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implausible.

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It is also argued that a virginal conception is really a distortion and a mask. Behind it lies an illegitimate birth, possibly the result of rape (Schaberg, The Illegitimacy of Jesus). In the second century Celsus wrote about adultery. In True Discourse (178 AD), a polemic against Christianity, he claims that Mary had an affair with a soldier named Panthera. Celsus based this on stories told in some Jewish circles about a Jesus ben

Others argue that a virginal conception is largely a theological idea, without basis a virginal conception if it was not based

in historical fact. While the Hebrew and Greek words used in the texts strongly suggest virginal conception, the evidence is not

conclusive. The Hebrew word almah, used in connection with Isaiah 7:14, refers to a young woman of marriage able age where virginity is implied, yet it is not a technical term for virgo intacta (betula Heb). The Greek word parthenos (girl, young woman) seems to strongly imply one who is a virgin, yet this may not always

These and other views have led many to conclude that the virginal conception is historically implausible. Regardless of what one may think about it theologically,



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the historical evidence is not sufficiently strong to verify it: "historical-critical research simply does not have the sources and tools available to reach a final decision on the historicity of the virginal concep tion narrated by Matthew and Luke (John Meier, A Marginal Jew, 222)." As such, some maintain that faith in Jesus Christ, true man and true God, does not necessitate affirming a virginal conception

Yet, one wonders whether all of this does not somehow miss the point. First of all, would the Gospel writers speak of

fact? Convincing ... virginal conception people of the rrection difficult enough. Why concoct fanciful stories?

> Second, a stumbling block for us moderns is our belief in a closed universe. There is no opportunity for divine intervention. Further, we affirm all too readily, sometimes unconsciously, that ultimately only science and reason determine what is, and what is not acceptable. But why affirm these kinds of (Enlightenment) beliefs? Why limit the possible?

> A virginal conception, as well as a resurrection, is not tenable until and unless we admit to divine action - the possibility of divine intervention in human history. Both virginal conception and resurrection are miracles, explainable only when we have (spiritual) eyes to see them and ears to hear about them.

Christmas is as much about celebration as it is about hope —hope for divine action in a humanly desperate and hopeless situation. No doubt science and reason can, and have worked miracles. But their power is limited, especially in the face of evil, greed and self-interest. Humans need a greater miracle. Will it not ultimately take the miraculous work of God, begun in Jesus to restore us to comfort and hope, to full humanity?



by Nik Carrier

With the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre approaching, Women's liberation is an even more pressing topic. What does socialism have to offer to women? Can a revolution bring women's

The socialist revolution will initiate the ending of oppression towards women. The transition to socialism will complete it. Socialism is the working class selfemancipation and the majority of the working class are women. Without the complete emancipation of women, it is impossible to speak of the complete emancipation of the working class. Therefore impossible to speak of

So how will womens' liberation be achieved?

There will come a number of legal measures, which are very straightforward and can be taken immediately by the workers' state. These include the abolition the legal inequality between men and women and the outlawing of discrimination against women; the establishment of the right to free contraception and free abortion on demand; the right to immediate divorce on demand and the right to equal pay and job opportunities.

We must remember the changing context of this situation. The fact that the workers' state will immediately become the main employer, and eventually the only employer, and that all major institutions in society will be under democratic workers' control will ensure that these laws are translated into

Many other social changes will also contribute to and facilitate the liberating of women. There will be anti-sexist teaching in schools and where sexist teachers remain they will doubtless be

firmly corrected by their students. The transformation in ownership and control of the media will mean that these too become a force for anti-sexism rather than for sexism as at present.

Since with the abolition of capitalist competition advertising in its present form will disappear, so too will the use of exploitative images of women to promote goods. All forms of violence against women will be seriously combatted.

However, as important and necessary as all these measures will be, none of them go to the heart of the matter. They deal with the symptoms and effects of women's oppression rather than its source. That source lies in the position of women within the family and the role that the family has played in class-divided society as a whole and in capitalist society in particular.

In capitalism today the raising of children and the care of the present generation (in economic terms, the reproduction of labour power) is primarily the responsibility of the privatised nuclear family. Within the family the burden of this work falls mainly on women. The advantages of this arrangement for capitalism are obviousit gets its labour power produced and refreshed at minimal cost and it divides and fragments the working class. The disadvantages for women are equally clear. Their access to paid employment is interrupted and restricted; their career prospects are damaged; they tend to be isolated in the home and to a greater or lesser extent they are economically dependent upon their husbands.

This is the root problem that will have to be solved to achieve the permanent and complete liberation of women as part of the transition to socialism.

The family is not an institution which can be abolished overnight. It has to be replaced with institutions that must be better at meeting the real human needs at present served by the family, so that people will adopt them voluntarily.

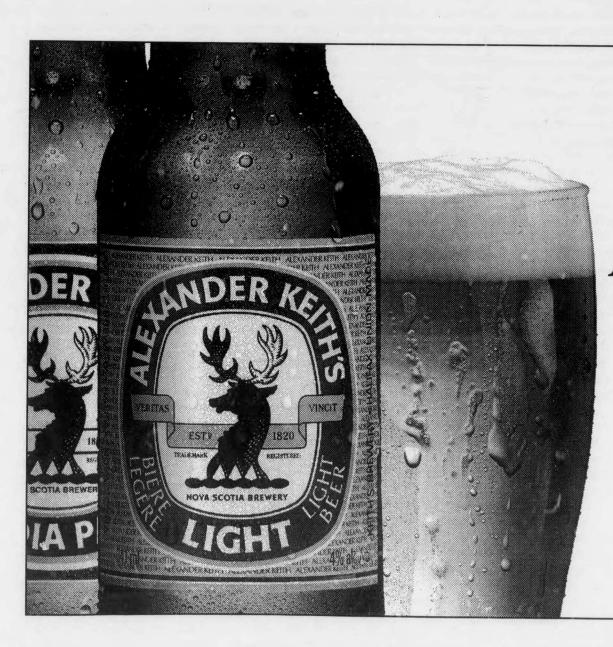
The task is the efficient and caring socialisation of housework and childcare. This means creating a network of community restaurants. It means providing communal laundry and housecleaning services. It means, above all, providing good nursery facilities for young childern and properly organised baby-sitting services for every parent.

As patterns of communal living are developed, this will considerably assist all of these problems. When this is achieved, child-rearing will cease to be a socially disadvantageous burden and become an overwhelmingly positive experience shared by men and women.

Who people live with and for how long will be a matter of purely personal choice, unconstricted by economic pressures or by the old religious codes and social conventions which reflect those

Clearly the implementation of such a programme will require large economic resources, strong political will and mass involvement. No capitalist government would attempt it or could achieve it. But that is why it is only through socialism that women will win their liberation.

The UNB Socialist's Club is holding a Public Meeting entitled, "How do we win women's liberation?: A Marxist Analysis," on Tuesday December 5, at 7:00 pm, in MacLaggan Room 109. For more information, contact Chris at 454-9233, or e-mail GNDYP@StThomasU.ca.



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