



## Women Propose Freedom - an alternative

The first meeting of the Women's Liberation Group on campus was held on Monday, Jan. 19. At this meeting and a subsequent one held on Jan. 26, certain problems of women in the university, the high school, and the working force, and the relationship of women's liberation to the political and economic structure of society were discussed. Women's Liberation is concerned with the inequality of women in society; and inequality which places woman below man on an economic, political, intellectual, and social scale. Unlike the Feminist groups in Canada and the United States, Women's Liberation does not believe that this inequality can simply be reduced to an analyses and actions which confront male chauvinism within society. Men, like women, have been taught to accept certain defined roles in life, and to expect members of the opposite sex to conform to their roles. It is the purpose, therefore, of Women's Liberation to propose a different and equal role for women in society alongside men, and to confront both men and women with alternative life-styles and economic and political changes which will narrow the gulf between the sexes.

The group concerns itself first of all with women, because it is they, who have been socialized to believe in their own inferiority. Psychologically, it is very difficult for a woman to accept the fact that she is potentially capable of being equal to man: "How are women characterized in our culture,

and in psychology? They are inconsistent, emotionally unstable, lacking in strong conscience or superego, weaker, 'nuturant' rather than productive, 'intuitive' rather than intelligent, and, if they are at all 'normal', suited to the home and family. In short, the list adds up to the typical minority group stereotype of inferiority: if they know their place, which is in the home, they are really quite lovable, happy, childlike loving creatures. In a review of the intellectual differences between little boys and little girls, Eleanor Macoby has shown that there are no intellectual differences until about high school, or, if there are, girls are slightly ahead of the boys. At high school, girls begin to do worse on a few intellectual tasks, such as arithmetic reasoning, and beyond high school, the achievement of women now measured in terms of productivity and accomplishment drops off even more rapidly. . . . In light of social expectations about women, what is surprising is not that women end up where society expects they will; what is surprising is that little girls don't get the message that they are supposed to be stupid until high school; and what is even more remarkable is that some women resist this message even after high school, college and graduate school."

(Psychology Constructs The Female) Naomi Weisstein

To continue the comparison between men and women and their roles, one can discuss the differences in the stereotypes which society presents to us as the 'typical' male and female.

On the sexual level, men are aggressive, strong, virile; women passive, cuddly, weak. Men are intellectual; women think only with their instinct; they rely on their emotion for any decision and "shy away" from any economic or life decision. Women wait, men act. While comparatively few men believe today that they have to be athletic, aggressive, or "masculine" at all times, women still cling to their own conceptions of their stereotype. Women joke about coming to college to get married, they feel embarrassed they are smarter than their boyfriend, and within an intellectual setting they persist in believing or sadly pretending that they do not actually want to learn anything, except how to get a date for Winter Carnival. Men outnumber women on every administrative level at UNB; and the ratio of men to women is not 4 to 1, as is the ratio of men to women at the university, it is much larger. UNB has never had a female SRC president, a female class president, a female valedictorian at Encenia. Those women who do gain high academic records often refuse to "push" for any kind of leadership in campus affairs, perhaps because it is not "feminine" to do so. With such a system, which makes roughly one-quarter of the student population "invisible", except at social functions or in class, the university wastes its facilities on women who fully intend to spend their lives after graduation in front of a TV set or in pursuit of a man.

Those women who choose to join the work force, either as professionals after university

graduation, or directly after high school find themselves at a strong disadvantage. Jobs are often "segregated", in that women are still a vast majority in secretarial, domestic, teaching, and nursing professions; while men dominate the higher paying

jobs as businessmen, school principals, administrators and doctors. Employers are often reluctant to hire qualified women for administrative positions because these are long-term jobs, and a woman may decide to get married or to have children, which will take her away from her job. Fewer women attain a high educational status, which places them lower on the economic scale than men. Their wages are generally lower than men's, sometimes, for exactly the same job and hours as men, especially in factory and restaurant work.

Women's Liberation concerns itself with these problems and seeks to find solutions applicable to the condition of women in a psychological, social, and political sense. The fundamental problem seems to be that of the woman's conception of herself. The solution seems to be in education which will confront women with other alternatives to their present image, so that they, and society as a whole, will reject the stereotype of the "successful" woman as being a narrow shallow project whose "project" in life is to be entirely concerned with man, home and children, and to negate the intellectual and decisive side of her nature.

The following proposals for

actions and education have been put forward at the past meetings of the Women's Liberation Group:

1. Education by means of pamphlets and discussion starting at the high school level, concerning birth control, the exploitive factors present within the marriage system in our society, and the reasons why it is necessary for each woman to decide for herself what kind of life and occupation she will have as an adult.
2. Co-operative day-care centers which will leave women free to work or go to university-centers which will not depend upon the mother's financial status or social background in order for her to have her children adequately cared-for.
3. Education and actions which will point out to both men and women the exploitive nature of advertising, beauty contests and other practices within society which serve to perpetuate the image of woman as a sexual object, rather than a complete, many-sided human personality.