To understand this quote from the Manifesto, it is necessary to keep in mind that the workers which Marx and Engels are observing are in the sweatshops and slums of the England of the 1840's. They consider this the normal state of the working class, but in no way the necessary state at all times and places. In particular, in contemporary America large sectors of the working class are relatively privileged and generally deeply imbued with the bourgeois ideology (though this is changing at an amazing pace)--hence to a large extent the white workingmen of the USA today share the national, racial, and sex chauvinism of their masters. A modern counterpart to the English workers of the 1840's, one which is almost identical in relevant sociological features, is the Black community of the US. Evidence that many of the features which already exist in the Black community, represent the direction in which the white working class is developing, can be seen in the way the white youth tend so strongly to look to the Black community for cultural leadership (most notably in music). One should think, then, in terms of the Black community of today, and the white working class of several years from now, in trying to understand the following passage which Engels writes in Origins:

Sex-love in the relationship with a woman becomes, and can only become, the real rule among the oppressed classes, which means today among the proletariat--whether this relation is officially sanctioned or not. But here all the foundations of typical monogamy are cleared away. Here there is no property, for the preservation

and inheritance of which monogamy and male supremacy were established....

And now that large-scale industry has taken the wife out of the home and into the labor market and into the factory, and made her often the bread-winner of the family, no basis for any kind of male supremacy is left in the proletarian household--except, perhaps, for something of the brutality towards women that has spread since the introduction of monogamy. The proletarian family is therefore no longer monogamous in the strict sense, even (he should have said "especially"-Geb) where there is passionate love and firmest loyalty on both sides, and maybe all the blessings of religious and civic authority....(emphasis added).

Engels is of course not claiming that there exists a matriarchy among the workers--and he would be astounded to hear that some people think that today's Afro-American community is matriarchal. Further, Engels is not at all claiming that working class women do not suffer sexual oppression; he cites the "brutality towards women" which represents the seepage of bourgeois ideology which will inevitably continue so long as there is a bourgeoisie, as oppression that the woman faces within the working class living-unit, and he of course agrees that all women suffer sexual oppression from society as a whole, outside the living-unit (which would include everything from legal inequality to unequal job and educational opportunity). What Engels is arguing for is simply the obvious notion that for working class women, the enemy is not the working class men, but bourgeois men.

Through all stages of class society, the type of family which existed at that stage, existed only in the ruling class. No family whatever existed for slaves; further, for the longest period of time under feudalism, it was legally impossible for serfs to marry. We have come a long way toward social equality; now everyone has the right to a piece of paper called a marriage certificate, which is printed on the same kind of paper that rich folks use. However, the guts of the bourgeois family still exists only in the bourgeoisie, and that is wealth.

If the "family" in the working class was truly a family in the historical sense, then the workingman, as the benefactor, would be the irreconcilable enemy of feminism. The essence of the family is production of heirs for wealth, and hence without wealth to bequeath, the workingman has nothing to lose by the abolition of the family; hence the workingman is the historical ally of female liberation. That is not to say that he is already an ally--he isn't. He needs a lot of talking to, and before you start talking to him you may even have to hit

him over the head a few times with a baseball bat, just to get his attention. But in the end he will listen to reason and be convinced, since, unlike the bourgeois, he has nothing to lose--only something to learn. His ideas about women are just like his ideas about Blacks; one day he will learn to look to both for political leadership, and the next day there will be a revolution.

\* \* \*

As Marx pointed out, the ruling morality of any epoch, is the morality of the ruling class of that epoch. The morality of monogamy is fully relevant only to the ruling class, and is more and more irrelevant, the further down you go in the social scale. But as the morality of the ruling class, it is the official morality of the society, and conformity is made legally binding. Such laws are not always enforced, but where it feels there is gain to be made, the ruling class feels free to use its legal power, and all other aspects of its power (its control of education, etc.), to force conformity.

Just as slaveowners felt that their morality was too good for their slaves, likewise the bourgeoisie is quite comfortable with the fact that the lowest strata of society, especially Blacks, often practice informal cohabitation rather than legal monogamy. But the ruling class is very insistent on the official ideology that something must be wrong with anyone who fails to practice its morality (it is always something wrong with you and never something wrong with the ideology), and they reserve, and often exercise, the right to suppress nonconformity. A basic part of the feminist struggle, is the fight to strip the ruling class of its right to enforce its morality through its control of the state and other social institutions.

\* \* \*

Special attention should be given to the reasons why the bourgeoisie itself needs monogamy. This need, again, is for the production of heirs for the inheritance of substantial amounts of wealth belonging to men. To see the necessity for this, one must consider the alternatives. First, a wealthy man might want to leave his wealth to humanity as a whole. But this would be totally counter to the individualism and greed which are prerequisites of individual wealth to begin with. On the other extreme, one might carry individualism to its logical conclusion, and not care about anything that goes on after one's death; thus, one would seek to spend all one's wealth while one is still alive. Some do this; they of course have no lasting impact on society. In addition, it is



rather painful to have to admit that one is going to die in the full sense--this conclusion, which is the logical conclusion of individualism (and which as a philosophy is known as solipsism), means that when one dies, the whole world comes to an end, at least in effect.

One has, however, the alternative of inventing a reason for believing in some way of living on after death, and the bourgeois does this through his sons. For most of human history it was not known that males had anything at all to do with reproduction. It was believed that children were the exclusive product of their mothers. With the discovery of biological paternity, however, it became possible, given other necessary conditions, for men to believe that they were the exclusive, or central, producers of children, and that women were mere incubators. In the Old Testament we note that a man's sperm is referred to as his "seed"--he plants his seed in the woman, where it grows and later sprouts. Despite our current knowledge that a child is produced through the fusion of the man's sperm and the woman's egg, it is still the belief of the average bourgeois that the offspring he has with his wife, are "his" and not merely theirs. By this psychology, a man's sperm is a part of him, like his toe. For his sperm to live on in the form of his son (and grandson, etc.), is thus like his toe living on--which might not be as good as immortality in the ordinary sense, but is felt to be much better than nothing. This identification with one's sons, is expressed through inheritance of the family name, through the male line. Thus John D. Rockefeller I and Henry Ford I honestly felt that they had achieved some sort of immortality, through the founding of their empires.

The very identity of the bourgeois, is defined in terms of his wealth. Since he has the wealth which creates this definition, which alienates the rest of humanity from him and thus makes him an individual, he thus must find his immortality as an individual--he must live on after death, through his sons, his family. The proletarians have no wealth, hence nothing to alienate them from the rest of humanity, hence nothing to force them to think of themselves as individualists. Thus the proletarians (male and female) are free to live on after death, through the whole of humanity; thus they have no need to found empires, which they couldn't do, anyway.

The role that the women of the bourgeoisie play in all of this, is, again, the role of mere instrument of production of heirs, as Marx and Engels wrote. Their only interest in this game, is to seek immortality through their husbands and the sons they bear their husbands (in addition to the economic security which results from being the property of a wealthy man). This is analogous to the

interest that white workers have in belonging to the master race, and to the interest that working-class men have in belonging to the master sex; in each case one is identifying with the privileges which belong to another and not oneself--living vicariously through Kennedy, Ford, Hefner, etc. The fact that they belong to the master class, then, need not necessarily make the women of the ruling class hopeless, no more than belonging to the master sex and the master race, makes the white workingmen hopeless.

On this, the NEC says:

No woman, even in the ruling class itself, can be arbitrarily ruled out as a potential feminist. While it is obvious that most women in the ruling class have more loyalty to the privileges of their class than to other women, there can be and are exceptions.

The spirit in which this statement was made was very positive. But what was actually said, could just have well been said of ruling class men:

No man, even in the ruling class itself, can be arbitrarily ruled out as a potential socialist. While it is obvious that most men in the ruling class have more loyalty to the privileges of their class than to other men (or people), there can be and are exceptions.

If there really is an important difference between bourgeois men and women, then stronger words are needed to express it. We should keep in mind that this difference may be only in its infant stage at present, like the differences between the classes in white America. We should feel that the NEC formulation is inadequate for the same reasons that we would feel that the following formulation was inadequate if put forward by a Black nationalist:

No worker, even in the ruling race itself, can be arbitrarily ruled out as a potential socialist. While it is obvious that most workers in the ruling race have more loyalty to the privileges of their race than to other workers, there can be and are exceptions.

The inadequacy results from the implicit assumption that the loyalties felt today will be felt in about the same degree in the future, and not be traded in for other loyalties, an assumption which is erroneous.

\* \* \*

We say to Black nationalists that they can and must drive a wedge between the workers and the bourgeoisie, within the white race. We say to feminists that they can and must drive a wedge between the workers and the bourgeoisie, within the male sex. Why can't we, for the same reasons, say to socialists that they can and must

drive a wedge between the women and the men, within the bourgeoisie?

Already today there is a major split within the US ruling class, over the comparatively minor question of which tactic to use in crushing the Vietnamese struggle and the US antiwar movement; this split appears along very vague geographical lines, and there are no differences in the basic interests of the two camps. Is it too much to hope for, that there might be a qualitatively more profound split within the bourgeoisie in the future, on the incomparably more controversial questions of feminism, along the incomparably more important lines of sex, where the basic interests of the two camps, as the Marxist analysis of the family shows, are diametrically opposed?

I think this projection is fully realistic. Thus, when I approvingly

quote the NEC statement that "The struggle of women is a revolutionary struggle in its own right," I mean precisely the same thing as when I say that the struggle of labor is a revolutionary struggle in its own right, and that the struggle of oppressed nations and nationalities is a revolutionary struggle in its own right. I conclude from this statement that sexual divisions within the ruling class, are potentially as important as class divisions within the ruling sex. I feel that this is a necessary consequence of the Marxist analysis of the bourgeois family, which Engels phrases thusly (again in Origins): "...at least in the possessing classes, the husband...is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat." (emphasis added).

Cambridge

December 2, 1970

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST ABORTION LAWS: REFORM OR REPEAL

by

Pam Edwards

Questions are surfacing in light of the new and perhaps unlimited string of restrictions that have been attached to New York's "liberalized" abortion law reform bill. This aspect of the struggle against abortion laws was dealt with only slightly in the women's liberation report, and it is my attempt here, to chronicalize the events in New York and the more recent developments in Massachusetts.

The New York abortion law repeal movement in one year has completed a full circle. Starting out with an archaic 140 year old law prohibiting abortion, its first move was to take legal action in the courts to have the law declared unconstitutional. These court suits actually looked like they were going to win repeal. However, according to an article written by James Clapp of the National Association to Repeal Abortion Laws, "Just five days before these cases were to be heard, the state Senate passed the final amended form of the abortion law, and thus rendered moot the constitutional challenges to the previous law." "Reform" replaced repeal.

Events Leading Up to Passage of the Reform Bill

The November 28th, 1969, issue of The Militant reported the abortion movement's first significant breakthrough, "In New York, a group of women joined by doctors, nurses, welfare mothers, and others have banded together to bring several different suits against the anti-abortion law . . . before a three-judge Federal District Court." The Militant article points out the implications of this legal action, "A favorable Supreme Court decision could have an important effect on abortion laws in this country . . . law suits may go way beyond the timid fights for abortion reform which have taken place in various state legislatures in recent years. . ."

The abortion movement gathered momentum after the first of the year. In December, the Congress to Unite Women issued a statement calling for the total repeal of the abortion law and for the "free public provision of birth control services in all hospitals and clinics." Cindy Cisler of New Yorkers for Abortion Law Repeal, speaking at the Militant Labor Forum in New York, said, ". . . women's liberation groups are for the total repeal of abortion laws and oppose mere reform of those laws because (it) leads to further indignities and humiliation and serves to buy off' women with money who can afford

abortions into forgetting their sisters who cannot."

On January 16th, The Militant announced that "a focus of YSA activity in New York has been support for an abortion suit challenging the . . . New York abortion law . . ." In the same article it announced plans for a mass demonstration in March for the abolition of the abortion law. Clearly there was mass pressure for repeal and not for reform of the abortion laws.

By the middle of March, with plans for a mass demonstration already underway, a Militant story reported, "In New York, many of them (legislators) hope to appease the abortion movement and . . . dampen the impact of the March 28th demonstration while at the same time backing an issue which is gaining greater support among voters . . ." In the next sentence The Militant foresees the events as they actually happened later on . . . "There is no doubt that some of them want to prevent abortion laws from being totally wiped off the books by a favorable court decision on the four suits." Later on in the same article The Militant adds its qualified support to the reform bill, ". . . new bills . . . will make it possible for tens of thousands of women to obtain legal, safe abortions, and they will have the immediate effect of saving thousands of lives." Why did we give qualified support for the reform bill at a time when mass pressure was united for repeal?

On April 3rd, with passage of the reform bill imminent, a Militant article reported, "While the new laws will not solve the problems of making abortions free and available to women who cannot afford the high medical fees involved, they at least set the stage for advancing the struggle to a new level."

The Aftermath of the Reform Bill

The "liberalized" bill as it stands now was compromised four times before it finally passed. Three of the alterations included a subtly worded clause that restricted the performance of an abortion to licensed physicians, a stipulation that abortions should be performed in a licensed hospital, and that there be a gestation limit of 24 weeks. A politician by the name of Mrs. Cook, one of the sponsors of the reform bill, led the way for the compromises--evidently feeling that they were "necessary to get the bill out

of committee."

Abortion law repeal groups fought for repeal, according to an article in the June 30th Militant, until "the day before the abortion law was to go into effect," and ". . . expressed their dissatisfaction with projected plans for implementation of the law, and pointed out insufficiencies in the law itself." In the same article it was stated that, "Already women are being told they will have to wait up to one month to get a bed (in a licensed hospital), which in many cases will put them beyond the legal limit of 24 weeks."

Since that time even more restrictions have been added by New York's Board of Health. On December 12th the New York women's liberation movement is planning another massive demonstration against the new liberalized abortion law, calling for free abortion on demand.

Those who would have abortion laws repealed must realize that their strength lies in uniting, not with opponents of repeal (like Assemblywoman Cook), but with each other, and not to support compromises, but to fight them!

#### Massachusetts' New Abortion Law Repeal Movement

In Massachusetts the movement developed later and has since learned a lesson from the New York experience.

At an abortion conference in February 1970 sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Association, a call went out to form the Massachusetts Organization to Repeal Abortion Laws. In March, public hearings were organized before the Social Welfare Committee for Massachusetts' first repeal bill. Between March and June MORAL conducted mainly a propaganda campaign, appearing before conferences and seeking endorsements. MORAL's first "open meeting" in June was attended by 75 people from across the state, who expressed their commitment to wipe the Massachusetts abortion laws off the books. MORAL endorses and has called mass actions (a conference and demonstration were held in late October), legislation (repeal bills), and court actions (getting suits to overturn the law). At this time, its central demand is: "Abortion on Demand."

(Note: Several women's liberation organizations along with the YSA have a position of "free abortion on demand." Conceivably, after repeal is finally won--we will then have to take the struggle further without the help of the present forces.)

A senator who is currently sponsoring a repeal bill gave MORAL the choice between filing a reform bill or a repeal bill--the organization did not hesitate for a second in making its decision for repeal.

North Boston

December 3, 1970

REPORT ON OHIO REGIONAL WORK

by

Leslie Dork

Lee Smith outlined a new structure for the YSA in his August 17 report to the plenum. In order to deal most efficiently with a greatly expanded membership, regional offices in each regional center were projected to act as an intermediary between locals, at-largers, and the National Office. Realizing that the regional organization would have no formal constitutional authority as yet, because no changes have been made in the constitution, Cleveland outlined a method of organizing with which to experiment, since it is only with concrete experiences with these methods that we will be able to evaluate them in a realistic manner and make the correct constitutional additions.

Cleveland's first step in regional organizing was to draw up a Regional Tasks and Perspectives covering the following areas: proposed structure of regional organization, finances and fund raising, sub drive, antiwar work, campaign, women's liberation, Third World work, opponents, membership, regional conference, and national convention. Eight specific recommendations on personnel, dates and times for the meetings (every two weeks), mobilizations, and tour schedule were also prepared by the regional office.

The T & P was read and discussed at the first regional committee meeting held in the middle of September. The meeting was built by a mailing to all comrades in the region explaining the necessity of more organizing on a regional basis and a series of phone calls to key comrades. It was well attended by representatives from every local, as well as several at-largers. The concrete proposals arrived at during the meeting involved three main aspects of regional organizing: traveling, the regional office, and regional meetings.

Traveling

Due to a shortage of personnel, it was necessary for the regional organizer, whose function was to be working mainly with already established locals and at-large areas to help develop their ability to participate in regional work and to coordinate regional activity, to also be regional traveler.

Since most locals outside Cleveland were based on the student population, which disappears over the summer, the emphasis of the regional tour was mainly

to visit areas where locals were in existence last spring in order to help them begin working together again as quickly as possible. Areas such as Yellow Springs and Oxford, which had comrades returning who had gained experience in large locals over the summer were able to re-establish themselves very quickly.

The regional organizer would attend local and executive committee meetings and see that all comrades who had been at-largers over the summer were contacted and began functioning as part of the local again. (The regional office was responsible for contacting the past organizer or a reliable comrade in each area to see that the meetings were called.)

Comrades were also asked to publicize contact meetings which the traveler could address. These were very successful near the opening of schools, because they were held before students got involved in a myriad of other activities and studies. For example, meetings in Cincinnati and Oxford drew well over eighty people each with only a minimum of publicity (a leaflet distributed during the day in Cincinnati and word of mouth elsewhere). Although the meetings did not result in any immediate recruitment, they did establish the YSA as a known political group on campus and provided a periphery of new contacts, a couple of whom subsequently joined.

Since the regional traveler was also a statewide candidate in the Ohio Socialist Workers Party campaign, he was able to gain more credibility as a speaker and many more interviews from papers and radio stations, especially the campus media. The statewide campaign was also helpful in that the publicity gained the YSA a large number of contacts throughout the state. However, the primary task outlined for the regional traveler was consolidating locals and at-large areas through internal organizational meetings and public recruitment talks. The many equal time appearances in diverse parts of the state often resulted in the regional traveler not being able to carry out his duties to the fullest extent. His entire time in some areas was spent in radio stations.

Finally, a major handicap in Ohio regional traveling this fall was the lack of a car most of the time. The disadvantages of the lack include the added expense and time of bus travel, lack of mobility upon arrival in an area, and the inability to carry sufficient literature. In order to even begin covering an area, a car is essential!

## Regional Center

Although the original projection was to assign two comrades to work in the regional office, only one was eventually so assigned. The comrade in the office as regional secretary was responsible for answering requests about the YSA, coordinating the regional tour, handling the finances, corresponding with locals, at-largers, and contacts, taking minutes at regional meetings and writing reports to the N.O.

## Regional Committee Meetings

The regional committee decided to hold meetings every other week at a central location. At least one representative from each local and all at-largers were asked to attend. A representative from the major area of work under discussion was also asked to be present, i.e., all antiwar directors attended through October 31.

A sample agenda would be:

- I. Regional Tour--regional traveler
- II. Regional Office
  - A. Proposed tour schedule
  - B. Educational Resources in the Center
  - C. Finances
- III. Statewide SWP Campaign Report
- IV. Antiwar Report
- V. Ohio-Kentucky YSA Regional Conference
  - A. Arrangements
  - B. Speakers
- VI. Local Reports (should be prepared ahead of time and include sub and fund drive reports)

Most of the meetings included a good representation of each local and several at-largers. The best assessment of regional work and the regional committee came from the Ohio-Kentucky Regional Conference held November 14-15 which was a truly "regional" conference, rather than a Cleveland-plus conference.

## Regional Conference

A discussion of several key points occurred in the regional workshop at the conference. One was the necessity of keeping a traveler on the road. It is important to have an experienced comrade who is able not only to help locals but who is able to talk personally to key contacts (including older sympathizers) and to work on recruitment.

Although regional meetings were time consuming, their importance was felt by

all. The meetings have helped cut across the feeling of isolation felt by most at-largers by giving them the opportunity to discuss and meet with comrades from various locals on a regular basis. Those from small locals have the opportunity to discuss interventions and division of labor among a small number of comrades with those in similar situations. They provided an opportunity to learn from each other's successes and failures. Everyone participating felt more a part of a national organization and developed a regional sense of direction.

The regional sense of direction and political participation regionally was manifested on October 31. Ohio was able to build a regional demonstration largely because of the participation of comrades in the development of a regional apparatus.

Due to the emphasis placed on close communication at the meetings, the regional office now regularly receives minutes from local and executive committee meetings, sample leaflets and reports on different areas of work from all locals. The workshop discussed the need for regular communication, especially around women's liberation. After the Convention, there should be a regular newsletter incorporating reports on different areas of work and interventions, especially in the women's movement.

## Finances

Finances remain a major problem. The regional meeting approved a proposal to levy a voluntary assessment of \$1.50 per member per month on each local, placing an equal burden on all locals relative to size. The proposal was subsequently approved and implemented by the various locals in the region. A couple of honoraria have been received for speakers and there are promises of \$300-\$500 already for next quarter--which shows this to be an excellent source of income if seriously approached.

The major part of the financing, however, has come from sympathizers in the Cleveland area. There is a need to approach sympathizers in the region. This must be another emphasis of the regional tour. Comrades in the region must seriously approach sympathetic professors or people with whom they work in the region and show them the YSA is an activist organization, seriously participating in building the revolutionary movement and explaining the importance of their support. The traveler should see that appointments have been made with these people and approach them to contribute on a fairly regular basis, monthly, emphasizing the importance of building the YSA on a regional basis.

Perspectives

Beginning in January, major effort must be made in several directions.

One, mini-traveling should be organized from the center to surrounding areas to reduce the area to be covered by the traveler, and enabling areas such as Kentucky to be reached. The fall's work has been successful in strengthening regional locals to the degree that some comrades in them might be able to be spared to make short trips with the traveler or the regional locals can do a limited amount of traveling on their own.

Regional meetings will continue to be held. A more flexible schedule will probably be used, however, of every two or three weeks.

Effort must be made to involve more at-largers in the regional apparatus.

Finally, a consolidated effort must be made until June to get regional comrades either to Cleveland or other centers over the summer to gain experience and attend the summer schools.

Cleveland

December 6, 1970

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