

Communist Federation of Britain (ML)

Letters: Womens Lib

Source: *Struggle*, [REDACTED] 1971

Transcription, Editing and Markup: Paul Saba and Sam Richards

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Source: *Struggle*, Number 14 January 1971

Dear Federation,

Women's Liberation workshop regrets that the Communist federation of Britain published its comment on the evidence of one newsletter produced by one group within the Workshop, and that no attempt was made to obtain further information as to our politics.

The 'Times' article referred to, in fact mention neither 'Shrew' nor the workshop thought it named some other Women's Liberation groups. Is this Marxism-Leninism in practice when small struggling organisations need all the understanding and support they can from each other ?

Yours faithfully,

Sally Reynolds

(On behalf of the Women's Liberation Workshop)

Dear Friend,

I disagree with the article on women's Liberation in the November issue. It is true that women will never be truly liberated under capitalism but that does not mean they should not organise to fight for their own interests until after the revolution has taken place.

It is inevitable that there are contradictions between men and women, and women are right to join together to examine these conflicts from their own point of view. If they make good and useful criticisms of men which the men listen to, this can help us all to unite more closely to overthrow the present rotten society.

We need to make use of all sorts of mass organisations to unite in a front against capitalism; and women, who are "half of Britain", will be a powerful section of this united front.

D. Burford (Cambridge)

LETTERS



WOMEN'S LIB. DEFENDED

The comment on Women's Liberation in the November Struggle raised a number of interesting questions on a subject that is very topical but I feel it failed to answer them.

The first point that should be settled is whether there is a need for women to fight for their liberation, whether in fact they oppressed and I'm sure the answer can only be 'Yes' on both counts.

I agree with the two quotations from Engels and Mao that no liberation is possible until society has changed, and until people are no longer exploited. I would add another from Lenin in 1919 who dealing with the equality laws passed in the Soviet Union said "Notwithstanding all the liberating laws that have been passed woman continues to be a *domestic slave*, because *petty housework* crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and to the nursery, and wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. The real *emancipation of women*, real communism, will begin only when a mass struggle (led by the proletariat which is in power) is started against this petty domestic economy, or rather when it is transformed on a mass scale into large-scale socialist economy.

Do we in practice devote sufficient attention to this question, which, theoretically, is indisputable for every Communist? Of course not. "The Woman Question" (selections from Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin New World Paperbacks.)

The above description is true of Britain today but should women wait for a socialist revolution before the fight for equality begins? One organisation in particular, the Women's Liberation Workshop, and an issue of their magazine 'Shrew'

were singled out for a 'carpeting'. I think this showed an unfortunate narrowmindedness. Neither in fact were quoted or mentioned in 'The Times' article that formed the basis, or so it seemed, of the information for the comment.

Also why the assumption that the workshop members meet during the 'carefree days when husband is out breadwinning'? In fact they meet in the evenings, although this possibility doesn't seem to have been considered.

The question was neither raised nor broached about the role of Marxist-Leninists in the struggle - presumably because the struggle itself had been written off.

As Communists we believe that for a struggle or movement to succeed in the long term it must include in the leadership people armed with theory of scientific socialism that is Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought.

The comment would have been far more useful if it had explored ways in which the C.F.B. could discuss and work with the people in the various W.L. groups towards a fuller understanding of the problem involved and the only lasting solution to these - workers revolution.

As both Engels and Lenin pointed out, the main aim is to free women from domestic slavery and we should see the fight for more creches and nurseries as an important step towards this.

It should be stressed that *two-thirds* of the women in Britain work. How many of them are expected to come home after work to cook, wash and run the house?

Equally important to remember is that the patriarchal society (male rule and line of succession) has existed since prehistoric times (Engels, Origins of the Family etc.) and the resultant attitudes of the male (dominant) and female (subservient) are deeply ingrained and must be fought against constantly.

Other aspects of W.L. such as marriage and the fight for freedom from child-bearing (contraception, abortion etc.) have not been touched on and indeed they deserve an article at least to do them justice.

In conclusion, our task must be to investigate more deeply the emergent movement for women's liberation and to develop a Marxist-Leninist platform to encourage, assist the struggle and develop the necessary long-term outlook that is the only way to complete equality and liberty-revolution.

Mike Leatt (London).