

A Strategy For

(By Mary Trew, member of Vancouver Women's Liberation Alliance and the Young Socialists).

The past decade has been one of world-wide struggle for liberation; it has been the most intense period of social convulsion in this century. Peoples and nations around the world are uniting in revolutionary ferment against the oppressive nature of capitalism. In the last ten years, we have seen a youth movement grow from small-scale rebellions against a number of rotten institutions into a powerful revolt of youth on a global scale.

As each oppressed group in turn discovered the nature of its oppression under capitalism and imperialism, so women have discovered that they too thirst for free and fully human lives, for self-determination and an end to their oppression as women. They are uniting to demand more of the rights and human dignity that they have been denied since the dawn of class society. The inability of capitalism to meet the demands and needs of women is becoming ever more apparent to the women's liberation movement; and this movement has enormous potential as a powerful lever to be used against a society which oppresses not just women but the entire human race. The question which socialists must answer is this: how do we help this movement to fulfil its potential? What is the best strategy for the liberation of women?

EMERGENCE OF THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

The roots of the women's liberation movement lie in the inherent contradictions of capitalism. The possibility now exists for women to have greater freedom than ever before and yet they remain in shackles. A shorter part of a woman's life span is devoted to her traditional role as childbearer and childrearer, and the material means exist to liberate women from all the most onerous aspects of

childcare and housework. Medical science is now capable of giving women control over their bodies to a degree never before possible in human history. More and more are entering institutions of higher learning and acquiring professional skills.

Yet these developments only sharpen the contrast between the potential for the liberation of women and the actuality of their oppression. Women continue to be defined almost solely through their roles as wife and mother, and childcare and housework remain almost totally the realm of "woman's world". Women are used as guinea pigs by the profit-hungry drug monopolies and are denied the right to choose when and whether they will bear a child. University degrees and professional training lead women to low-paying jobs and to constant confrontations with sexual discrimination. More and more women are coming to understand their profound social economic and psychological oppression and the narrow, restricted future which lies before them in this society. It is no accident that the women's liberation movement began among students, professional and more materially privileged women; they are in the best position to sense the appalling discrepancies between their potential and actual situations and they are the freest to act against these injustices.

POTENTIAL OF THE MOVEMENT

The women's liberation movement has the potential to reach out to all women, to draw them into an anti-capitalist struggle and towards the socialist solution. The movement can reach far beyond its present boundaries to the working class women who are by far the most oppressed in our society. They are the hardest hit by wage discrimination and are used as a pool of cheap labour; they are the greatest victims of the oppressive abortion laws and of the lack of

freely available birth control information and devices; it is they who suffer most harshly under the double burden of full-time worker and full-time homemaker.

No series of reforms, however far-reaching, can eradicate women's oppression, for it is deeply embedded in the foundations of the capitalist system itself. As the movement grows, more and more women are becoming aware of the common enemy -- aware that it is the capitalist system which sustains and benefits from their oppression.

It is in this context of the nature of women's oppression and the potential of the movement as a revolutionary force that we must determine the way forward for the movement, determine a strategy.

PROGRAM

The demands upon which the women's liberation movement must be built are an essential aspect of this discussion. Unless the demands which we put forward speak to the real needs of women, hit at the real source of their oppression, we will be unable to mobilize the women of our country to propel the struggle forward.

Four themes stand as the programmatic basis of the movement. They are:

1. Women must have complete control of their bodies. Freely available birth control information and devices. Government research to provide safe contraceptives. Removal of all restrictions on abortion -- free abortion on demand.
2. Special measures to ensure that women have complete access to educational facilities. Abolition of the need for an income for students. Universal coeducation. Encouragement in analytical fields. Write women back into history -- tell the truth about women. Abolition of all forms of sex discrimination in the schools.
3. Women must be freed from their traditional responsibility for the child. The government should provide 24-hour child care centres which would permit women to seek employment outside the home. A state wage for those who choose to be homemakers.
4. Complete equality for women at work. Equal pay for equal work. Paid maternity leave. Preferential admission to certain types of educational programs to compensate for women's secondary status and psychological conditioning.

This programmatic basis of the Women's Liberation Movement speaks to the real needs of women in this country throughout the world, and it is around these demands that the movement will develop in an anti-capitalist direction.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

In this early stage of its development the movement suffers from a certain degree of inexperience and inadequate leadership. Some women approach their oppression in a personal and unpolitical way; they develop strategies of psychological readjustment and anti-men attitudes, or restrict their activities to small consciousness-raising groups or communes. Some take the "revolutionary" approach, excluding any women who have not reached the "revolutionary consciousness." These misadventures and blind-alley developments are for the most part symptoms of growing pains within this young movement.

In Canada at present, only a very small number of women have been mobilized in the independent women's liberation groups. Although the groups do exist in all the major cities and in many smaller centres across the country, they are still largely in the process of defining themselves, their programs and their strategies. By and large they have been unsuccessful in orienting themselves toward working class women and newly radicalizing women in such a way as to draw these forces solidly into the groups on a common basis. Their still-small size stands in contrast to the enormous potential of the movement. Although it is true that the vast majority of Canadian women do not yet see the need for a revolution which oppresses them, in ever-increasing numbers they are becoming aware that they are denied their rights, and they are ready to fight for them. Individual frustration and anguish are turning into rebellious anger and a desire for action.

Our task as revolutionaries then is to put forward demands which will mobilize these women and aim the struggle in a revolutionary direction; in short, to set women in motion against their enemy, the capitalist system. We must bring this movement to full consciousness of itself and its power, and lead it to victory.

WHAT KIND OF MOVEMENT?

The most important basic characteristic of the emerging women's liberation movement, which gives it such revolutionary implications, is its independence. The movement is related to and interconnected with, other struggles -- the youth rebellion, the student power movement, the Black and Chicano liberation, the struggle against the war in Vietnam, China, trade union struggles -- but it has its own demands, its own organizational forms. Its fate is directly dependent on the evolution of other struggles. For the first time in decades, women are saying that they are willing to wait for anyone else to take up their struggle; that they are unwilling to subordinate their demands to the needs of any other struggle. Women's auxiliaries are no longer live the women's liberation movement!

The movement is independent too, in the sense that it is developing outside the framework of the big business and political parties. As the movement grows, the ruling class will make great efforts to co-opt it, to capture its leadership and divert the movement from an independent, mass revolutionary direction. However, by maintaining demands which are true to their nature, anticapitalist, we can guard against this possibility.

There are some tendencies within the left who hold that independent women's organizations promote divisions in the working class. In so doing, they ignore the fact that

LIFE SIZE Just Add Air... Life-Like in Every Detail!

INFLATABLE

5'4" Tall **DOLL** 9.95 DELUXE MODEL

37" - 23" - 36"

AMAZINGLY WARM SOFT DETAILS FUN AT ANY PARTY

THIS AD EXPLOITS WOMEN

FOR PLAYFUL ADULTS

Judy, the inflatable doll, is made of strong, durable vinyl that feels soft and smooth like the lovely girl from whose body she was fashioned. INFLATABLE -- just add air and she's ready for real action.

"Hi, I'm Judy, the life size inflatable London doll that no man should be without. I'm completely Life-Like in every detail. My young body is formed from warm, soft, Flesh-Like vinyl, that has human-like softness and feel; a body you'll love to touch. ADD AIR, and instantly I'm ready for action -- your perfect 'PLAY-MATE.'

My soft, life-like body is flexible and bendable. Let me be your loving companion. I'll live with you when you're at home -- sit beside you as we travel in your car -- even be your swimming buddy (I float). I know you will love playing with me. Send for me today and my many talents and personal attractions will be all yours to enjoy. I'm 5'4" tall and measure 37-23-36."

COMPLETE PACKAGE ... For the ultimate enjoyment of your London Doll order Judy complete with all her interesting accessories, including, BIKINI, Peek-a-boo NEGLIGEE, WIG in blonde, brunette, or black, etc.

BEWARE OF IMITATIONS Judy is the original and finest London doll. The doll made with the softest, strongest, life-like body created just to please you! GET THE REAL THING -- DON'T BE FOOLED BY INFERIOR PAINTED BALLOON-TYPE, CHEAP IMITATIONS.

WE'RE POPULAR
WE'RE COMPANY
WE'RE SAFE
COCKTAIL HOUR
WE'RE SPORTING

LONDON SALES, Dept. JD-502
P.O. Box 3426, Granada Hills, Calif. 91344

Please rush my inflatable doll(s) to me for a 10 day free trial. I must be 100% satisfied or my money will be refunded promptly.

I enclose 9.95 + .95 postage for my DELUXE DOLL.

I enclose 16.95 + .95 postage for my DELUXE DOLL AND COMPLETE PACKAGE -- includes BIKINI, Peek-a-boo NEGLIGEE and WIG BLONDE BRUNETTE BLACK.

PLEASE RUSH! I enclose 50c extra. For C.O.D. orders send \$1.00 deposit. Save C.O.D. charges by sending cash, check or money order with your order.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Calif. residents add 5% State sales tax.

Photos shown are the actual live models from which the dolls were fashioned.

SPECIAL 10% DISCOUNT when ordering 2 or more dolls!

5 feet 4 inches **TALL!**