

# MANIFESTO

WE APPEAL TO WOMEN TO COMBINE IN SOLIDARITY TO MAKE THESE DEMANDS AND, SIMULTANEOUSLY TO SECURE THE UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION OF MEN IN MAKING THEM.

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Women's Liberation is not a feminist movement, i.e., it is not narrowly confined to the struggle of women for equality with men in the present society. The aims of Women's Liberation are TOTAL in the sense that the liberation of women must concur with the liberation of all individuals from a situation in which the only socially accepted mode of self-expression or development is in terms of pre-defined sexual roles.

A woman is never taken for herself: she is always "Bill's bird", "the little woman" or just "mum". Her greatest humiliation lies in the situation where her decorated body, being the subject of male phallic fantasies and the consequent source of much commercial profit, determines her VALUE both in her own ideas and those of the male.

But that the male regards the female in this way indicates that he, too, is imprisoned within a sexual role: potency and/or virility become for him fetishized and, in worshipping them, symbols of his power over woman. (The woman, knowing herself to be desired, exploits this male obsession: in this sense, and in others, the power relationship is reciprocal.) This situation, because no male can ever measure up to such absolute potency, leads to male fears, real though false, as to his "virility", his "masculinity." Just as the woman is required to fulfil expectations of her role as sexual object, wife, mother, so is the male required to fulfil expectations of him as actor in the outside world. To succeed as bread-winner he must develop qualities required for success in our society: aggressiveness, competitiveness, emotional detachment, and, since he is always involved in authoritarian work, structure, authoritarianism. Moreover, in a national society that relates to other societies in terms of power (economic and military), he has to be trained, psychologically and physically, for the military role, as instrument of his nation's power-obsession. If he rejects this role on political/moral grounds, society calls him "coward", "sissy"; and, since much of self-definition and security is based in the dominant role of "masculinity", his whole being in relation to the existing world may be called into doubt.

"Masculinity," like "femininity", is a role socially imposed: it is a role reflecting the historical process in which man's ('man' used as to signify the male human species in abstract) greater physical strength determined him as, progressively, hunter, armed protector, commander of armies, ruler of society. This role derives from the first division of labour, which was sexual, required for man's management of basic scarcity.

In modern society, where basic scarcity no longer exists and there is productive potential to satisfy all needs, where technological mastery has removed the need for human physical strength, the masculine role and its counterpart, the feminine role, need no longer exist. This is true not only of the primary social roles (the sexual ones) but of all social roles. That is to say, we are now in an historical situation that has the potential for individuals to free themselves of being defined by role structures, of a situation in which, the role having defined the behaviour appropriate to it, the individual has become a reactive being, not an active subject. The historical possibility now exists for individuals to realise themselves in terms of human creative potential and sociability.

Our society talks of "love" between male and female; but this "love" is a mystification, the rationale for the modern marriage/family institution — for how can spontaneous feeling or communication of self take place when individuals relate not to each other as individuals, but to each other as the occupiers of predefined roles? How can the generous free reciprocity that is human occur when the nature of these sexual roles is to make the male dominant over the female? — for reciprocity can only occur in a situation between equals.

Accordingly, the freeing of woman from her subservient role, the assertion of her freedom as an individual, must simultaneously involve an attack on the male role. Men must have demonstrated to them the destruction of human relations that they perpetuate in clinging to their dominance as males. For males are frustrated in their possible wish for communication of their dreams and despairs to the individual closest to them by the obstacles arising from the pre-definition of the other (the female) — a pre-definition usually mutually established and maintained — as illogical, irrational, ignorant of the affairs of the world, gossipy, frivolous, etc. particularly when that other expects him to know how to handle the world and despises him if he admits any failure here.

If we believe that men and women are individuals, each with an experience of the world unique to them, who can relate to this world as active critical subjects rather than passively behaving as the occupants of pre-defined roles, then why does this individuality not express itself, throw off these chains? The answer lies in the nature of the social system in which they exist. As Herbert Marcuse says: **Domination** is in effect whenever the individual's

goals and purposes and the means of striving for and attaining them are prescribed to him and performed by him as something prescribed." In a society where hierarchical top-down organisation predominates, a minority (of men) will dominate the rest. This domination is based not just in their actual power (control of the economy, of the political and military systems) but in their more or less conscious perpetuation of a culture that induces people to see this system of domination as natural. This cultural control successfully whittles down the imagination of most to conceive that society might be organised so as to minimize domination and allow each individual effective participation in the decisions governing his/her life. Domination, in requiring effective control of the many by the few determined to hold on to their power, requires that people be taught to behave in organised, predictable patterns that service the structure of domination. This is why sexuality and human relations have to be institutionalized in the marriage-family. Spontaneity is the arch-enemy of this system, and spontaneity arises when individuals exercise their right to act, to choose, to determine their lives, because it is then that the particular chain of behaviour is broken. This is the meaning of the "Anarchy" that so patently terrifies not only our own rulers but ourselves. We are terrified because in adjusting to this structure of domination, we have had to repress our natural spontaneity and life-instincts, and instead of living life in itself, we have subordinated our lives to gaining the means (work — wage, salary) merely to exist, the standard of subsistence becoming more developed, more comfortable as the productive capacity of society increases. Life as an end in itself gives way to life as a means to consumption in itself. The distortion and oppression of life in this way is experienced by the psyche as so natural, so ordinary — for it has become automatic — that freedom becomes almost inconceivable and, into the bargain, a terrifying spectre in the threat it presents to the already established personality in the world. And it is much "easier" to live, as far as possible, life as a patterned routine than to choose freedom.

## WE CAN CHANGE THIS SITUATION, WHICH IS HISTORICAL NOT NATURAL

It is significant that Women's Liberation, in being the first expression of political radicalism to be consciously and directly concerned with the individual, in effect, with the intimate relation between two human beings, with human relations generally, has erupted in the modern, western societies in this time of affluence and of the struggle for acceptance of the common humanity of other (women constituting the largest group with minority status), minority groups, the negroes and the Vietnamese.

Women's Liberation has to evoke what woman already, if only partially know — that they are denied individual creative potential, denied recognition as individuals in their own right. Every woman who has looked ahead, passively and/or despairingly, to a closed future of marriage, children and housework knows this; every woman who has wanted education sufficient to get a job in which she can express herself to some degree, who has sought after good jobs or who has suffered routine jobs knows the brutal, discriminatory practices all along that line. We should be more inclined to believe the myth of the "happy housewife" if it could be demonstrated that woman ever had any choice to be otherwise. Such "happiness" may be the symptom of more or less mature, more or less tenuous adaptation to a virtually inescapable situation, rather than real

happiness. That the situation is inescapable for most middle-class women as for working-class women suggests the obstacles to be not only, or even primarily, material. On the whole, middle-class women only escape the pressures of "Women's Day" ideology and social expectations, made most effectively by the family, if they, by educational attainment or some "break", have partial refuge in a community (university, bohemian/deviant social groups) which goes part or all of the way in accepting her as an individual first, a woman second. As the last phrase indicates, even here she is likely to be fragmented into roles with their respective functions.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION can speakhead the change, but to do this it must show itself as HUMAN (individual) LIBERATION. IT MUST, in this latter sense, ALWAYS REMEMBER THERE IS LITTLE POINT IN CLAIMING EQUALITY IF THE NATURE OF THE LATTER IS TO MAKE US EQUAL TO UNFREE MEN.

Yet while men are unfree, women are materially, socially and psychologically more unfree — hence WOMEN'S Liberation. WOMEN'S = HUMAN Liberation since, in freeing ourselves, we must free men (and vice versa).



*"Is that all you can suggest: 'Let her get on top once in a while?'"*

## PROGRAMME

The following aims and demands may be classified as two types:

- (A) **Structural** - those that would challenge and eventually destroy the existing system of domination.
- (B) **Reforms** - i.e., although significant change would be required for their achievement, they do not challenge the basis of the system of domination.

## (A) STRUCTURAL

(the general critique made above is already assumed: only specific points are made here).

## WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS:

- (1) An end to the socialisation of children and adults — by the family, the education system, the mass media, and socio-cultural agencies in general — into their respective sexual roles.

- (2) The abolition of institutionalisation of relationships between men and women. This means abolition of the family as an **institution**, an end to the laws bonding together the members of a family. There is no reason why people may not freely **choose** to live in a familial situation; but they should remain in that situation only by their free will. Equally, people should be free to choose other relational situations — e.g. small communal groupings.
- (3) The democratisation of inter-sexual and inter-generational relationships. In the relations between man and woman, between parents and children, there should exist reciprocal recognition of each as an individual in his/her own right, with capacity and right to participate in the decisions governing that relational situation, and with freedom to pursue his/her own life as he/she deems fit. (While small children may not be able to exercise such rights, nonetheless, they should still be respected as individuals; the age at which they can exercise such rights is problematic and should be left flexible to accommodate the differences in growth of individuals.)
- (4) The end of commercial exploitation of women as sex-objects, of human sexuality in general. This would require the ends of the economic system to be human, rather than profit and production as overriding ends in themselves.
- (5) The end of a situation in which most individuals, for the bulk of their working lives, are involved in alienated labour. The development of a situation in which, so far as we have to meet material necessity, we do so communally and democratically, in which, therefore, the labour process and product are our own and not another's. A situation in which each and all, having met material necessity, possess the means whereby to develop and express themselves.

**(B) REFORMS  
WE DEMAND:**

- (1) Democratisation of the existing family institution, at least so far as the limits of institutionalisation allow it.
- (2) The equal sharing of housework and child-care between husband and wife, with the work situation adjusted accordingly. (e.g., guarantee of women's right to work; the granting by employers of free shopping time during working time to both men and women.)
- (3) The rationalisation of housework in the provision of communal facilities, such as local and cheap dining facilities, child-minding centre, and laundries for those who want to use them.
- (4) If women are forced by temporary necessity (the care of infants), or *choose* to undertake the bulk of the domestic work, that they be paid a wage by the state for what is essential productive labour.
- (5) That women have the right to control their own bodies:
- That the government initiate and finance a widespread education campaign on birth-control, and establish local community birth-control centres for the dissemination and distribution of birth-control information and devices.
  - That such information and centres be extended to cover the various physiological disorders the female body is susceptible to.

- The abolition of sales tax—at present 27½%—on contraceptives.
  - That free abortion on demand be instituted.
- (6) The removal of all barriers to equality for women in *work*.
- The full integration of all areas of work, i.e. an end to the labelling of some areas as being fit only for men, or only for women. (Only if this occurs can “equal pay for equal work” really mean economic equality.)
  - Equal pay.
  - The payment of maternity allowances to women workers at least three months before births and one to two years after births.
  - Guarantee of the same or similar job to a woman returned after absence through pregnancy.
  - The establishment of free, small, professionally-staffed child-centres in every work place (factories, offices, stores, universities, schools); these centres could be directed by a committee of elected parents and staff.
  - That further training, promotion, etc., be equally open to women as to men.
- (7) The abolition of all sexual differentiation in *education*: i.e.
- The establishment of all schools as co-educational in every sense.
  - The abolition of any sexual differentiation in subjects and vocational choices.
  - If there exists training in schools in health, cooking etc., that boys and girls be required to undertake it.
- (This demand is important in the present situation so as to legitimize male interest in cooking, etc., to destroy the inbuilt male resistance to such tastes and thereby free girls from their future burden of having been the only ones inducted into these “arts”—Once this has occurred, compulsion should give way to individual choice.)
- The encouragement of and provision of opportunities for all girls to develop their education as far as possible, to develop interest in the traditional male preserves of politics and technology, and to secure equal training in these fields.
- (8) The provision of educational training or retraining schemes and employment for women of an age no longer burdened by the care of children, so that they may regain their self-respect as individuals in developing their capacities and contributing to the community.
- (9) The repeal of the law that makes it an offence for male homosexuals to express their homosexuality as they choose; the end of all discrimination in employment, and in social life generally, against homosexuals.
- (10) That women be written back into history; that analysis of their historical role, of the source and development of the division of labour between the sexes, be made.

