

## The Dialectic of the New Feminist Movements

*Jim Davis, Ozark Bioregion, USA*

### 1

For as long as the patriarchal mode of domination of people based on sex prevails, there will be an ongoing unrelenting struggle for women's liberation. At times this struggle will be out in the open, but more often it is hidden within the domain of family politics. During times of great social, economic and political crises this struggle erupts to the forefront to challenge all ideologies which oppress women. But every time this movement has arisen it has been put back down by the forces of the patriarchy: orthodox religions, the state, artificial notions of family structure and the sexual division of labor. These methods of domination have been successful so far mainly because opposition movements have not come up with methods that would overthrow these oppressive forces. And if women are to succeed in the next round of struggle then these powers of domination must be actively and directly opposed.

### 2

The overthrow of the patriarchy is just one of the struggles against Capital. It has been said that all Socialists must be feminists but that most feminists are not Socialists. This is sadly true and it is for this reason that modern feminism lacks the imagination necessary to confront and overthrow Capital. This is a most unfortunate contradiction which has to be dialectically transcended. If Capital is not directly opposed and struggled against then all human liberation becomes instead the liberation of Capital from traditional fetters. And the liberation of Capital from all restraint is an ever increasing nightmare world that only spells the New Dark Age. This New Dark Age may have already started.

### 3

Feminism is an essential element in the struggle of human beings against the domination of Capital. However, not all feminist movements are alike or historically continuous. It is this lack of real continuity between the old feminist movement and the present one that leads the new movement to repeat the errors of the past. This is a direct result of the different origins behind the past and present movements. The present movement owes its origin to the internalized contradictions felt by female participants in the civil rights struggle of the sixties. Their initial theory was limited in being a reaction to their positions within the civil rights and anti-war movements. Doing all of the essential work of movement building, which is the active raising of community to struggle, they were assigned to the very bottom ranks by their male 'comrades' who saw the 'Revolution' as another form of macho-ism. The movement arising out of the society it claimed to be reforming ended up mirroring it. Therefore, women needed to break away in order to resolve the conflict between the movements' claimed goals and actual practice. It raised up a critique of everyday personal life which became the focus of the struggle.

### 4

It was at this point that the new feminism started to look about, and dug up the past for ideological support. It seized upon the ideas of the past without questioning the reason for the old movement's demise. In doing so, the feminist movement drifted from the real human world into that of the Idea, and like all movements based upon thought fragmented into competing sects. And then another conflict arose, this time drawn up according to economic class, as one section of the movement sought liberation by accommodation with Capital by accepting its ideas and becoming Capital (living beings that are under the control of the dead as Capital is the rule of dead labor). In other words, they sought to become part of the managerial ruling class. The rest of the feminist movement were absorbed into various leftist parties or moved into the realm of the absurd like lesbian separatism, goddess worshippers, Firestone's mechanical sexless utopia, etc. So what started out as

a potentially liberatory movement derailed itself. It avoided the issue of class and increasingly resorted to a false male/female opposition to explain oppression. I feel what is needed now is not the formation of a new feminist movement, rather we should incorporate all of its valid points into a larger movement for human social liberation.

## 5

What remains of the feminist movements of the 60s and early 70s have become part of the problem. This feminist movement has become recuperated into the capitalist system of domination; it has accepted its role to play. It is the way forward for certain middle-class women and it is the bogey woman for the New Right, thus it performs two functions. These feminists thought they could be social revolutionaries, but the revolution they sought was sold out by them. They accepted a few crumbs from the table of Capital and sold out all humankind. Not willing to face up to the issues of class war, they turned to biology. They sought to explain women's social oppression upon the accidents of birth. Turning more and more to their own self-interests they wrote off half of all humankind as potential allies. They failed to see that the struggle for women's liberation is a part of the larger struggle for human liberation from all Dominion.

## 6

The contradictions between the reality of everyday life and Western ideology came to a head in the 1960s as various oppressed groupings realized that their oppression contradicted ideology concerning freedom and equality. The very visible oppression of African-Americans within the U.S. social structure and their struggle against it, provided the catalyst for other struggles. These oppressed peoples realized that the special oppression they were personally experiencing was an essential part of the capitalist mode of domination, exploitation, and consumption. This realization forced many of them into ever increasing anti-capitalist positions and the most radical of these groups began to advocate the social revolution.

## 7

However, Capital has the ability to recuperate any opposition movement which does not call into question the very existence of Capital itself. Capital offers the false hope of a way out of oppression, but only for individuals. If one only played by the mystic rules of the marketplace then you can transcend sex, race and caste. These persons then become spectacular individuals who are then paraded about as proof that differences amongst Americans do not really exist and that group struggle for liberation is unnecessary. Thus group liberation is impossible as long as Capital itself is not struggled against.

## 8

The feminist movement is divided into two mutually opposed camps: one which is reactionary and the other potentially liberatory. It is only potentially liberatory in that it presents a partial critique of everyday life. It failed historically since it did not raise a critique of the totality of everyday life. And when they attempted to turn theory into practice they suffered from a lack of vision. They placed too much trust in technological solutions and faith in the very institutions which oppressed them. Overall, this is not a long term or unsolvable problem and by no means just a feminist problem. The whole range of social revolutionary movements are similarly infected. This can be summed up by a simple observation: all social revolutionaries too often try to seek a single solution for problems which have multiple causes. Capital is not the cause of our social ills, rather it is the long result of centuries of exploitation which takes a variety of forms; it has numerous origins and numerous ends. To overcome it we need to ride the waves of history but not become too attached to a particular wave; struggles come and struggles go, only the struggle in general goes on.

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Patriarchy is a pre-capitalist mode of domination whose origins have been lost in the mists of pre-history. It exists in many forms, in all cultures, in all lands and across all known economic systems. The goddess worshipping matriarchy of the feminists is a myth. Modern cultures which worship the goddess oppress women even more than male God religions, so worshipping a goddess is not a sign of non-oppression. What this means is that the patriarchy does not need Capital for its survival and the mere overthrow of the regime of dead labor will not end it. Patriarchal modes of domination can only be overthrown when they are consciously exposed and dismantled. This is not a task for after the revolution. It must take place in the here and now. We must settle in for the long haul and live in our daily lives the future we wish to create. There can be no social revolution without the liberation of women.

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The most radical of these new feminists eventually decided to declare their innocence by tossing all of the flame for the continuance of the patriarchy upon the backs of existing men. Even when shown that women play an essential role in the reproduction of patriarchal forms of domination within the family (due to their primary role in the early socialization of children) they still refuse to accept responsibility. These would-be social revolutionaries seek only an easy way out, to avoid the painful tasks of reorganizing their everyday social lives. It is far easier to be a victim and go on placing blame than actively to seek out and make reality with practical solutions. The plain truth of the matter is this: all existing men and women equally are oppressed by the structure of domination we inherited from our parents and cannot be held accountable for the sins of our fathers and mothers. However, this does not mean I justify present forms of oppression which we have a chance to struggle against and overthrow. I feel we must struggle against all systems of domination. And the responsibility to do this lies with us all; men and women must unite against Power. One way to do this is to end patriarchal socialization and to abolish all sexual divisions of labor in our everyday lives. We must not pass onto a new generation the domination we detest. Therefore we must form unity towards the development of a new humanity which grows out of our present struggle for freedom.

11

The various left parties and groups all seem to offer the same quick solutions to the problems confronting women. All of their solutions are based upon their seizure of power and of the use of state power to overcome oppression. One solution often advanced to the problem of domestic oppression is the nationalization of housework. This is done through the setting up of communal kitchens, house cleaning services and day-care centres. What this solution completely ignores is the latent sexual division of labor. Since the largest section of the adult population without paid work is women, who do you think will run these nationalized services? Women! So under the leftist scheme women are freed from individual domestic labor only to be subjected to industrialized domestic labor. Therefore liberation becomes a mere sham, a spectacular trick played upon women by their would-be liberators. What is needed is not the nationalization of domestic labor, but the communalization of it. This means that all domestic labor is shared equally by all members of society. In the commune of the future all would participate equally in the maintenance of the commune, preparation of meals, and of the caring for its children (even those without children would participate).

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Another solution advanced by leftists is to advocate equal pay for equal work or comparable work. Leftists here do not even question the oppression of women as workers, but merely call into question the rate of pay. These leftists are so dominated by the modernist world view that it limits their vision and prevents them from ever transcending the present form of capitalist economy. Thus they say it is alright to exploit as long as all are exploited equally. How far is this from the historic

socialist project of abolition of the wage system! At a time when trade unions were advancing the slogan of 'a fair day's pay for a fair day's work', the revolutionary movement was demanding the abolition of the wage system. The problem with capitalism is not just a question of the amount of one's paycheck; we need to abolish capitalism and not meekly beg for a pay raise.

Women cannot achieve liberation as long as they remain domestic slaves. Under the present economic situation women are doubly oppressed both at home and in the workplace. This situation needs to be transcended; the sexual division of labor has to be overthrown. Unless this is done, liberation is impossible. So far all leftist solutions rest upon the maintenance of society as it is and not upon the future we wish to create. While the exact forms of the future social family can only be known in outline, we can still try consciously to eliminate the sexual division of labor within our everyday lives. We should strive to make our lives as prefigurative of our vision as is possible while living in the old world order.