the furies

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The story of the Furies is the story of strong, powerful women, the "Angry Ones", the avengers of matricide, the protectors of women. Three Greek Goddesses, they were described (by men) as having snakes for hair, blood-shot eyes, and bats' wings; like Lesbians today, they were cursed and feared. They were born when Heaven (the male symbol) was castrated by his son at the urging of Earth (the female symbol). The blood from the wound fell on Earth and fertilized her, and the Furies were born. Their names were Alecto (Never-ceasing), Tisiphone (Avenger of Blood), and Magaera (Grudger). Once extremely powerful, they represented the supremacy of women and the primacy of mother right.

Their most famous exploit (famous because in it they lost much of their power) involved Orestes in the last episode connected with the cycle of the Trojan War. Orestes, acting on the orders of the Sun God Apollo, killed his mother Clytemnestra, because she had killed his father. Clytemnestra had killed the father because he had sacrificed their daughter Iphigenia, in order to get favorable winds so his fleet could sail to Troy. The Furies tormented Orestes: they literally drove him crazy, putting him under a spell where for days he could not eat or wash his blood-stained hands. He bit off his finger to try to appease them, but to no avail. Finally, in desperation, Orestes went before the court of Athena to plead his case.

The point at issue was whether matricide was justifiable to avenge your father's murder, or in other words, whether men or women were to dominate. Apollo defended Orestes and totally denied the importance of motherhood, claiming that women were no more than passive sperm receptacles for men, and that the father was the only parent worthy of the name. One might have thought that Athena, Goddess of Wisdom, would have condemned Orestes, but Athena was the creation of the male God, Zeus, sprung full-grown from his head, the first token woman. Athena decided for Orestes. Some mythologists say that Zeus, Athena, and Apollo had conspired from the beginning, ordering Orestes to kill his mother in order to put an end, once and for all, to the religious belief that motherhood was more divine than fatherhood. In any case, that was the result.

The Furies were, of course, furious, and threatened to lay waste the city of Athens. But Athena had a direct line to Zeus, King of the Gods; she told the Furies to accept the new male supremacist order or lose everything. Some of the Furies and their followers relented, the rest pursued Orestes until his death.



ORESTES PURSUED BY FURIES

We call our paper The FURIES because we are also angry. We are angry because we are oppressed by male supremacy. We have been fucked over all our lives by a system which is based on the domination of men over women, which defines male as good and female as only as good as the man you are with. It is a system in which heterosexuality is rigidly enforced and Lesbianism rigidly suppressed. It is a system which has further divided us by class, race, and nationality.

We are working to change this system which has kept us separate and powerless for so long. We are a collective of twelve Lesbians living and working in Washington, D.C. We are rural and urban; from the Southwest, Midwest, South and Northeast. Our ages range from 18 to 28. We are high school dropouts and Ph.D. candidates. We are lower class, middle and upper-middle class. We are white. Some of us have been Lesbians for twelve years, others for ten months. We are committed to ending all oppressions by attacking their roots--male supremacy.

We believe The FURIES will make important contributions to the growing movement to destroy sexism. As a collective, in addition to outside projects, we are spending much time building an ideology which is the basis for action. For too long, women in the Movement have fallen prey to the very male propaganda they seek to refute. They have rejected thought, building an ideology, and all intellectual activity as the realm of men, and tried to build a politics based only on feelings--the area traditionally left to women. The philosophy has been, "if it feels good, it's O.K. If not, forget it." But that is like saying that strength, which is a "male" characteristic, should be left to men, and women should embrace weakness. Most straight women, to say nothing of men, feel afraid or contemptuous of Lesbians. That fear and contempt is similar to the feelings middle class whites have towards Blacks or lower class people. These feelings are the result of our socialization and are hardly worth glorifying. This is not to say that feelings are irrelevant, only that they are derived from our experience which is limited by our class, race, etc. Furthermore, feelings are too often used to excuse inaction and inability to change.

A political movement cannot advance without systematic thought and practical organization. The haphazard, non-strategic, zig-zag tactics of the straight women's movement, the male left, and many other so-called revolutionary groups have led only to frustration and dissolution. We do not want to make those same mistakes; our ideology forms the basis for developing long-range strategies and short-term tactics, projects, and actions.

The base of our ideological thought is: Sexism is the root of all other oppressions, and Lesbian and woman oppression will not end by smashing capitalism, racism, and imperialism. Lesbianism is not a matter of sexual preference, but rather one of political choice which every woman must make if she is to become woman-identified and thereby end male supremacy. Lesbians, as outcasts from every culture but their own have the most to gain by ending race, class, and national supremacy within their own ranks. Lesbians must get out of the straight women's movement and form their own movement in order to be taken seriously, to stop straight women from oppressing us, and to force straight women to deal with their own Lesbianism. Lesbians cannot develop a common politics with women who do not accept Lesbianism as a political issue.

In this (see page 8) and following issues of The FURIES we will share our thoughts with you. We welcome your comments, letters, articles, fiction, poetry, news, graphics, and support. We want to build a movement in this country and in the world which can effectively stop the violent, sick, oppressive acts of male supremacy. We want to build a movement which makes all people free.

For the Chinese women whose feet were bound and crippled; for the Ibibos of Africa whose clitori were mutilated; for every woman who has ever been raped, physically, economically, psychologically, we take the name of the FURIES, Goddesses of Vengeance and protectors of women.

Ginny Berson

Such A Nice Girl . . .

In February 1969 I joined a Women's Liberation study group in Washington, D.C.. As we read Engels' Origin of the Family I knew I had found other women who shared my anger, frustration, and hopes. I stopped trying to organize "radical teachers" and quit my job as an elementary school teacher to work full time in the women's movement.

Between September 1969 and the spring of 1970, Women's Liberation reached its first peak in energy, participation, and media coverage. Hundreds of women came week after week to our free university course. We opened an office and were flooded with mail, phone calls, and "new" women. Our projects and actions on daycare, abortion, the pill, and the war kept us out all day and up all night. Our enthusiasm, which we called female life-force, infected the left movement in the city, including husbands and boyfriends of many W.L. women. At softball games, parties, and communal suppers, women challenged men about their chauvinism in a mock-serious way which did not threaten the growing sense of community. My husband paid our bills, washed the dishes half the time, and wanted to know everything that happened at every women's meeting.

By the spring of 1970 we had developed a descriptive analysis of the oppression of white, middle-class American wives and mothers, which most of us were. We practiced a fly-swatter, help-your-sister approach to ending the oppression of women. We were confused by guilt feelings about black, poor, and third world women. Where could we go from there?

Several women who had been leaders in W.L. got together to form a working collective. We knew we were beginning to flounder. We had ideas but no overall direction and less energy. We rejected leadership but were still leaders. We prided ourselves that Washington avoided factionalism, and tried to figure out an individual explanation every time some one dropped out of the group instead of understanding the political reasons why people did not stay. Most of all we believed "sisterhood is powerful" and that an analysis and strategy for our liberation would simply come out of our good vibes and our renewed seriousness.

In the meantime I had fallen in love with Joan and was scared shitless that I would be kicked out of Women's Liberation if anyone found out. At meetings in the W.L. office, women protested loudly whenever the media or men denounced W.L. as a "bunch of lesbians". Each time I looked at the floor and waited for them to go home so Joan and I could lock the door and make love.

Gradually we told our friends, and while we were both relating to my husband, no one was very upset. Bisexuality was seen as progressive. The real threat, and the real contradictions in the women's movement, only became clear when Joan and I ended our attempts to relate to my husband.

I had never questioned or thought of heterosexuality as an institution. Now, I began to understand that everything I had thought was "natural" was a vicious lie maintained to keep women down. I was as disoriented as my friends were threatened. I was very conscious of changing. A crucial part of my conditioning as a woman was to be passive, to let things happen to me. Now I was deciding to be different and make things happen. My friends, and their husbands, explained to each other that I had been stolen from my husband by a man-hating lesbian. Their hatred of Joan as a "real" lesbian only emphasized their need to continue seeing me as a passive, duped, non-threatening "real woman".



As I experienced the combined exhiliration of loving a woman and knowing I could change, I thought all women would come out, change and be as happy as I was. Most of my friends didn't change and come out; I gradually emerged from my "new gay" euphoria to find myself in an alien world. I thought I had been fighting pig America before, but because of my class, race, and heterosexual privilege, I had fought as a rebel, not as a reject. Everything around me was, and of course, always had been, heterosexual--men and women together, and men most important". Books, movies, people in the streets, my family, my friends, and especially Women's Liberation: Birth control, bad fucks, and abortions! I had belatedly discovered lesbian oppression. I was a queer and I was going to have to fight in order to survive myself. I had taught myself to shoplift to "practice" for the revolution, but now as a lesbian I had to lie every day to survive in the Man's world.

Much of my new oppression as a lesbian was coming from my heterosexual friends--the women I had worked with and loved in W.L.. I was a "nice" lesbian who explained to them over and over, as many times as they asked, why I was a lesbian and how I was oppressed. At first I did not push anyone to come out, even as I began to see that lesbianism is a political choice. I kept reassuring them and myself, that we could continue to work together.

I wasted energy and emotion on them too long. They had said "women should love women--men keep women apart--women together can change the world". Because they wouldn't or couldn't live up to those ideas, they are traitors to their own vision. They have been bought off by the privilege and security they get from men. They have betrayed women, especially themselves. A women"s revolution can be made by women only who give their full energy and love to each other, that is, by lesbians.

Only after I had kicked out my husband did I see how much heterosexuality had blocked my real understanding of men and male supremacy. I could let myself remember the disgust I had initially felt about fucking. I realized that every fuck is a rape even if it feels nice because every man has power and privilege over women, whether he uses it blatantly or subtly. My "liberated" husband kept me down not by violence but by making me feel guilty. He wanted me to be a strong woman as long as my main worries were about his feelings, problems, and "oppression". In a conversation, when the guilt tactic no longer worked on me, he sat in disbelief, and I saw him consider whether to fall back on the male power which he had always had in reserve. As a heterosexual I had always had to double-think, "well, my man is an exception" every time I got close to the truth, that male supremacy is the source of all oppression, and that every man benefits from it. As a lesbian I have begun to experience how it will be fundamentally different as women begin to build our own world. As long as I gave energies to my man, I had not experienced that tremendous difference.

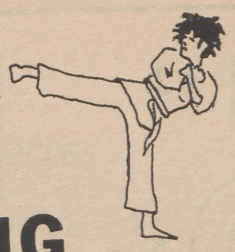
When I first came out I thought of myself as better than "old" lesbians. I believed in my "superior women's consciousness" and my "revolutionary life-style." I was afraid of bar lesbians and offended by "sexist" camp humor. In fact I looked at lesbians with all the prejudice and fear I had learned as a heterosexual. I still wanted to be "normal" and to keep my heterosexual privileges. As I saw through the perversion of heterosexuality and experienced the shit that came down from my straight friends, my identification as a lesbian--a man-hating dyke--became clear to me. I cut my hair as a symbolic cut with my past, and because I wanted to look like a "real" lesbian. The bar which had frightened me at first became my refuge too.

I gave up some of my privilege by becoming a dyke. But I am only now understanding some of the rest of my privilege and how to change it. About a year ago I joined a lesbian collective that lived together one painful week and broke up, largely because several of us had not dealt with our class privilege. I had thought that eight gay women living together would be heaven after the isolation of being the only lesbians in Women's Liberation. But I was so consumed by what I thought was "revolutionary"--communal everything, non-monogamy, dope--that I resisted any criticism about my class behavior. Class had been mentioned but not understood in the heterosexual women's movement, because we spent all our time dealing with men instead of with each other, and because the organization was started and controlled by middle class white women who couldn't or wouldn't see that our class behavior was the cause of many of the problems that so distressed us.

There are many ways in which I have not changed enough about class. Some of them I understand and just have to do something about. I know there is a lot I don't understand yet about class, and I have hardly begun to deal with race. I did change from a heterosexual to a lesbian, and from heterosexual consciousness to lesbian consciousness. I am frustrated and angry at women who cling to their privilege and refuse to make that change. Working class women are just as angry at me, for the same good reason. The revolution means change...women changing themselves...women changing the world. There is no middle ground and no individual solution. If you, or I, choose not to change, we choose against a women's revolution and against ourselves.

Sharon Deevey

WOMEN: WEAK or STRONG



Women have been kept down in many ways. One pervasive and oppressive way has been the sterotyped body that women are expected to have. A woman is supposed to be feminine or, in other words, full-breasted, soft, tiny-waisted, large hipped, long haired, or a variation on that model depending upon the style of sex object desirable that year. But, as long as that woman appears somewhat weak and helpless, in short, physically unfit, she is acceptable any year.

Women are rarely encouraged to be strong, because it is undesirable to men. When women start thinking about themselves first and develop their strengths, men hurl the "insults"; strong women are called dykes or too masculine and told that they are stepping over the accepted line of behavior. The truth that a woman is strong or is a lesbian, freaks men and totally threatens them. Men can't stand the fact that some women don't need them and don't ever depend on them.

The way women are supposed to dress also keeps them in place. High heels, clunky heels, and now platform shoes make walking harder and running almost impossible. Let alone the fact that most women's shoes are never made to last more than a year. Any kind of skirt, whether it be long, short, midi, or maxi is a drag for walking, sitting, running, or moving freely. Men know how to react to a woman who dresses correctly and are usually thrown off guard by women who do not dress in the expected manner. Women should dress comfortably, sensibly and in clothes that are not constricting.

Unfortunately most women still care about what men think and have a huge investment in the heterosexual world. These women are stopped from developing this strength in themselves and kept from knowing what it means to love or be in touch with their own body or another woman's body; they fear losing what little social and economic status women have and cannot take men's disapproval of them.

To begin to be strong and care about your physical being is to reject the male sterotype for women and the idea that women are supposed to look a certain way, and to begin to take yourself seriously. If you are political about your situation-meaning that you will take control of your life, make changes in yourself and in others, and ultimately, in the system that keeps you down.

To be strong is to feel great, to have loads of energy, to have some idea what it means to be in control of your life. To be strong is to know you can fight back. To be strong in mind and body is to love yourself and have everybody be able to see that love reflected in your body. It's time we understood what it means to have a strong body, a body that you're in communication with - a body that you care about in a healthy way.

Since I started to care more about my body and began to take karate, my body has changed in many ways. One of the most dramatic has been that my waist has gotten much larger. To have a strong torso, it is essential to develop your waist muscles and stomach muscles. Men usually have straight waists and women are to have slim waists - it keeps us weak. To be physically



weak makes intimidation easier, both physical and psychological.

Another visible change has been my breasts. Everywoman knows that the second your breasts start to develop a bra is slapped on you. Sometimes girls (or their mothers) are so anxious to wear a bra that they start even before their breasts are developed. By wearing a bra your breast muscles are never allowed to develop and your breasts remain weak and soft -- just the way men like them. Fuck that shit! Strong, firm breasts are wonderful. If you stop wearing a bra and start working out, your breast muscles will hurt at first, but after awhile the muscles will develop. Even if your breast muscles have been stretched out by childbirth or if you have large breasts, it is possible to develop them to their particular capicity.

In the past four months, my arms, shoulders and legs have all gotten visible muscles. It is wonderful to see and feel my physical strength take shape. Strong arms and legs are essential for fighting, for good punches and kicks. Strong legs are also necessary for running, if you're not quite at the stage of handling seven men with one blow!

I've also cut my hair. I first cut my hair as a symbolic cut with my past and the male heterosexual world when I became a lesbian. I have also found that short hair is a lot less burdensome when I work out and a lot easier to take care of. Long hair gets in the way of many physical activities and is a general pain. Long hair on women now seems like a calculated put down. At one point in history women were forced to have long hair as a punishment.

I know that since I've gotten stronger I have much more confidence in myself. I'm taking a healthy interest in my body and how physically fit I am and my body is beginning to reflect what I think of myself.

Other women in touch with their bodies and developing their strengths are such a turn on! Such women develop their bodies for themselves, not according to a male sex standard that is unhealthy. Consciously or unconsciously they understand that a strong body is a reflection of what they think about themselves and how they love themselves.

Everywoman, even if she has certain physical limitations, should begin to work for a healthy physical state, getting in touch with her own and other women's bodies.

We have to begin to fight our oppression on many levels. We have a lot to change and we need to be strong to do it.

Traditionally women's arms have been one of our weakest points. I have listed here twelve exercises for strengthening them, to be done with 3 lb. hand dumbells. These exercises should be done everyday, increasing the number of each as your arms get stronger.

Ideally you should work out at least three times a week, doing exercise for your whole body. A workout should make you sweat and use all the parts of your body. If you are not able to take karate or disciplined enough to work out on your own, I suggest you start building up parts of your body and as time goes on maybe you will become inspired to jog a mile everyday, swim laps, ride your bike to work, or take karate. I have found karate to be most satisfactory for me. I know that karate may not be for everyone, but some sort of exercise is and every woman should find what suits her best and then keep at it.

For exercise 1-10, stand with your feet shoulder width apart and feet pointing straight ahead. As soon as your arms get stronger, increase each exercise to 20x each, then 25x each, on up to 50x each.

1. wrist twist, arms at side, twist wrists simultaneously, 15x

2. arms at side, fist facing forward, lift just your forearms up and down, alternating, 15x



3. arms at side, fist facing backwards, lift forearms as in #2, 15x

4. arms straight above shoulders, bring hand down to shoulder, alternating, 15x each arm

5. arms straight out to side shoulder height, wrist facing sky, bring hand to shoulder, alternate, 15x each arm

6. arms at side, going forward, raise arm up to shoulder height, alternate 15x each arm

7. arms at side, bring hand to underarm, alternate, 15x each arm

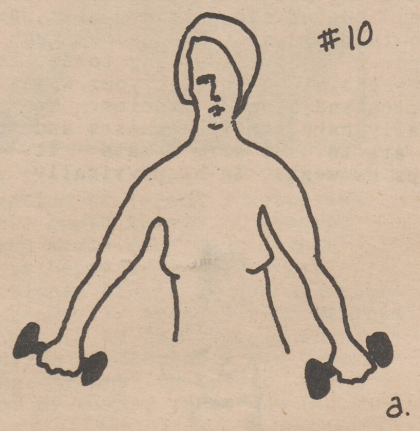
8. arms at side, going sideways, bring arm (straight arm) up to shoulder height, alternate 15x each arm

9. arms straight out sideways shoulder height, fist facing forward, bring hand to shoulder, alternate, 15x each arm

10. arms at side, simultaneously, bend right arm at elbow and left arm at elbow, bring right arm parallel to stomach and left parallel to back, alternating between front and back, 15x each

11. squat, rest wrists on knees, fist facing floor, raise wrist as high as you can, 15x

12. squat, rest wrists on knees, palms facing sky, raise wrists as high as you can - don't take wrist off knee. 15x







Lee Schwing

THE DENTIST

All the way to the dentist she thought of Jennifer. Of how it got better all the time, every night. Of how incredible it felt to love someone like that. To want them so much that her body ached at knowing that it would be hours before they would be together again. Last night had been the best, and her insides stirred and trembled at th thought of their passion--hands lips legs tongue on ears neck breasts cunt--"I am loving you". Morning coming and not wanting to get out of bed ever--to hold each other, talk, make love. Thinking with sadness now, instead of her usual anger and scorn, that all women were not Lesbians, that all women did not know, would not let themselves know, feel, love another woman--themselves. And then to Jennifer again--Jennifer of blue light eyes and laugh; Jennifer of "I am loving you", never said to her like that before.

The parking lot at the clinic was half empty. The day was gray and the ground was covered with puddles. The clinic was equally gray, the magazines in the waiting room at least six months old, one of the small prices one pays for not going to a private dentist. She sat with an old Life open on her lap, thinking of Jennifer. Her name was called and she moved quickly to the office, eager to get it over with. The dentist was surprised to see a white woman enter, and was ashamed for her. As he poked around her mouth he poked around her life: "Are you a stu-- dent?" "Why aren't you married?" "Ah, but you do have a boyfriend?" A job? A family? A life? She answered in grunts, submerging her desire to tell him to shut up, can you just fix my teeth, can't you just be a dentist instead of a man? Of course not. She knew.

The nurse filled the needle. Her mouth wide open, his fingers stretching it more, he poised over her and said, "If you come to my private office, I can give you much better treatment." "I can't afford it." "It could be free." The needle went into her gum but she did not feel it. Screaming, swearing, glass smashing, heavy feet stomping his face in, knees flying to his prick, kicking kicking over and over until there was nothing left but a useless sagging mass of flesh. A knife in his guts tearing them out while he writhed on the floor in total agony and pain unimagined before. He pulled out the needle. "No thank you," she said.

He drilled and filled for the next twenty minutes, chatting all the while about his private practice, the great sacrifice he made by working at the clinic twice a week, how if any conflict arose of course his private patients came first--"A man has to make a living, doesn't he?" He only filled two-- there were two more to do next week --she would have to come back. He handed her his card as she got up to leave. "Come see me some time." "Right, I will." He walked out of the office into the waiting room. "Next?"

All the way home she tried to think of Jennifer and couldn't.



Ginny Berson

ROXANNE DUNBAR:

how a female heterosexual serves the interests of male supremacy

The following article is a comment on Roxanne Dunbar's latest work, "The Movement and the Working Class."

I hesitate to write this response to Roxanne Dunbar's latest article because it is so critical. There are women and men who will lick their lips at the prospect of one woman raised in the working class criticizing another. Therefore, let me state that this article is a political criticism, not a personal attack. Criticism is a form of respect because you take the individual seriously enough to reply to her ideas.

"The Movement and the Working Class" is both helpful and harmful. It takes a sharp look at the various groups existent in the U.S. The article does us all a service by analyzing how the different movements ignore class or sell working class people down the river. It is unfair to summarize the article, you owe it to yourself to read it. The address is : Roxanne Dunbar, Box 3983, Lafayette, Louisiana 70501. Send in and ask for the article by name. The point here is to single out areas where Roxanne Dunbar has overlooked something or made a disastrous mistake.

The most glaring factual error in the article is where the author includes the Lesbian movement under the banner of the New Left and then goes on to vilify that struggle as being totally removed from the class struggle. She represents Lesbians as promoting bourgeois ideology. Nothing could be farther from fact.

"The young people who make up the base of the New Left are organized by 'constituencies.' There is 'Gay Liberation' and 'Women's Liberation' which have merged at points into a more virulent, all-female form called 'Radical Lesbians'." In this quote from her article, Roxanne simply puts us all in the same pot and throws it out the window. There is no explanation, just a slam in the word "virulent." The fact is that the Lesbian struggle has been operating in this country since the '50's when a group of Lesbians formed Daughters of Bilitis. The majority of those women were not working class but they did pull themselves together at a dangerous time---in the middle of the McCarthy era when homosexuality was as great a sin as communism. The Lesbian movement is older than the New Left and has little to do with fashionable radicalism among white, middle class youth.

A second push toward Lesbian organizing came through oppression suffered by young Lesbians from all classes in the Women's Liberation Movement and the Gay Liberation Movement---the push was to get out of the boat. Some of these women, particularly the ones of middle class origin, are more tainted with youth culture rhetoric than the older DOB women or the Lesbians who came out on their own, independent of political movements.

Roxanne is one of the women who turned Lesbians away from the Women's Liberation Movement by her insistence that Lesbianism was a bedroom issue. This is a variation the same argument that men use against women when women fight for their own liberation. It's the old "your oppression isn't all that important" line. As men deal with women only as sexual beings so Roxanne locks Lesbians in the bedroom.

Roxanne goes on to put us down by saying,"--nothing could be further removed from the class struggle than the question of homosexuality as a freedom, even among homosexuals in the working class. Nothing could be further removed from the consciousness of a working woman with children than the 'freedom' to be a Lesbian." As a woman born and raised in the working class who is a Lesbian living with other working class Lesbians (and some from the middle class) I know this is not true. Except for two of us, all the working class women are new Lesbians and since becoming Lesbians have doubled their work output; they are also happier. They are free from having their energies drained by struggles with individual men or with men in groups. Now they pool their energies with other women and have that much more time for political work. Materially we have pooled our resources and don't have to spend as much time working outside at straight jobs. When is it counter to class struggle to free people more to work in the fight to end class oppression, race oppression, sex oppression?

Roxanne attempts to smash Lesbianism by treating it as a personal luxary rather than dealing with it as a political ideology. This sweeping us under the rug as some great apolitical, individualistic freedom is classic heterosexual blindness. Her thesis that Lesbianism is a simple personal choice is a cover to avoid recognizing the political implication of Lesbianism: Lesbianism is the greatest threat to male supremacy that exists. As for this simple choice, this unimportant freedom---which frees women's bodies, heads, time and energies---it is also the freedom to get fired from jobs, betrayed by straight women in the movement and spit at by one's own race and class. Why? Because if all women were Lesbians male supremacy would have the impossible task of maintaining itself in a vacuum. Men know what a threat we are to their power so they heap the worst abuse upon the Lesbian in order to keep women from becoming Lesbians. They also know that when their male supremacist order topples so will race and class differences since it is not in our self interest to foster divisions based on race and class. Male supremacists foster those divisions, especially the white, rich variety, because it keeps people fragmented and preserves their power. If people are divided from one another they will not unite against the common oppressor, the white, rich capitalist male. This ruling class male encourages working class men of all races to participate in his system by giving those men the power of sexism. Depending on their usefulness to his plans he can also bestow race and class privilege on men. In this way he can turn those men against other men below them who see the truth and organize to end the white, rich man's rule. He can also turn all men, not just segments of the male population, against all women who would organize to end sexist oppression---the privilege all men share: they control the women in their sub-group. The big man preys on the other men's fears of losing control over their women to keep them from seeing that any attack on him, The Big Man, weakens his power. So by oppressing women, particularly Lesbians since they fight sexism the hardest, working class males are cutting their own throats. The Big Man controls their jobs, housing and worse, the inside of their heads for he has shaped their concept of masculinity, he has forced them to identify with him both emotionally and economically. Even the man farthest away from The Big Man, the working class Black male, identifies with The Man's phallic imperialism. Roxanne Dunbar's smothering of the politics of working class Lesbians keeps all men, especially working class men, from understanding how sexism most benefits the ruling class male. It keeps the working class man from changing those parts of his behavior that oppress Lesbians and women. No solid alliance can be built between working class women and men until he changes his oppressive actions toward women. The only people who effectively challenge those oppressive actions are Lesbians, and Roxanne, a woman, legitimizes male power by writing off Lesbians. So once again we have political struggle in the hands of men. This time it is the class struggle with a few token women to mask male oppressiveness.

Does this mean that working class Lesbians are intent upon destroying working class men and weakening the class struggle? No, it does not. It means that working class Lesbians are not going to work for an ideology, practical plan or people who oppress us. Men have not purged themselves of supremacist behavior regardless of class/race background. To encourage women to ally with them now perpetuates our oppression. How will men, especially working class men, learn to shed sexism? If we leave them flat, that's how. As long as there is a woman to wipe their noses, cushion reality for them, serve them, men aren't going to change. When women remove themselves from the dominion of men the men will have a hard time hanging onto sexist behavior and ideas. The male concept of self depends on the subservience and debasement of women. Male power depends on female acceptance of it. If you don't accept their power then they don't have any. Only the rich, white capitalist will have power and that will be economic---and that too, can be crushed.

Also, when we are gone who will be men's escape valves, shit-

Roxanne Dunbar continued

workers, peacemakers? Without our necks to stand on for a better view the men will be forced to look at themselves and change. The serious ones will join women in the struggle. against this society/state international sore.

This same process holds for straight women. As long as they do male supremacy's dirty work and keep Lesbians down, Lesbians must leave the straight women to wallow in a cesspool of their own making. Sexism is not limited to men and must be fought wherever it is found.

By keeping straight women from seeing that Lesbianism is political, that their individual lives and the relationships in it are political, Roxanne allows straight women to continue to support individual men as well as collective male supremacy. The political Lesbian is committed to the destruction of male supremacy, therefore the Lesbian is serious about a women's movement.

Roxanne gives straight women an excuse for not building a strong women's movement to destroy male supremacy. You can't build a women's movement if women are tied to their oppressors---individually and ideologically. Holding onto male values and privileges granted to women for heterosexuality (which insures that each man will have his slave) subverts the women's movement. You cannot build a women's movement if you don't commit yourselves to women, totally. Heterosexual women are still committed to men. Roxanne guarantees that they will stay that way.

Lesbians contain the only hope for women to realize their own strength, their political power. This explains why working class Lesbians prefer to work with Lesbians in the Lesbian movement (a mixed class movement to smash male supremacy) rather than work with heterosexual working class women in a movement devoted solely to class oppression. Why work with someone who ties you to your oppressor when you have just freed yourself from him on a one-to-one level? Why work in a movement that drains your energies fighting the supremacist attitudes of your supposed working class brothers---who will also try to screw you? Why work with someone who derides your oppression or who actively surpresses you with another brand of Marxist intellectualism?

We'll be damned if we'll work with people who oppress us, no matter what class they come from. Roxanne herself says, "for the working class and the poor, the loss of one of its number from the struggle is a great loss--." Yet she insists on insuring that working class Lesbians defect from her appointed class struggle.

By cutting down Lesbians without ever dealing with our politics, by lumping us with the New Left and middle class concerns, Roxanne safely avoids the real crises that would be caused by a meeting of working class women and men. The crisis being that the men would be forced to stop oppressing the women and both would be forced to stop oppressing the Lesbian.

Like many women faced with the choice of renouncing their heterosexual privilege and fighting sexism/racism/classism, Roxanne has chosen to retreat into class struggle, heterosexual to the core. This pattern is repeated wherever Lesbians have asserted themselves. To become a Lesbian is to renounce all sexist privileges, privileges which keep you apart from other women. Men refuse to give privileges to women who reject their control. Lesbians reject male control and lose heterosexual securities. But they gain through that loss---women.



By turning your back on sexist struggle and embracing class as the only road to liberation, straight women allow men to retain their power over women. They also have the added advantage of being taken seriously as class struggle has a respectable history, after all, it includes men. The battle against sexism is, to date, exclusively a women's fight.

You get points from men for joining a heterosexual class struggle and you get bonus points for attacking Lesbians who are the people attacking sexism. Once again, men have gotten women to do their dirty work for them. Having the straight women attack the Lesbians, their hands remain clean.

Another debilitating feature of the class struggle as it now exists is that it allows middle class people to "join" it. These people reared in middle class homes do not have to give up their privileges or their behavioral patterns cemented in childhood, patterns that are destructive to people reared in working class homes. Often these middle class joiners do not even have to share their material resources with the working class people. All too often all they have to do is accept the intellectual premises of class struggle and go on to organize others for the fight. How revolutionary.

The world has witnessed a number of class revolutions led by Marxist intellectuals who originated in the middle class. In all those countries women still do not share political power commensurate with their number. Their economic situation is improved but that hardly alters the realities of political power: Women have none. In Cuba for all its miracles, sexism is so fierce that homosexuals are "rehabilitated." To tell a woman, especially a working class Lesbian, to repeat the class struggle as defined by men in this country, is to tell her to forget her own oppression, tow the class line, to once more, like a good woman, give herself over to politics as constructed by men.

Sexism is rampant under socialism. Having seen what happens repeatedly in class revolutions to women it is clear that we must try another way.

Does this mean we junk class struggle? As a person who grew up in the working classes I can hardly endorse that. I believe the class and race struggle is and must be part of the fight against sexism. This is an absolute truth for Lesbians. It is not in our self-interest to promote oppression based on class and race. We are despised by all sects, to continue among ourselves destructive divisions of class/race invented by rich, white capitalist men is to commit political suicide. A Lesbian who comes out loses many of her class/race privileges although she doesn't necessarily lose her behavioral patterns that reek of those disgusting privileges. No one wants their Lesbians---not the rich, not the poor, not the Black, not the White not Roxanne Dunbar. We need each other. We cannot weaken ourselves by hurting each other with left over daggers from white, rich, capitalist male America. Lesbians of all people, have the greatest stake in destroying class and racial oppression.

You can't destroy class without destroying capitalism. A Lesbian movement is necessarily socialist. A socialist movement is not necessarily non-sexist. Therein lies the great gap between Roxanne Dunbar and myself.

Roxanne misses this precisely because she is not a Lesbian. No straight woman knows what a Lesbian's life is like and she never will as long as she remains straight. She has not suffered the ultimate sexist oppression. The Lesbian has. She has not experienced Lesbian strength/love. The Lesbian has. Roxanne thinks that Lesbian communities are a new Left hoax. We know they are the tiny space of freedom we have created in the male world. We know they are the beginning of the end for male supremacy and its hideous younger brothers, racial oppression and class oppression.

A word of common sense. When I speak of Lesbians and Lesbian communities, I am not speaking about all Lesbians everywhere. I am speaking about those women who have developed a political ideology, who have committed themselves to the destruction of male supremacy et. al., who have committed themselves to women, who want to build a new world. I know full well there are women who physically love other women who could sell us out as quickly as any man or straight woman. Some of them are racist, class snobs and outright reactionaries. By the same token, all working class people are not committed to the destruction of capitalism. There are plenty of racists and facists among the workers. The essential point is that workers carry the greatest threat to capitalism if organized just as Lesbians carry the greatest threat to male supremacy if organized.

Roxanne envisions organizing by breaking through the brainwash of ruling class ideology in the workers. She is absolutely right. But she had better break through the brainwash of male supremacist ideology in her own head or she and other women like her will find themselves deeply betrayed by their own analysis.

Rita Mae Brown

EDWARD THE DYKE

and other poems



A History of Lesbianism

How they came into the world,
the women-loving-women
came in three by three
and four by four
the women-loving-women
came in ten by ten
and ten by ten again
until there were more
than you could count

they took care of each other
the best they knew how
and of each other's children,
if they had any.

How they lived in the world,
the women-loving-women
learned as much as they were allowed
and walked and wore their clothes
the way they liked
whenever they could. They did whatever
they knew to be happy or free
and worked and worked and worked.
The women-loving-women
in America were called dykes
and some liked it
and some did not.

they made love to each other
the best they knew how
and for the best reasons.

How they went out of the world,
the women-loving-women
went out one by one
having withstood greater and lesser
trials, and much hatred
from other people, they went out
one by one, each having tried
in her own way to overthrow
the rule of men over women.
they tried it one by one
and hundred by hundred,
until each came in her own way
to the end of her life
and died.

The subject of lesbianism
is very ordinary; it's the question
of male domination that makes everybody
angry.

I'm not a girl
I'm a hatchet
I'm not a hole
I'm a whole mountain
I'm not a fool
I'm a survivor
I'm not a pearl
I'm the Atlantic Ocean
I'm not a good lay
I'm a straight razor
look at me as if you had never seen a woman before
I have red, red hands and much bitterness

V. Detroit Annie, hitchhiking

Her words pour out as if her throat were a broken
artery and her mind were cut-glass, carelessly handled.
You imagine her in a huge velvet hat with great
dangling black feathers,
but she shaves her head instead
and goes for three-day midnight walks.
Sometimes she goes down to the dock and dances
off the end of it, simply to prove her belief
that people who cannot walk on water
are phonies, or dead.
When she is cruel, she is very, very
cool and when she is kind she is lavish.
Fishermen think perhaps she's a fish, but they're all
fools. She figured out that the only way
to keep from being frozen was to
stay in motion, and long ago converted
most of her flesh into liquid. Now when she
smells danger, she spills herself all over,
like gasoline, and lights it.
She leaves the taste of salt and iron
under your tongue, but you don't mind.
The common woman is as common
as the reddest wine.

Edward the Dyke is a book of poems by Judy Grahn and drawings by Wendy Cadden, Brenda Crider and Gail Hodgins. The four of them and other lesbians in the San Francisco Bay Area (The Women's Press Collective) designed and printed the book themselves. So it's not a normal stodgy book of poetry, but a beautiful book of beige and wine colored pages which reflect the poems. The wonderful sky-blue cover is graced by the above drawing.

Judy Grahn's poems are a delight to read. She is one of the few lesbian poets to celebrate the strength and survival capacity of women. No self-pity or whining here. The language is direct and simple; you don't have to go to the dictionary to figure out the images. You can tell that a lot of time and work has gone into turning her ideas, experiences and emotions into powerful and beautiful verse.

Edward the Dyke sells for $1.25 and can be ordered from 1018 Valencia St., San Francisco, California. If you would like to have bulk copies to sell at meetings, consciousness raising groups and the bar, the press would be delighted to send them to you. Bulk copies are $1.00 each, you keep $.25.

Co[illegible]

in the place where
her breasts come together
two thumbs' width of
channel ride my
eyes to anchor
hands to angle
in the place where
her legs come together
I said 'you smell like the
ocean' and lay down my tongue
beside the dark tooth edge
of sleeping
'swim' she told me and I
did, I did

LESBIANS IN REVOLT



Photo by JEB

The development of Lesbian-feminist politics as the basis for the liberation of women is our top priority; this article outlines our present ideas. In our society which defines all people and institutions for the benefit of the rich, white male, the Lesbian is in revolt. In revolt because she defines herself in terms of women and rejects the male definitions of how she should feel, act, look, and live. To be a Lesbian is to love oneself, woman, in a culture that denegrates and despises women. The Lesbian rejects male sexual/political domination; she defies his world, his social organization, his ideology, and his definition of her as inferior. Lesbianis puts women first while the society declares the male supreme. Lesbianism threatens male supremacy at its core. When politically conscious and organized, it is central to destroying our sexist, racist, capitalist, imperialist system.

LESBIANISM IS A POLITICAL CHOICE

Male society defines Lesbianism as a sexual act, which reflects men' limited view of women: they think of us only in terms of sex. They also say Lesbians are not real women, so a real woman is one who gets fucked by men. We say that a Lesbian is a woman whose sense of self and energies, including sexual energies, center around women--she is woman identified. The woman-identified-woman commits herself to other women for political, emotional, physical, and economic support. Women are important to her. She is important to herself. Our society demands that commitment from women be reserved for men.

The Lesbian, woman-identified-woman, commits herself to women not only as an alternative to oppressive male/female relationships but primarily because she loves women. Whether consciously or not, by her actions, the Lesbian has recognized that giving support and love to men over women perpetuates the system that oppresses her. If women do not make a commitment to each other, which includes sexual love, we deny ourselves the love and value traditionally given to men. We accept our second class status. When women do give primary energies to other women, then it is possible to concentrate fully on building a movement for our liberation

Woman-identified Lesbianism is, then, more than a sexual preference, it is a political choice. It is political because relationships between men and women are essentially political, they involve power and dominance. Since the Lesbian actively rejects that relationship and chooses women, she defies the established political system.

LESBIANISM, BY ITSELF, IS NOT ENOUGH

Of course, not all Lesbians are consciously woman-identified, nor are all committed to finding common solutions to the oppression they suffer as women and Lesbians. Being a Lesbian is part of challenging male supremacy, but not the end. For the Lesbian or heterosexual woman, there is no individual solution to oppression.

The Lesbian may think that she is free since she escapes the personal oppression of the individual male/female relationship. But to the society she is still a woman, or worse, a visible Lesbian. On the street, at the job, in the schools, she is treated as an inferior and is at the mercy of men's power and whims. (I've never heard of a rapist who stopped because his victim was a Lesbian.) This society hates women who love women, and so, the Lesbian, who escapes male dominance in her private home, receives it doubly at the hands of male society; she is harrassed, outcast, and shuttled to the bottom. Lesbians must become feminists and fight against woman oppression, just as feminists must become Lesbians if they hope to end male supremacy.

U.S. society encourages individual solutions, apolitical attitudes, and reformism to keep us from political revolt and out of power. Men who rule, and male leftists who seek to rule, try to depoliticize sex and the relations between men and women in order to prevent us from acting to end our oppression and challenging their power. As the question of homosexuality has become public, reformists define it as a private question of who you sleep with in order to sidetrack our understanding of the politics of sex. For the Lesbian-feminist, it is not private; it is a political matter of oppression, domination, and power. Reformists offer solutions which make no basic changes in the system that oppresses us, solutions which keep power in the hands of the oppressor. The only way oppressed people end their oppression is by seizing power: People whose rule depends on the subordination of others do not voluntarily stop oppressing others. Our subordination is the basis of male power.

SEXISM IS THE ROOT OF ALL OPPRESSION

The first division of labor, in pre-history, was based on sex: men hunted, women built the villages, took care of children, and farmed. Women collectively controlled the land, language, culture, and the communities. Men were able to conquer women with the weapons that they developed for hunting when it became clear that women were leading a more stable, peaceful, and desirable existence. We do not know exactly how this conquest took place, but it is clear that the original imperialism was male over female: the male claiming the female body and her service as his territory (or property).

Having secured the domination of women, men continued this pattern of suppressing people, now on the basis of tribe, race, and class. Although there have been numerous battles over class, race, and nation during the past 3000 years, none has brought the liberation of women. While these other forms of oppression must be ended, there is no reason to believe that our liberation will come with the smashing of capitalism, racism, or imperialism today. Women will be free only when we concentrate on fighting male supremacy.

Our war against male supremacy does, however, involve attacking the later day dominations based on class, race, and nation. As Lesbians who are outcasts from every group, it would be suicidal to perpetuate these man-made divisions among ourselves. We have no heterosexual privileges, and when we publically assert our Lesbianism, those of us who had them lose many of our class and race privileges. Most of our privileges as women are granted to us by our relationships to men(fathers, husbands, boyfriends) whom we now reject. This does not mean that there is no racism or class chauvinism within us, but we must destroy these divisive remnants



Photo by S. Myers

Male Supremacy Quakes and Quivers

of privileged behavior among ourselves as the first step toward their destruction in the society. Race, class, and national oppressions come from men, serve ruling class white men's interests, and have no place in a woman-identified revolution.

LESBIANISM IS THE BASIC THREAT TO MALE SUPREMACY

Lesbianism is a threat to the ideological, political, personal, and economic basis of male supremacy. The Lesbian threatens the ideology of male supremacy by destroying the lie about female inferiority, weakness, passivity, and by denying women's 'innate' need for men. Lesbians literally do not need men (even for procreation if the science of cloning is developed).

The Lesbian's independence and refusal to support one man undermines the personal power that men exercise over women. Our rejection of heterosexual sex challenges male domination in its most individual and common form. We offer all women something better than submission to personal oppression. We offer the beginning of the end of collective and individual male supremacy. Since men of all races and classes depend on female support and submission for practical tasks and feeling superior, our refusal to submit will force some to examine their sexist behavior, to break down their own destructive privileges over other humans, and to fight against those privileges in other men. They will have to build new selves that do not depend on oppressing women and learn to live in social structures that do not give them power over anyone.

Heterosexuality separates women from each other; it makes women define themselves through men; it forces women to compete against each other for men and the privilege which comes through men and their social standing. Heterosexual society offers women a few privileges as compensations if they give up their freedom: for example, mothers are respected and 'honored', wives or lovers are socially accepted and given some economic and emotional security, a woman gets physical protection on the street when she stays with her man, etc. The privileges give heterosexual women a personal and political stake in maintaining the status quo.

The Lesbian receives none of these heterosexual privileges or compensations since she does not accept the male demands on her. She has little vested interest in maintaining the present political system since all of its institutions--church,state, media, health, schools--work to keep her down. If she understands her oppression, she has nothing to gain by supporting white rich male America and much to gain from fighting to change it. She is less prone to accept reformist solutions to women's oppression.

Economics is a crucial part of woman oppression, but our analysis of the relationship between capitalism and sexism is not complete. We know that Marxist economic theory does not sufficiently consider the role of women or Lesbians, and we are presently working on this area.

However, as a beginning, some of the ways that Lesbians threaten the economic system are clear: In this country, women work for men in order to survive, on the job and in the home. The Lesbian rejects this division of labor at its roots; she refuses to be a man's property, to submit to the unpaid labor system of housework and childcare. She rejects the nuclear family as the basic unit of production and consumption in capitalist society.

The Lesbian is also a threat on the job because she is not the passive/part-time woman worker that capitalism counts on to do boring work and be part of a surplus labor pool. Her identity and economic support do not come through men, so her job is crucial and she cares about job conditions, wages, promotion, and status. Capitalism cannot absorb large numbers of women demanding stable employment, decent salaries, and refusing to accept their traditional job exploitation. We do not understand yet the total effect that this increased job dissatisfaction will have. It is, however, clear that as women become more intent upon taking control of their lives, they will seek more control over their jobs, thus increasing the strains on capitalism and enhancing the power of women to change the economic system.

LESBIANS MUST FORM OUR OWN MOVEMENT TO FIGHT MALE SUPREMACY

Feminist-lesbianism, as the most basic threat to male supremacy, picks up part of the Women's Liberation analysis of sexism and gives it force and direction. Women's Liberation lacks direction now because it has failed to understand the importance of heterosexuality in maintaining male supremacy and because it has failed to face class and race as real differences in women's behavior and political needs. As long as straight women see Lesbianism as a bedroom issue, they hold back the development of politics and strategies which would put an end to male supremacy and they give men an excuse for not dealing with their sexism.

Being a Lesbian means ending



Photo by JEB

your identification with, allegiance to, dependence on, and support of heterosexuality. It means ending your personal stake in the male world so that you join women, individually and collectively, in the struggle to end your oppression. Lesbianism is the key to liberation and only women who cut their ties to male privilege can be trusted to remain serious in the struggle against male dominance. Those who remain tied to men, individually or in political theory, cannot always put women first. It is not that heterosexual women are evil or do not care about their sisters. It is because the very essense, definition, and nature of heterosexuality is men first. Every woman has experienced that desolation when her sister puts her man first in the final crunch: heterosexuality demands that she do so. As long as women still benefit from heterosexuality, receive its privileges and security, they will at some point have to betray their sisters, especially Lesbian sisters who do not recieve those benefits.

Women in women's liberation have understood the importance of having meetings and other events for women only. It has been clear that dealing with men divides us and saps our energies and that it is not the job of the oppressed to explain our oppression to the oppressor. Women also have seen that collectively, men will not deal with their sexism until they are forced to do do. Yet, many of these same women continue to have primary relationships with men individually and do not understand why Lesbians find this oppressive. Lesbians cannot grow politically or personally in a situation which denies the basis of our politics: that Lesbianism is political, that heterosexuality is crucial to maintaining male supremacy.

Lesbians must form our own political movement in order to grow. Changes which will have more than token effects on our lives will be led by woman-identified Lesbians who understand the nature of our oppression and are therefore in a position to end it.

Charlotte Bunch

For the Furies collective



Photo by JEB

QUEEN CHRISTINA

Lesbian Ruler of Sweden

Garbo is superb striding in male attire in the movie, "Queen Christina, Ruler of Sweden." But male Hollywood could not let her portray that strong woman lesbian image in its entirety and my heart fell when she went to bed with John Gilbert. In reality, the Christina of the 1600's did not go to bed with dashing Spaniards but with her lady-in-waiting.

Christina was born in 1626 and her voice was so strident that the nurses at the birth reported to the king that he had a son. Gustavus was not dismayed when he learned that the baby was a daughter but declared that since he had welcomed the child into the world as a son, then a son she would remain to him. He ordered that she be treated as his son and heir; Christina was educated entirely as though she had been a boy, which meant physical training and the sciences instead of needlework.

Gustavus Aldolphus was killed in battle in 1632. Christina became ruler of Sweden at the age of six. She was sitting in Council at 17 and already at odds politically wirh the Chancellor, Alex Oxenstierna. And at this time, her guardians started pestering her about marriage. It increasingly distressed her and though she did not understand why, her active av aversion to marriage had begun when she first became attached to Countess Ebba Sparre, her lady-in-waiting. Most of Christina's biographers will agree that her refusal to marry was the decisive factor in her life; and they agree that had she married, she wouldn't have later left her throne. But less than a handful discuss the real reason why she refused to marry even though many documents and her own letters clearly show that she was a lesbian. There seems to be no doubt that Christina had a love relationship with Ebba Sparre. For instance an excerpt from a letter Christina wrote to Ebba:

> "I have seen the most beautiful and the most charming members of our sex, I can claim with even greater assurance that I have seen no woman who can compete with you, for you are charming above them all. And now tell me whether there is any comfort for an eternal separation. But even if I must face the fact that I may never see you again, I am equally sure that I shall always love you."

It is clear that Christina knew that she loved women and so did not want to marry, although she was very discreet. It seems that Christina did not consider her lesbianism abnormal, but she felt that she had to contemplate a future for her country--an heir or successor. Since she would not marry and produce an heir she decided as early as 18 that she must abdicate. She frankly admitted that she "felt such a repulsion towards the marital state that she would rather choose death than a man." She went further on to state that she would"never submit to being treated the way a peasant treats his field when planting seeds."



Greta Garbo playing Queen Christina

After her coronation, Christina became increasingly more strong and clear. She became her own master. And the main person in the court opposing her was Oxenenstierna. He vigorously opposed her efforts to make peace with Sweden's enemies. Oxenstierna considered the war a sacred heritage from Gustavus Aldolphus. He wanted peace only if it would bring immeasurable benefits to Sweden. Little did it matter to him that an estimated three-fourths of Germany's populace was being slaughtered. The clergy did not want peace hoping that the war would somehow make Protestanism the greatest force in Europe. And neither did the generals and high officials want peace for it would destroy their careers. Christina wanted a speedy peace. She was alone, except for perhaps the suffering people, but she remained firm. Christina was the only leader in her country who saw that Sweden had sought a position in Europe which it could not sustain forever, as a country of small resources. Peace finally came in 1648 with increasing friction between Christina and Oxenstierna, Christina was greatly pleased but Oxenstierna and his party were dissatisfied at not having their outrageous demands met.

In that same year the court persisted in urging Christina to marry. Charles Gustavus, her cousin was now the most popular candidate. Christina mentioned to him in a private interview that she might recommend him to the court as her heir. But the idea of becoming her successor instead of her husband did not appeal to Charles. His ego was sorely hurt. He pouted and when he next saw her stated that "if she would not marry him, he would ask her permission to leave Sweden forever." At this Christina lost her patience and told him to "stop posing and not talk like a hero in some drama." But she realized that he would make the best successor and be the most acceptable to the Estates and Council.

Although the officials of the state wanted to settle the country's future as well as Christina (they did not want an unmarried queen as their ruler), they delayed the abdication to make it seem that they did not want their "God-given" ruler to leave them. It took Christina months to get the Council to agree that she could present Charles Gustavus to the Assembled Estates. And it took that same amount of time to persuade Oxenstierna to summon members of the State Council so that she could formally announce her abdication. At each level of the governing body of Sweden her abdication was opposed by the same men who opposed her governing efforts to bring her country to peace. The people especially begged her not to leave them. It was not until June of 1654 before the formalities were over and she could lift the crown off her head.

QUEEN. CHRISTINA CONTINUED

Charles gave her a sum of money and, still convinced she was a "real woman" at heart, gave her a jewelled hairpin. That night Christina ordered her valet to cut off her hair.

Ebba Sparre did not leave Sweden with Christina, and little is known about their parting. There is only one letter left written to Ebba from Christina in Rome, imploring her to " fly into my desperately longing arms."

Christina became a well-known celebrity-adventurer throughout Europe--one who associated with Jews and wore male attire. Jews at that time were not considered at all equal to the Christian Europeans and a woman who wore pants was almost unheard of. She lived the rest of her life actively, almost always with a finger in European politics urging peace and acting as a personal diplomat between European powers.

Two of the three biographies of Queen Christina that I read mentioned her lesbian tendencies but later denied that she was gay by telling story after story of her rumored affairs with men. One book by Margaret Leland Goldsmith states that Christina was "sexually abnormal." Goldsmith like many women today, hates women. Again and again she attacks Christina had her so-called "problematical nature." In one breath Goldsmith will rave on about how "masculine " Christina was and in the next attack her

> "overconsciousness which even today is such a disadvantage to many professional women, who refuse to forget their work after they have left the office. It is almost as though, being new as a sex to responsible work, they are parvenues in their overzealousness."

Furthermore she starts the book by explaining that Christina accomplished nothing. Goldsmith, like most male-identified historians, recognizes greatness only in how many countries one can conquer during one's reign. Male-identified historians have to validate and romanticize the aggressiveness and recklessness that male rulers perpetuate. For if they recognized the peace and practicality that happens when women rule, they would then have to admit that women should be in power and rule the world.

Christina is not a famous ruler simply because she did not initiate the foolhardy power-hungry acts of male rulers. She brought peace to Europe, proving herself one of the ablest political stateswomen of all time. This then was the real reason why she had to abdicate. A male society cannot stand to be ruled by a female monarch who has female values. Most of all Sweden could not tolerate, in the long run, having a queen who would not fit into the woman role--marrying and producing a male heir--and who was clearly a lesbian. But male-identified historians will never admit this.

Much is to be learned from her including the way in which she viewed European politics and the premium she put on peace.

Queen Christina left an important political legacy for all lesbians to study.

Helaine Harris



Garbo as Christina with her lady-in-waiting

GOSSIP

Gossip is irresponsible communication. Irresponsible because it is at the expense of another person who is not there to defend herself. Irresponsible because it is not constructive: it helps no one, least of all the person being gossiped about. We have all experienced being gossiped about so we know the end result: it destroys trust. It's bad enough when this activity flares up among friends, but when it crops up in a political movement it jeopardizes our security and detracts from political issues.

Women gossip because we will be listened to by other women; gossip is often the only way women can get an audience. With some token exceptions, women are excluded from TV and radio broadcasting and newspaper reporting and editorializing. Men have determined that women have nothing to say, and women have internalized their own "unimportance" and limit their speaking and listening to other women gossip.

Given our rigid roles as sex object, mother and maid it is surprising that over the centuries women did not lose the power of speech altogether. We spoke to each other about those areas of life left to us: child care, domestic chores, maintaining our status as desirable sex objects, and each other. In talking about each other we glossed over the good things and seized upon the bad. Women are ready, so ready to listen and accept negative information about each other. This upsetting activity stems directly from our oppression and subsequent self-hatred. Most women's lives still are a tedium of muffled unhappiness. Aside from TV, one of the few escape routes left is getting involved in other people's lives vicariously. Gossip aides this escape.

How reassuring to hear that Mary is as wretched as you are, or better yet, worse off. That means Mary is "less" than you are and therefore you can feel superior. Given our low status in the pecking order it is a very real consolation to be able to peck someone beneath us. And who is lower than a woman except another woman who has transgressed in her assigned womanly duties or who has freaked out because she could no longer bear her oppression? You also get status if you are the first to know something about another person and you can feel superior.

Gossip is especially destructive when it is aimed at women who are political, and when its content, although appearing to be "personal", is a thinly veiled attack on the victim's politics. There are many types of gossip; this article will discuss two of the most dangerous kinds. First, an example of the "emotional appeal" method.

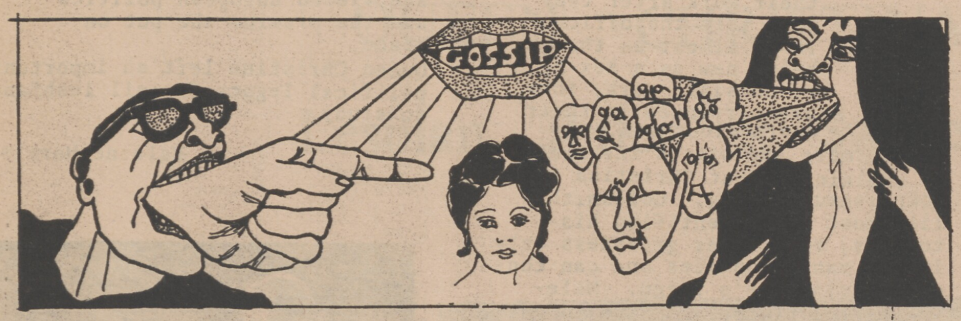
Mary has formed a political study group with other women. The emotional appeal gossip would say something like this to an unwary listener: "I'm so upset and feel so rejected. Mary, Jane, Susan and Evelyn have formed a study group and left me out. Mary and I used to be good friends. How could she do something like this to me?" What the speaker has failed to tell the listener is exactly that--why she is not part of that group. The speaker has put the formation of a political study group on emotional terms, centered it around herself and her supposed needs. She gives no hint at what the political differences between herself and the group are. The speaker has created an aura of pity for herself. Women are suckers for this kind of emotional appeal because emotions are our assigned sphere by men. This form of gossip is especially disgusting because it preys on women's emotional susceptibility which comes from woman oppression.

The second and more destructive type of gossip is the pseudo-psychological method which includes emotional elements to bolster its claims on the listener's attention. It is connected with class privilege whereas the emotional appeal is not. You have to have had some contact with middle class psychological bullshit in order to be able to pull off this technique--obviously, well-educated middle class women are standouts in its performance.

This form of gossip is vicious and the hardest to track down because it offers some kind of explanation for another woman's behavior that is easy to swallow, and once digested, the listener can then turn around and pass it on as her own idea. With emotional appeal alone, the listener can only relate how the poor gossip has been

... on page twelve

continued



injured by Mary. Here's a brief example of this method--it is best performed over a few weeks or months time so the gossip can build up credibility with the listener and round out her thesis.

"I've known Mary for some time now and we used to be very close. She is a very ambitious and insecure woman. She has to prove herself better than anyone else and she really needs to control people because that is the only way she can be sure about them. Now she has gone and organized this study group with her lackeys and it's only to dominate others that she's doing this. You really should stay away from here, and don't try to work with that study group." Again, the gossip ignores the political basis of the study group and chooses to single out Mary, who she dislikes, in order to turn people against Mary and the group. Most political statements or ideas can be traced back to their originators and then destroyed by destroying the originators. It is a very clever way to explain and destroy political ideas.

It is crucial that gossip be seen as a political and counter-revolutionary act. It is a means by which women can form hierarchies without interfering in men's hierarchies. It takes energy away from our real struggle, which is not just personal (in that it is not against individual people) but ideological and political. Gossiping about Richard Nixon will not bring him down, any more than gossiping about a woman will build a movement which can destroy sexism. Furthermore, if the gossip were really concerned with the behavior of the victim, she would confront her instead of stabbing her in the back.

But the crucial point about gossips is that they attack political women without attacking their politics, when it is clearly their politics that are threatening. Straight women gossip about Lesbians in order to excuse themselves from dealing with Lesbianism. Reformists support gossips because they don't want stronger politics to emerge. Gossips don't want to face either their own oppression or responsibility for their own actions. They don't want to face the fact that they do not fight their oppression. If you understand your oppression than you are faced with the moral decision of complying with it or fighting to end it. Apolitical women want to hide from that decision; gossips help them do it by smearing the women who would force that decision upon them. Men adore gossips because it weakens the entire movement and keeps them in the power seat longer.

We should be clear about the difference between gossip and political fights. Gossip is not ideological struggle. Gossip is under-the-table verbal assasination. Gossip serves our enemies by weakening us and making us look like backstabbing fools. Political differences exist and one way to educate ourselves is to air them. We owe it to ourselves to freely express those political differences. Reformism is different from revolution and any attempt to smooth over the sharp lines of divergence only water down the politics of both beliefs and make them sweetly liberal.

It is a mistake to assume that gossip is just talk, that women who gossip are merely prattling and that gossip does not have specific targets for specific reasons. A woman in the movement who gossips cannot be said to lack politics. She gossips about those whose politics are different from her own. Gossip therefore serves her political interests as well as her more petty concerns. She is able to rip to shreds a political person and avoid a confrontation with that person's political ideas. She insures that other women will not consider the analysis of the women she is damning. The sad fact is that people not only remain ignorant of the purpose of this behavior, they are influenced by it.

The values that operate in gossip are those that operate in any power struggle. The gossip is seeking a measure of power for herself with the least amount of risk possible. She tries to enlarge and defend her personal or semi-political power over those that threaten it. The more powerful a person's political analysis, the more viciously must this kind of woman attack her. Gossip gives you control over others and when facing gossip we often forget this basic fact--control.

The question now is what to do about gossip. If you are the object of political attacks. covered as gossip, you can try to short circuit the gossip by speaking to her straight out. She will probably evade you, cry, or try to lie her way out. You can confront her in front of other people so that they can judge what is going down. One amazing upshoot of this procedure may be that after the exchange is over, the gossip will gather her followers and twist the entire exchange to her own advantage. A ripe lie is that she was too overcome with emotion (that old trick again) to respond. Horseshit.

If you cannot stop the chief inititator, you can at least stop the cycle from spreading by calling your group together (be it consciousness raising, a project group, or a tightly organized cell) and making everyone aware of the problem. Everyone should understand that not only is someone's character being assasinated, but that the political ideas of that person, and by extension, the group with which she works, are being destroyed.

The most effective way to deal with gossips is to cut out their tongues. However, at this time, that is not feasible. Gossips can bad rap you from coast to coast and they can succeed in slowing down your work because other people who don't yet know you will be leery of you. But if you are seriously trying to change the conditions we all live in, no amount of gossip can cover that seriousness over. KEEP WORKING. In time, even some of the former supporters of a gossip will clearly see who gets the work done and who doesn't--and no amount of psychological hogwash can obscure why the gossip can't get anything together, including herself.

Keep your head up and don't stoop to answer her ridiculous accusations and outright lies. The future is yours. Her future is to fall in the trashcan of the struggle against sexism.

Rita Mae Brown

The Price is Wrong

The primary moving force behind the most powerful white men in this country is the economy. These past few months we have been inundated with the news that there is a crisis in this economy. This crisis is particularly serious because it involves both the international and domestic spheres.

It is important for us, as revolutionary lesbians, to understand this crisis. Any crack in the monolithic power system that rich white men have built can never be completely resealed and provides a present and future source of weakness. If we are to turn these weaknesses to our advantage, we must analyze them.

In this issue we will begin with the international economic situation --its basic elements, the dynamics which have produced a crisis in it, and how that crisis is being dealt with by Nixon et al. In the next issue we will begin discussing the domestic economy.

ELEMENTS OF THE MARKET

Balance of payments. This is a bookkeeping term. Subtract the international minuses (dollars gone out of the U.S. -- for private investment, military expenditures, foreign aid, tourist spending, import purchases) from the pluses (dollars coming back in to the U.S. -- primarily for its exports) and you have the balance (of payments). If the figure you are left with is a plus figure, you are said to have a surplus balance of payments, and if it's a minus figure, you have a deficit. The balance of payments situation for the U.S. is a deficit, and

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has been an 'unacceptable' deficit for at least a decade.

The Gold Standard. In its most basic form the gold standard means the use of, and common acceptance of gold as the standard for determining the value of one currency relative to any other currency. Since 1934, gold has been priced at $35 an ounce --which means that one dollar is worth 1/35 of a gold ounce because, theoretically, the U.S. promises to any country an ounce of gold for every 35 American dollars it chooses to turn back in to the U.S. With the dollar's value fixed in terms of gold, the value of each other currency is then determined relative to the dollar. This gives each currency a fixed value in terms of gold and a stable currency value in relation to each other. (Commonly known as a fixed rate of exchange.) As long as currencies are tied to the gold standard, their values do not change with periodic fluctuations of the international market.

Reserves. A nation's reserves refer to the amount of gold it has in its possession with which it can guarantee its currency internationally. Its currency is guaranteed by its reserves as long as the amount of currency it has outstanding (the amount of its balance-of-payments deficit) is no more than the total amount of its gold reserves. Thus, a limit on its deficit is imposed by its gold holdings. When the U.S. has a deficit, other nations have a surplus of U.S. dollars, which they can theoretically turn in to the U.S. for some of its gold reserves.

Two things are important to note here: 1) We are describing the theoretical functioning of the gold standard-reserve system. It is hopelessly archaic, and has not worked according to theory for many years; and 2)The gold standard-reserve system is solely international and governmental. It is not applicable to the workings of domestic economies.

Devaluation. A country's currency is devalued in relation to the gold standard, and, consequently, depreciates in relation to the currencies of other countries. If the U.S., for example, were to devalue its currency, the number of dollars needed to purchase an ounce of gold would increase (e.g., from $35 per ounce, to $40 per ounce). One dollar would thus be worth a smaller fraction of a gold ounce -- the dollar is de-valued.

If the dollar is worth less in gold than it was, and all other countries' currencies are worth the same in terms of gold as they always were, then the dollar is worth less in terms of their currencies also.

If the dollar is worth less in terms of the pound, one can then buy more dollars worth of goods for one pound. Thus, the exports of the U.S. will increase (more countries will buy U.S. goods because they are, in effect, cheaper) and the imports will decrease, because they are more expensive. Since the country has more of its money paid in to it (for its increasing exported goods) and less of its money going out (paid out for its decreasing imported goods), its balance of payments will be improved. That is, it will have less of a deficit. This improvement is one of the reasons for devaluation of currency.

Serious inflation in the domestic economy can also lead a nation to devalue. During inflation, prices and wages are high and keep pushing each other higher. As this happens, the currency becomes worth less domestically;the dollar is able to purchase less. This kind of domestic instability affects the international market the way bad news affects the Stock Market. The demand for that nation's currency in the international market decreases. Often, speculation in international markets indicates that it will continue to decrease in value, and there follows a rush by other countries to rid themselves of that currency. (Usually, this is done by turning it in to that country for the promised gold.) Such a rush against the unstable currency increases its instability and decreases its value even further. At this point, the country is practically forced to devalue its currency. Doing so will stop the trend against it, since the devaluation will bring the currency closer to its real value in the international market.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRISIS

The twentieth century rise of technology and corporations changed the world economic situation drastically. Each year the U.S. further outstripped every nation in amount of goods produced. The other developed nations also acquiring the new technology soared ahead economically, while the under-developed nations lagged farther and farther behind.

By the end of World War II, and with its help, the U.S. economy was, by far, the most powerful in the world. Likewise, the U.S. dollar was the 'hardest' currency in the world, because it was the most stable and was backed by the largest gold reserve supply. It was considered by all nations to be 'as good as gold' -- unlike any other currency in the world. Consequently, dollars were the currency most wanted, and most readily accepted in foreign trade. Dollars poured into Western Europe, Latin America, and selected nations in Asia. Foreign aid dollars: to help the war-torn capitalist nations rebuild their economies; dollars for private investment in overseas firms, the foreign subsidiaries of American corporations: to boost the productivity of other nations (which in turn creates greater markets for the U.S.), and to produce American goods at lower costs (since labor and raw materials are cheaper outside the U.S.); American tourist dollars; and most importantly, dollars in overseas military expenditures: to protect the "free world" (read, free markets for continuing U.S. economic growth). The U.S. balance of trade alone --its import-export balance -- was a surplus (a profit--it imported fewer dollars worth of goods than it exported), but the amount of this surplus was not nearly enough to cover all these other outlays of capital, primarily military, which stayed overseas. Thus, the U.S. began running a deficit in its balance-of-payments as a whole.

In the past, other nations would have forced the U.S. to deal with this outflow of dollars, by turning in their surplus dollars for U.S. gold. They didn't do this now for many reasons. First, the massive power of the U.S. economy insured the value of dollars held overseas. They did not need to be turned in for gold because they were 'as good as gold'. This enormous economic power also intimidated trading 'partners' who could hardly afford to cross the U.S. There was an unwritten pact not to challenge the U.S. reserve supply,which was at the time, advantageous to all. The U.S. could continue its deficit, getting something for nothing, since it didn't have to pay its international debts. Other nations had dollars in surplus which added to their total reserve supply and gave them a larger international bank account. Dollars, unlike gold, could also draw interest. The international market itself was also stimulated since these dollars added to the overall money available for world trade.

Dollars began to be held with gold as reserves, filling the gap created by the inadequate supply of world gold reserves. There seems to have been no real alternative to this course of events, within the framework of capitalism and the gold standard. The gold standard-reserve system, if adhered to strictly, would have stifled the world capitalist market. The limited supply of gold would have been a ceiling on the market's growth, when it needed to increase without limits. Likewise, the overwhelming growth of U.S. capitalism required that it continue to expand its markets overseas, to use its surplus capital. When the domestic market becomes unable to consume all of capitalism's products, it can expand no more domestically. Yet it must continue to expand in order to exist, so it must turn to overseas growth in order to survive. Similarly, it must spread some of its capital wealth around, essentially creating smaller versions of itself, so that it will have someone to trade with.

NIXON'S "SOLUTION"

The dollar domination of the international market, coupled with a U.S. balance-of-payments deficit, has escalated continuously since the end of the second world war. On August 15 of this year things came to a crashing halt. Nixon announced, in his "New Economic Policy" two international actions: 1) Cutting the dollar loose from the gold standard--floating the dollar; and, 2) the institution of a 10% surcharge (tax, or tariff) on imports.

Only the U.S. (and only the conservative in the U.S.) would dare to do this singlehandedly. Nixon-Connally et al. have, with these actions, abolished the standard upon which all capitalist world trade was based, and transformed a 'spirit of cooperation' among Western-world nations into 'survival of the fittest'. The liberal position of cooperation, consultation, and freer trade which predominated in the 60s, has been replaced by a conservative, protectionist doctrine. This doctrine maintains that the U.S. is powerful enough to go it alone and pursue its best interests, regardless of the interests of other nations.

Floating the dollar, or cutting it loose from the gold standard, accomplishes two things. First, it is an underhanded way of devaluing the dollar, without admitting U.S. economic weakness--an unacceptable loss of face for the U.S. and its sacred dollar. Actual devaluation also would have further weakened the shaky domestic economy by making the dollar look worse internationally. By removing the gold standard(the fixed rate of exchange), the U.S. says, we will not devalue but will make all other countries upvalue their currencies in relation to ours.

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With the dollar floating, each currency's rate of exchange vis a vis the dollar now floats upward until it reaches a new, more accurate exchange rate. The U.S. is also discussing the possibility of increasing the price of gold -- another way of devaluing the dollar without saying it.

Secondly, the removal of the dollar from the gold standard stops the convertibility of foreign dollars into gold from the U.S. reserves. This action prevents an international rush to get rid of dollars. Such an international movement against the dollar, though not a probability, would have been debilitating to the U.S. economy. Taking the dollar off the gold standard also holds the U.S. gold reserve supply stable (at a respectable $10 billion) in anticipation of a return to the gold standard system.

Nixon's import surcharge requires that all nations pay a tariff of 10% of the value of any exports they send to the U.S. This increased expense requires other nations to decrease their imports to the U.S., and imports that do come in are 10% more expensive than similar American made goods. This surcharge gives the U.S. a large trade advantage over all of its customary trading partners (i.e., the International Monetary Fund members who are Western capitalist nations). While this surcharge actually does little to help the overall American economic position --since only a small per cent of its economy depends on foreign trade- - it weighs very heavily on all the other IMF members. Unlike the U.S., they depend mainly on their exports; and their primary export market is-- guess who. Their exports will be cut at least in half and their economies will suffer enormously.

ANALYSIS

The American economic position has so deteriorated in recent years that its balance-of-trade, a strong point for over two decades, has begun to show a deficit. Both of the Nixon international measures are aimed directly at this trade deficit specifically. Devaluation itself, though it will undoubtedly help the trade balance, would have been necessary in any case, given the weakened condition of the dollar both at home and overseas. The surcharge, along with this devaluation, could help to turn the trade deficit back into a surplus. However, since trade accounts for only two or three per cent of the entire American Gross National Product, these moves cannot significantly resolve the economic crisis. The truth is that they were never meant to. Nixon-Connally et. al. had other reasons for announcing them as part of the NEP.

First of all, these moves are showy, and controversial enough to produce a flurry of news about their effects -- a good cover, since most people take news to be actual activity. This obscures the gravity of the economic crisis, and the real problems continue to go unsolved. The surcharge specifically is meant to act as a force behind U.S. demands on other nations. The U.S. will blackmail the others into revaluing, and into accepting some of the burden for its overseas military expenses -- because it won't lift the surcharge until they agree. The discussions at the latest IMF meeting, in Rome, seem to confirm that the U.S. will achieve its purposes. Although weaker, it can still wield the club of superior power and win. The economic futures of the other Western nations are still too tied to that of America for them to do more than bemoan their fates and be 'reasonable'. In the end, they must shuffle -- and so they are. They have accepted the surcharge with a stiff upperlip (and with only one reprisal:Denmark). They have agreed to the revaluation, and they will agree to shoulder some of the 'free world' military expense. They will reform the international monetary system within the limits which are set by the U.S. But they will not forget.

They will not forget that the U.S. has fucked them at its whim. The U.S. had a so-called cooperation with all these nations, when it suited its needs. Its needs at this time are to protect its existence, its image, its shaky economy. For the sake of its economic system, its heartbeat, the U.S. has forsaken these nations and broken many long-standing political alliances and economic promises. Its capitalist allies have learned the hard way that, in dealings of power, the one with the most power can 'cooperate' at its pleasure, and will rule brutally when necessary for its survival. The resentments and anger the U.S. has caused among its allies will prove bothersome to it in the future -- probably not disastrous, but troublesome. They will not be so eager to support every move of the U.S. As an example, many of the old allies voted against the U.S. proposal to keep Taiwan in the U.N. In future years when the U.S. needs their help, if it's not in their best interests to give that help, they may refuse. Alliances are hardly strengthened by power plays like this one.

These actions also exacerbated the divisions within the U.S. ruling class. Nixon-Connally et al. have smashed the liberal trend of U.S. international economic policy, and moved to a conservative,'power-1st' approach. The liberal men of the ruling class have long argued for 'cooperation'-- that it is in America's long-run interest to consult the other Western nations, remove all trade barriers, and allow an 'acceptable' balance-of-payments deficit. The conservatives opinion of the first two liberal tenets need not be repeated. The actions of Nixon and his boys defy these notions absolutely. Connally has made the conservative stand on the third point equally clear. Repeatedly, he has said that the U.S. is now aiming not simply for a lessening of the deficit but for an $8 billion surplus. Since the deficit is presently $5 billion, the U.S. would have to recover $13 billion to have such a surplus. Most people laugh at the absurdity of this plan. The worried liberals argue that if the U.S. goes ahead with this plan, there would be a recession in the world market, which would certainly be harmful to long-run U.S. interests. (In order to achieve a surplus, the U.S. would have to pull dollars out of the world market...which would decrease market activity, since much of the international market's growth has been dependent on the surfeit of American dollars.)

The Nixon-Connally bunch are conservative-reactionary down the line. Domestically they are hard-headed capitalists. Apparently, they still believe in the 'free market' system that went out decades ago, with the rise of big corporations. Internationally, they are adhering doggedly to a'might makes right' approach. In most conflicts among the ruling men, the conservatives are much more brazen in their exercise of power than the liberals, though the effects of both methods are essentially the same. Liberals are consistently more eager to 'soften the blow', to cloak the exercise of power in the guise of 'free choice','cooperation',etc. Essentially, these men are arguing among themselves about the most effective way to retain, maintain and enhance their power. This in-fighting will recur with each new crisis. By itself, it does nothing to change the actual seat of power; but every division is another wedge, another weakening link which impairs the ability of the ruling class to unite solidly against future challenges to their power.

The U.S. is no longer unquestionably the most economically powerful nation in the West. These actions indicate the weakened state of its economic position. The forceful disruption of long-standing trade arrangements has produced a precarious world economy, in which the existing power balance is subject to change. The U.S. has disturbed a set of international alliances and market principles that were established after the second World War, at the height of U.S. economic and military superiority.

Since then, other capitalist nations like Japan and West Germany have, with U.S. aid, rebuilt to the point that they are now challenging American economic strongholds. Some of their products now out-sell the U.S. competition. The Common Market has been successful enough to provide more strength for European countries as a group, allowing them greater flexibility in market relations with the U.S. Greatly increased trade between capitalist and communist nations in the 70's will further alter the world market situation.

All of the above factors combine to make it unlikely that the new set of international arrangements will be as favorable to the U.S. as the last. Nor will the new order be as easily arrived at...there will probably be years of negotiation, modification, and re-negotiation. At present we can only be certain that the market of the 70's will be in a state of flux. Its 'golden age' -- two decades of prosperity and stability -- is a thing of the past.

Finally, these international measures were advertised as the way to solve America's balance-of-payments problem, the way out of a deficit and back to a 'healthy surplus' They do not touch, except peripherally, the real source of this deficit which is the monstrous American military expense, the cost of policing the world for capitalism. In one quarter of 1971, the annual rate of the trade deficit was $4.2 billion; the balance-of-payments deficit was $23 billion. Part of the overall deficit problem is the long time required for foreign investments to return profits, but the bulk of it is purely military expenditure... for Vietnam, the Middle-East, Europe, the rest of South-East Asia, Latin America, etc.

The cost of insuring markets for capitalist expansion is high; the cost of imperialism even higher. This part of the deficit problem can never be resolved by merely reforming capitalism. Here lies the hidden heart of the U.S. problem. At some point, the profits of exploitation are consumed by the costs of maintaining it.

Susan Hathaway

WHAT'S GOING ON?

We know there is a lot more news from Lesbians out there, but it has been difficult to get for this first issue. Lesbians are, in fact, getting together. There is an overall feeling of need to do that. At the same time, there is a common complaint that people are not sure what to do with themselves once they do -- physically -- get together. Many groups are struggling against disintegration and several have already fallen apart.

Groups that have been started around specific issues or projects have found that they lose steam or people begin to drift off. Groups that have a "consciousness raising" orientation find that eventually no one seems to know where they are going with it. Things break down because of emotional conflicts, disputes and bad feelings over issues like monogamy, or just a general lack of clarity about politics,about what people should be doing, and what their commitment to each other is.

Having experienced some of this breakdown in our collective, we see now that it was largely because of an emphasis on personal relationships instead of politics. When there is no common reference point (clear Lesbian politics) for evaluation of issues, it becomes hard to make political decisions. As a result, politics are pushed aside in order to deal with what is more tangible, what does not require tedious study or hours of preparation and thought, that is, personal relationships. But the kind of personal trust that everyone wants to feel among the members of a political group cannot grow in a political vacuum.

We need to pull together to form a solid ideology so that our purposes are clear. It is essential to have a firm understanding of how and why Lesbianism itself is politically important. Through the development of this understanding, we will be able to decide where to go and what our priorities are. Groups will get together and stay together because a firm political commitment and common strategy will transcend traps like overemphasis on personal relationships and will eliminate political indecision.

MIDWEST CONFERENCE

A weekend for Lesbians from all over the Midwest is planned by Yellow Springs Radicalesbians for February 11-13. It will held at the Outdoor Education Center in Glen Helen, near Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio. The cost will be $2.50 per person per night. There are mattresses, but you should bring sleeping bags.

The conference will start with a swim and art display on Friday evening, Feb. 11. There will be workshops, consciousness raising, and reports from various cities on Saturday and Sunday, and a dance on Saturday night. Hopefully, women from the different areas represented will furnish guerilla theater throughout the conference.

If you have any suggestions about what you would like to see happen at the conference, write to RADICALESBIANS, c/o Women's Center, Antioch Mail Room, Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387. Or you can call 767-7862 (area code 503). Write or call the same places for directions and further information about the conference. Also -- you should bring Lesbian and women's literature from your area.

PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia Radicalesbians has been in existence for about a year. They meet for consciousness raising and business meetings every Monday night at 8:00 P.M. at the Women's Center, 4734 Chest Ave. The number there is (215) SA7-1717.

Currently, Radicalesbians in Philly are involved in several projects. Members of the group go out in groups of twos, threes and fours for speaking engagements. Two papers have been given to psychiatry-social worker conventions, "basically trashing them and their view of homosexuals, female or male." Both conventions were clearly taken aback by the presence of Radicalesbians and what they had to say. However, they were, of course, "liberal and tolerant". Other members of the group are involved in talking to college classes.

Gay women from the Homophile Action League (no longer existant) are now working with Radicalesbians. They have been especially concerned with legislation and job discrimination against gay people, especially women. During the mayoral campaign, they picketed the offices of both candidates -- protesting the total disregard of any gay issues.

Radicalesbians also sponsored a Halloween costume party for all women in October. They are now putting out a bi-monthly newsletter, which they hope will grow into a Lesbian newspaper.

DENVER

Gay women in Denver started getting themselves together last Spring through Gay Liberation. Because of the inevitable hassles between men and women in GLF, they split off from that group. They are now meeting every week. Some of them have been learning auto mechanics and they are anxious to start a class for gay women soon. Also -- football in the park every Sunday. For information, call (303) 623-0773.

BOSTON

Radical Lesbians in Boston are hoping to get out more issues of the Lavender Vision this year. Also in the works are plans for some meetings on feminism for gay women who haven't been politically involved before, come-out meetings, and Lesbian anti-rape groups. Meanwhile, they have been organizing some basketball teams for gay women and working on the possibility of a Lesbian band which would play for a weekly free women's dance.

SAN LORENZO

From San Lorenzo, ALTA writes that so far, nearly all the poets whose work she has published at Shameless Hussy Press have been Gay. For a catalogue, write to Alta, Shameless Hussy Press, P. O. Box 124, San Lorenzo, California.94580

SAN FRANCISCO

The Lesbians Speak Out Collective in San Francisco is getting ready to put out the second edition of Lesbians Speak Out. They want it to include a wide variety of material about Lesbians, their lives and how they have been affected by being gay. They would like to have articles, poetry, songs, pictures, drawings, maps, graphs, photographs, short stories, "plus any whatevers that are available." And they would like to have them by midnight, December 31, 1971. They are also trying to put together a book of Lesbian letters. The material should be sent to the Lesbians Speak Out Collective, 1018 Valencia St., San Francisco, California, 94110. Material will be returned if it is accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The Women's Press Collective in San Francisco wants gay women to know about Edward the dyke and other poems, a 46 page book of poetry by Judy Grahn and drawings by Wendy Cadden, Brenda Crider, Gail Hodgins and Sunny. The book is $1.25, and copies are available from Judy Grahn, 1018 Valencia St., San Francisco, California 94110. (See article at page 7.)

Also in San Francisco, the Lesbian Mothers Union is meeting weekly. The group got together last summer after the Los Angeles Gay Women's Conference, where they had attended a workshop for Lesbian mothers. They are working on a program to be presented to the Family Service Agency. The Union wants the professionals to come through with legal aid as well as legal and psychological research. Since Lesbians are not considered to be fit mothers in this society, their children are always taken away from them in custody cases. The Lesbian Mother's Union hopes to gain solid ammunition from mental health professionals and research before it tries to bring forward a test case in the courts.

SEATTLE

In Seattle, the Gay Women's Resource Center is open five days a week, 9 to 5 phone service. It is staffed by volunteers. The object is "to provide a place for all women -- particularly gay women -- to meet one another on a personal level in an area of acceptance." The center offers a Survival file, small library, speakers bureau, small rap groups and alternative counselling that happens " in really good ways".

The Center also puts out a newsletter called Gayly Forward, which includes poetry, fiction and other commentary for and by Lesbians You can get in touch with the Seattle Gay Women's Resource Center at (206) ME2-4747. Or you can call Martha Walters at (206)LA3-4597.

Also in Seattle, Lesbian mothers have just started a rap group. Anyone interested in the group can contact the Gay Women's Resource Center for more information.

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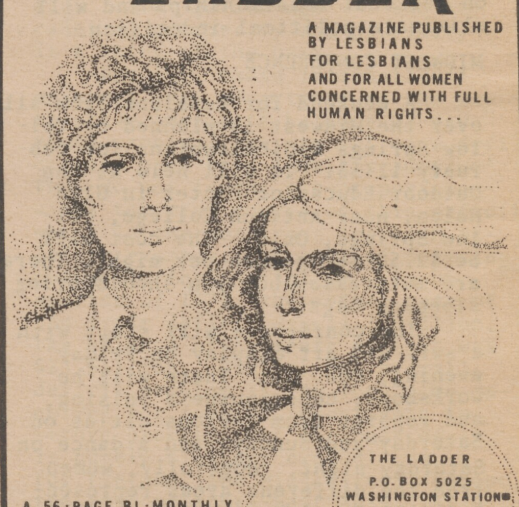
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