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BATTLE ACTS

"...no more traditions chains shall bind us..."

the forgotten women

THE FORGOTTEN WOMEN

By Sharon Shelton
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In recent years, much attention has been focused on the plight of women workers and the unequal conditions so rampant in the labor market. As more new women of necessity enter the work force each year, there is a growing awareness of the special oppression faced by women on the job. Equal pay for equal work rightly has been a rallying cry for the struggle against those many inequalities that women wage-earners face. And this struggle on the part of so many women who have toiled under the most wretched conditions is crucial indeed.

But, often too little attention may be afforded those women who are *not* wage-earners—whether they are merely not remunerated for equally long hours of hard labor not considered productive or whether they are women who are denied participation in the work of society.

These are the forgotten women. These are the women who are discarded on the scrapheap because they do not produce for profit and therefore in the eyes of capitalist society are valueless. They are the legions of housewives, women on Welfare, older women, women in prison, and those who are ill. They may be forgotten because they are a member of an oppressed nationality, suffering a double oppression in racist society and unable to find jobs because of discriminatory hiring practices. Or they may be gay women, forced to hide their true identity and constantly facing exposure, contempt, and even brutality because of their sexual preferences.

And ultimately, the liberation of these women goes hand in hand with the liberation of their wage-slave sisters and with all those exploited by capitalist society. For they will not be free until the very basis of social relations is drastically changed—until production is so reorganized that productive value is used to provide for the needs of the people and not for the profit of the bosses.

Traditionally, women have been assigned the role of reproducing and maintaining the work force. While this work is outside the productive forces, the hours of a

housewife are long and unrewarded. For example, the U.S. Department of Labor estimates that women may work up to 99.6 hours in the home in a week—at no pay! And millions of women across this country daily face the drudgery of cooking, scrubbing, waxing, ironing, dusting, and changing diapers. The work is lonely and hard, and it has no value on the marketplace.

Women on Welfare face even further humiliation in capitalist society. The average mother receiving Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) is the head of a family of three children. This means that she must take on the burden of childrearing and housework, just like the housewife. Only with the Welfare mother, this burden is compounded because it is a task that she must perform alone without a husband to help out. Like the housewife, she is unpaid for her many long hours of toil. But not only does her work go unrewarded, she is even told that the meager pennies allocated to keep her alive by the state constitute some kind of "gift." On the average, this "gift" turns out to be a mere $48.70 per person a month! So it should be no surprise, despite all the myths about women on Welfare, that the average stay on ADC is approximately 2 or 3 years.

Older women also suffer from contempt and abuse in this society that stresses that women should be youthful and attractive. A woman whose life has been centered around her children and household tasks suddenly may find herself useless when her children leave home. For the older woman, it is difficult to get a job, and if she is too old to work, Social "Security" barely provides. According to the *New York Post*, in fact, 5 million people of the 20 million over 65 are now living on incomes significantly below poverty scale. And 68.3 percent of all old age recipients in 1970 were women. These women lead lonely and unproductive lives in a society that no longer has a place for them.

Women who are mentally ill lead a similar, unproductive, lonely existence. According to Phyllis Chesler, author of *Women and Madness*, women are more likely to be placed in mental institutions than men. While 90 percent of psychiatrists and psychologists in the United States are male, their patients are predominantly female, constituting two-thirds of the patients in private treatment. Life for a woman in a mental institution may be terror. According to Dr. Peter Roger Breggin, writing in *Mental Health*, doctors are more prone to perform discredited treatments like lobotomies on female patients than on males. And not only are women subjected to other terrors such as physical abuse by male attendants, just the tedium and isolation of a life that has no purpose is enough to produce great suffering.

Women in prison are also isolated from society and suffer many of the same abuses as women in mental institutions, such as physical assaults by male guards. Most women in prison, however, work. And they work hard and long for the lowest pay. The jobs are cleaning clothes, scrubbing floors, preparing food, and maintaining prison grounds, and the pay ranges from 6 to 10 cents an hour. Usually it is spent for cigarettes or for food to supplement the inadequate diet offered by the prison.

Most women in prison are serving time for crimes of necessity, usually to feed a starving family. They may have been convicted of shoplifting, forgery, or prostitution. Many are framed up or falsely arrested. Others may spend years in prison just awaiting trial, because they could not afford bail. Black and brown women make up a sizable portion of the prison population due to the tremendous racism in the society, and these women are treated far worse than are other inmates. If the agonies in prison are not enough, the woman inmate often faces the additional problem of not even knowing where her children are or how they are doing. When the state takes possession of an inmate's children, she is not told their whereabouts and must live constantly wondering and worrying about her loved ones.

Women in prison, the aged, the mentally ill, the housewives. . . these are just a few of the women forgotten in our society. Many of these women work—and they work very hard—but they are made to feel that their work and their very lives have no value. Others of these women could work and contribute to society, but are never given the chance. Their futures seem bleak indeed as they quietly pass away their lives, ignored and suffering.

They do not have to suffer. In socialist countries, everyone is treated like a worker. No one experiences the degradation of "Welfare," and no one is left so impoverished that they must resort to crimes of survival. Housewives can work outside the home if they wish, with their children taken care of at free childcare centers as in Vietnam. Or women so choosing can work at home with their burdens eased by the many facilities available, such as free laundries and public dining rooms like those offered in Korea. Everyone, including the elderly and the mentally ill, is encouraged to perform whatever productive tasks they can. In Cuba, for example, the patients at a mental institution on the outskirts of Havana are busily engaged in the work of raising chickens and tending mammoth rose gardens. Instead of being locked

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"I went to Sparta at the age of 9..."

By Vivian

I went to Sparta, which is the Wisconsin Child Center, at the age of 9, and stayed there 3 years.

When I was there 2 years, I asked if I could go home, that is, back to Milwaukee, but they said that I had to stay there until I finished school.

I had thought about how long I had already been there, and to stay there another 3 or 4 years, I could not see.

I already felt like I was losing my identity, and didn't really know anything about my own color, since I had not been around Black people since I was 6 years old. So with it being this way, I couldn't really relate to my own color.

In order to change this, I asked to go home, and when Sparta refused, I told them that I would rather be in Oregon.

To get to Oregon took a month of work to actually act that bad, but they did sentence me to Oregon until I was 21.

Sometimes I wondered: "Was I better off staying there at Sparta?" In a way I was considered different there, because there were only five other Black children, so they did try not to be so hard on us, and we did get our way a little more.

Granted, there were some of the staff who were very bigoted toward us, even though we were children, but you learn how to adjust to things like that.

I went to Oregon, the Wisconsin Girls' School at the age of 13.

When I first went there, I really wished I had stayed at Sparta, because I had a very hard time with the Black girls.

To them, my way, my mannerisms were too much of an act, and they thought I was a big phoney. I couldn't explain to them, so that they would understand, that I had lived around whitey most of my life, and that their way of living was what I was used to. I was not trying to be white or think I was better than anybody else. I just happened to have a lot of whitey habits. Anyway, in this way I got into a lot of hassles, from the girls and the staff. So in order to try to hold myself together, the psychiatrist started putting me on medicine (which I had been on before in the other places). The medicine eventually led me to have a very bad pill habit.

Granted, I wasn't the easiest person to get along with. I did have a very bad temper. Also I liked to get in trouble with the administration. I was extremely hateful, but to me this was really the only way that I felt I could survive the mental abuse that I had been taking from a child on, or since I was taken from my mother.

From the children in all the institutions, I was talked about and was called many degrading names. By the time I got to Oregon, I had a very good inferiority complex. It was like I had built a brick wall around myself. I knew in order to keep my sanity, I was better off fighting people than becoming a puppet, like I've seen some of the kids turn out. Also I wasn't going to let myself in for a lot of hurts by the remarks people made.

I never stayed out long, because for me, it was simpler to live in the inside than to come out and try to readjust my whole life to the thought of having so-called freedom. I guess, the best way to explain this is that when you have been free all your life, and are suddenly thrown into prison, the first question you ask yourself is, "How am I going to do that time?" Well, the way I felt about going to live in the outside world was very terrifying to me. I still didn't know how to act like Blacks, eat most of their foods, and it seems that everybody had something bad to say or do to me, so it was easier to live in or stay in an institution. That's the only place I felt I had some type of security in my life.

So, from the time I was 13 until I was 18, I could never stay out more than 3 months at a time.

Oregon finally felt they couldn't help me any longer so they sent me to Taycheedah, the State Home for Women, on a juvenile charge.

When I first went there, it was a great big game to me. It fascinated me to be around all the older women at my age of 17 and to know all the money that it was possible to make illegally. Granted, things or rather getting money wasn't as easy as I thought, but I didn't find this out until much later.

My first two times up there weren't so bad, because it was like going to school and learning a lot of things, some good and others bad.

I got involved in the "gay life," because I was young, but more than that I found out that I actually enjoyed it at the time and that was what I wanted to do. As far as that life goes, I don't blame the older women for that, because didn't nobody break my arm to do it. It was the first time that I had gotten that much attention in my life and felt like someone really cared for me as a person.

As far as the food went, it was as good as the cook and the girls that work in the kitchen at the time. If the matron cared about what we had to eat, we had good meals. If she didn't, the food was bad. You ate if you wanted too, or if you didn't, you just went hungry, but you had to report to the dining room.

One thing that I think Taycheedah definitely does wrong is if an inmate is already copping out, and doesn't want to face reality, especially if she was a problem to the institution, then she could become what I call a "legal junkie."

As long as you got a story or if they feel that they don't want to take the time to be of help, you can definitely get medication. Instead of the staff trying to find out what the problem is, they seem to never have the time to bother. By they, I mean the administration, that is, the one you are supposed to talk your problems over with, such as, the social worker, superintendent, officer fives, or supervisor. The person you could talk to when you needed somebody was only the matron, and then it was against the rules for her to stand up there and talk to you. They said she was not

getting paid to take the time with us nor did she have the training.

The psychiatry doctors up there really have no understanding of inmates. They would be trying to make you have ideals by the way their society is run, and most inmates can't relate to that, because they have never been upper-middle class people. If you tell them what's on your mind or say something that they really don't understand, you can easily get thrown out of their office. Their biggest thing if they don't understand a person is to give them plenty of medicine.

When I went back the last time, which was my third trip, I was on an adult charge. I wasn't there 2 days before I was asking for medicine, which I got. To show you how much medicine, they would give an inmate, I have taken as much as 500 mg of thorazine at one time, 300 mg of thorazine four times daily, plus sleeping pills and some other antidepressants. I have seen where a girl was so doped up that she looked like a walking zombie. They called this helping a lady, but then her mind wouldn't even be functioning.

I have been on different types of medicine for approximately 12 years. I decided this last time after I had been up for about a year and a half to get completely off. If I had known then what I would have had to go through, I don't think I would have gotten off.

I had quite a few different withdrawal symptoms, and at one time I thought I would lose my mind. After the withdrawal was over, it still took about 3 months before I got my system together, as far as sleeping and not being "super" nervous. I still can't sleep good, and when things bother me, I can still feel the craving for the medicine to hold me up.

It took a lot of work in the inside of me and a lot of hurting myself in order to get my head together. I had to quit blaming a lot of people for what was happening to me and start trying to figure out why I would do such things to myself. It also took this last stay in the pen for me to do it.

I find now that society isn't really interested in me going straight. They are definitely not going to let it be that easy for me. You know, it's funny but "society" says that they want to help ex-cons, but at the same time they put all types of obstacles in our way. The government has all these different programs that they claim are to help ex-cons, but in reality what they want is to say they are helping, but at the same time keep putting us in jail.

The people that run these programs are so damn jive that sometimes it makes me sick. If they do happen to get an ex-con a job, they feel that he is supposed to take whatever bullshit that is necessary to stay on that job, even if he is qualified to do it. If you fail, then you are letting everybody else down. It's not important what could be happening to you mentally or how emotionally exhausted you could be when you get home. In a sense they feel that we are supposed to be extra grateful because we even got hired. If it even comes to the point that you have to lose your self-respect, tne employer can say anything to you any way he wants. Everybody else says, "Don't quit. Stick it out. Show them that you can make it. Don't let us down." Really, in actuality, all you are being is a nice scapegoat for them, so they are the ones to get a pat on the back. They are the ones that are saying that your problem is working, but you are the one living under the working conditions.

Three weeks after I was out, I started working for the telephone company. I really didn't even have time for a

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Children's Page

drawing by Grace Mitchell

At 91 Mollie Stein Fights Back!

By Jeanne Rosenbloom

The following is a true case history of an aged union organizer who attempted to return to New York City for treatment of her severe arthritis, after a 15-year residence in a large West Coast city. All names of individuals and institutions have been changed.

Mollie Stein, age 91, a widow of many years and in her youth a militant union organizer, arrived at Kennedy Airport recently. Her destination was a downtown union headquarters. She had been lonely away from the city of her youth, and believed she would receive better medical treatment through her hometown union. She was poorly dressed, and nearly unable to walk on her severely deformed, arthritic legs. But in her bag she was carrying nearly $6,000—her entire life's savings. Unfortunately, the old union retirement home she remembered fondly was no longer a reality, and since she arrived in New York City on a Sunday, she had no place to go.

Mollie was depressed and a little scared. She lay down on an airport bench, clutching her bag, and slept, waiting for Monday morning when she was sure her home could be located, and all would be well.

Airport police take a dim view, however, of old women in scraggly clothes, sleeping on benches, so they took a protesting and terrified Mollie into custody, bruising her arms badly in the process. After a couple of calls to certain social service organizations, which proved of no benefit, they hauled Mollie, kicking and screaming, off to the nearest major hospital. The doctors described her as incoherent, and she was diagnosed as suffering from *Senile Dementia.*

Mollie was growing more and more upset, and started loudly crying for her "brothers and sisters." Hospital officials assumed she was crazy, as *they* knew she had no living "family." She was, of course, calling for her union brothers and sisters.

Not wishing to be, as it was indelicately put, "stuck" with a mad, shouting, old woman, they summarily shipped her off to the local state mental hospital. Fortunately for Mollie (and one can only guess what her rather large stash of money had to do with the outcome), no one believed she was insane at this hospital, although by this point she was obstreperous, hostile, and generally hard to even talk to. Her pleas and demands to be allowed to see her brothers and sisters became even more insistent; the loss of her money enraged her; she was in a mental hospital, and her legs *hurt.* She keeps Kosher, and couldn't eat the slop the hospital offered her, anyway. She began to wail for death. All seemed clear to Mollie: she had been abducted, stripped of her savings, and was in a hole called a mental hospital. After years of self-reliance and struggle, she was incarcerated, with nothing left, in a locked mental hospital ward. She quite rightly trusted no one.

Social workers and other personnel decided that she should have the right to go to her union, her original, rational intent. Mollie wouldn't budge without her money. The Patient's Property Office wouldn't give her the money until she physically came and got it—Catch-22. The union, which was contacted, gave the sad news to the hospital social workers that Mollie's memories of the breadth of their social services were no longer the happy reality Mollie was anticipating.

The state hospital admissions note read as follows: "Mollie was crying at this point, was very depressed and said that she would be better off dead. This anxiety and depression was situationally induced. On interview Mollie was angry. . .speech was coherent, and her affect was appropriately depressed and her mood justifiably indignant. Insight and judgment were all unimpared." In short, what the hell was she doing in a mental hospital?

Through an incredibly complex bureaucratic process Mollie was taken to her union (whose address was changed from what she correctly remembered), given a Kosher sandwich, and pointed in the general direction of a hotel—still clutching her ragged bag of money.

If Mollie had not run into some unique hospital personnel at the second hospital, she would have most certainly traveled the well-worn path of many old people in similar situations—kept for the rest of her life in the state hospital. Her money would have been drained off at $411 a month for her "maintenance," until it was all gone. Then the state would have "generously" taken over her expense, until she died, which probably would have been soon—if not from grief, then from lousy medical care.

Ironically, Mollie must be considered one of the lucky ones, and if her story doesn't have a happy ending, it is still perhaps better than most. The last anyone heard of Mollie, a distant kin had dropped her off on the following Sunday, at 3:00 a.m. at the same airport, presumably so she could return to where she had left—still crying for her brothers and sisters.

Someday, Mollie, you and all old people won't have to beg for what you've rightfully earned, but will grow old with decent medical treatment and respect.

"The Golden Years" Social Security's broken promise

By Elizabeth Ross
Staff Writer for Workers World Newspaper

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made...

Those famous lines were written by an English poet, Robert Browning. He and his wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, spent most of their days far from the chilly fogs of England, basking in the mellow Italian sunshine; and they never worried about collecting their Social Security checks—not only because Social Security didn't exist in those days, but because they didn't need it, having both been born into comfortable, middle-class families.

In hopes of realizing an old age such as Browning described, working women and men in this country waged a long, hard struggle for Social Security benefits. It was a victory that workers won Social Security from the bosses in the thirties, despite the fact that monthly checks are still woefully inadequate. Even after the 20 percent increase that went into effect on October 1, 1972, the average monthly stipend for an individual with no dependents is now $156, and the minimum is still under $100.

Between 3 and 4 million elderly people are still living below the poverty line ($3,500 a year for a couple, by the government's own reckoning). Although Congress has been geeing and hawing for 5 years over a bill to increase the amount an aging person can earn and still keep those checks coming in every month, the maximum at this time is only $2,100 a year.

However, a few of the 28,100,000 Americans who now collect Social Security don't need it. They can still collect the maximum—no matter how many stocks they own or how many tenements they might collect rent on—because the government sets a limit on *wages* earned by Social Security recipients, but no limit on any other form of income.

I had to quit my part-time job last summer because I had reached the maximum, and for every $2 I earned, I would have lost $1 from my allotment. But if I had earned $2,800 during the year, I would have lost *all* of my Social Security. It wasn't worth it, after working all those years to get it!

Several years ago, when the combined earnings from my job and Social Security came to $3,300 a year—still below the poverty line, but apparently enough to keep going—my husband became suddenly ill. He went to the clinic of one of New York's biggest hospitals, and on his second visit he was told he must be put to bed there. I was with him at the time, and we told the Admissions clerk we couldn't afford a stay in the hospital. He told us to consult a woman social service worker, who had a desk on the premises. When we told her the full extent of our income, she said there was no doubt my husband's stay in the hospital would be covered by one of the many charities that "exist for such cases as ours," and our fears were allayed.

When a bill for $1,200 for my husband's five-day sojourn in the hospital came to us in the mail, we cheerfully threw it into a drawer, being sure its appearance was only a formality. Another letter, a few days later, asked me to get a statement of my earnings from my employer, which I promptly attended to. To our amazement we soon received the news that I earned *$2 a week too much* to be eligible for any charity!

"Well," we said, "that's what they'll get—$2 a week." And we sent them $10 a month for about a year. But they said that wasn't nearly enough on such a large bill, and got out a judgment against us. My husband, who was still ill and unable to work, went to a lawyer, who said not to worry, not to declare bankruptcy—it would destroy our chances for getting credit anywhere (as though we had any thought of buying a car, a house, or even a color TV). Last month the hospital attached our checking account. There was only $94 in it, so it wasn't a major tragedy, but it was money we had been counting on to pay the rent, and we had to borrow from a friend. We will keep our rent money in a sock under the mattress from now on.

The story of this personal incident has shocked my middle-class friends, who consider it horrendous; but our experience is only a minor inconvenience compared with the real hardships that millions of elderly men and women face every day of their lives.

Think of the 85,000 people in the State of New York who were dropped from the welfare rolls this month to prevent them from receiving the aid they so desperately needed because the 20 percent increase in Social Security gave them those few extra dollars (in some cases only $10)!

Think of the 14,183 elderly patients waiting for death in New York City's profit-making nursing homes, and the 7,080 more in the City's "public" institutions. Barry Cunningham, writing in the *New York Post*, says, "Overcrowding, poor food, indifferent treatment...even brutality were revealed in unannounced inspection tours." Doesn't this sound more than a little like descriptions you've read about the nation's prisons?

Besides the usual diseases of old age—arthritis, heart disease, cancer, and respiratory ailments—that age-old

scourge of the poor, tuberculosis is still rampant in this, the richest country in the world. People over 65 who live in crowded conditions, eating the cheapest and least nutritious foods are 8 times as likely to contract TB as young people. Among the Black population, both men and women over 65 are 32 times more apt to get TB than young white people. My sister, who works in a state hospital in Delaware, says that most of the TB patients are elderly Blacks. She told me they are sent home "cured" often after a few months, but that many of them come back again a year later, having caught the disease once more because of the poverty in which they live. And yet, tuberculosis is a disease that can now be cured! Supposedly modern medicine has "conquered" it!

Think of the thousands of aging people who don't know their rights, or have any knowledge of fighting for them or of the foreign born, who know little of the language and less of the law. The case of Peter and Rose Marcus, both New Yorkers in their 70's, is appalling. That they slept at the South Ferry terminal in Battery Park on the waiting room benches, and carried their belongings around in shopping bags for three months this spring is a heartbreaking example of what can happen to untold thousands. Mrs. Marcus was rescued by a Henry Street Settlement House worker, who found her picking garbage and near-empty plastic cups of coffee out of the trash can in the terminal. How many other homeless wanderers are there in this vast and wealthy country, who have never been lucky enough to be noticed by a perceptive social worker?

One out of every 20 old persons in the United States lives in New York City. Many of them came from small towns to the "great city of opportunity" in their youth, hoping to find fame and fortune. Thousands poured in from Europe, Asia, and Latin America, hoping to leave the grinding poverty of their homelands behind. But the large segment who came not in hope, but in desperation, are the descendents of women and men captured in their native Africa to be sold here as slaves. Many Black New Yorkers over 65 fled from the South to escape the terror of Southern lynch mobs, whose victims were counted in the thousands.

One of the most telling statistics about old age in America is this: while one-seventh of the elderly of the nation are poor, in New York City (often called "fun city" or the modern Babylon), *more than one-half* live below the poverty line, with incomes under $3,000 a year!

Browning's words are a mockery to the poor and oppressed of the world. But one day they will have a universal meaning. Even now, in those lands where the struggle for a socialist society is in progress, the care of the aged as well as of the children is given top priority. Edgar Snow, who wrote about his travels in China after the revolution, told about meeting the ex-Emperor—Pu Yi—in a pleasant, sunny home for the aging. Pu Yi, at his own request, worked as a gardener, and said he had never been so happy in his life, "because there's no one here to order me around." When he wasn't gardening, he wrote a book about his memories of the court of the last of the Chinese dynasties. He felt he owed it to history to tell it like it was and would never be again.

There must be those living today who will tell it like it will never be again anywhere in the whole wide world.

Ethel Rosenberg — of strength and love

By Rosemary Neidenberg, New York City YAWF Women

After World War II there had been a general mood of optimism and an expectation of all the post-war world wonders. Bitter memories of the Depression of the thirties had been softened by the booming war production and post-war catching up on consumer goods of the forties. For a brief time, many Americans saw in the future the fulfillment of their dreams of home ownership and education for their children.

By the 1950s, a sagging peacetime economy was threatening the people's dream of eternal peace and prosperity. The triumph of Communist revolution in China, the loss of Eastern Europe to the Soviet bloc, and the development of an atom bomb by the Soviet Union were threatening the dream of those with money and power—the dream of world domination.

War was again on the agenda of the U.S. ruling class—war to gear up the economy at home and to attempt to trim the tail of the Red tiger—this time against the Korean people. It required a massive public relations job to sell it to a war-weary American public, and this necessitated the massive anti-Communist hysteria and witchhunt of the fifties. The same master guild of hoaxers and plotters who had staged the Maine, the Lusitania, and Pearl Harbor for previous wars, now concocted the "Great Spy Hoax." If the government could convince the American public that members of the American Communist Party had sold the secret of the atom bomb to the Soviets, the next step to war would be easy.

The government sought out a stooge, and David Greenglass, who had been a wartime employee at Los Alamos atomic research project, and had Communist relatives, provided the perfect setup for a frameup. Greenglass's sister, Ethel Rosenberg and her husband, Julius, were to be the government's victims. The concoction was that David Greenglass had, in 1945, given to the Rosenbergs a drawing of the bomb and that they had sold it to a Soviet agent.

Later, renowned atomic scientists would tell the world that David Greenglass, a mechanic, had neither the opportunity nor the technical ability to transmit atomic secrets; that knowledge necessary to produce an A-bomb was the property of the world body of scientists; and that the technological and productive level of a nation determined whether it could produce the bomb. But in an atmosphere of terror and anti-Communism that had been created, the shoddy, faked evidence and the shabby, inept chief witness, David Greenglass, was all the government needed.

Perhaps the government thought that two humble people from a background of poverty and hard work, people who had had a very close family life, would collapse under the ever-tightening vice of pressure that had been prepared for them—if not for themselves, then for their two young children. But the government was wrong.

"They expect me to break under the strain because I am a woman," Ethel Rosenberg said to her lawyer. "They think that in the Death House I will be haunted by images—alone, and without Julie, I'll collapse. But I won't."

Her life began in the Lower East Side of New York. Then, as now, the area throbbed with poverty and struggle. Fleeing pogroms and poverty in Europe, immigrant Jewish families worked in sweatshops, lived in tenements, struggled for education and security. Ethel's childhood home on Sheriff Street between Delancey and Rivington was lighted by gas and had a round tin tub in the kitchen for bathing. The toilet, shared with other tenants, was in the hall. When Ethel went to high school, she often went to a friend's house in the winter to do her homework—it was too cold in hers. She graduated at 16 in that bleak Depression year of 1931. Her earliest dream was to be an actress and a singer. Her one theatrical achievement was winning the $2 second prize in an amateur show at Loew's Delancey.

Her education as an oppressed worker was expanded when she worked in the garment district for $7 a week. In August 1935, 12,000 shipping clerks went on strike. Ethel and other women lay down on 36th Street, filling it with their bodies from curb to curb to stop the trucks from making deliveries. She and three men were fired after the strike was settled. The National Labor Relations Board ruled 5 months later that their firing was due to union activity and they were reinstated with back pay.

Julie Rosenberg lived near Ethel Greenglass on the Lower East Side, but they met for the first time on New Year's Eve, 1936. Ethel had been asked to sing at a benefit dance for a rank-and-file group in the International Seamen's Union. Julie said later about their first meeting, "I have loved her ever since that first night and always when I hear her sing it is like the first time and I know they can never part us—nothing will." They married on June 18, 1939. Their first home was a furnished room across from Tompkins Square Park at Avenue A and 7th Street. Later they moved to Knickerbocker Village, a housing project on the Lower East Side, where they were delighted with a one-bedroom apartment furnished with a few pieces of used furniture.

Julie and Ethel worked hard and quietly for the things they believed and raised their children with much love and attention. They were a part of the progressive movement of the thirties and forties that swept thousands of people into the struggle for a new socialist system that would make the terrible human suffering of the Depression a thing of the past. A friend said, "You'd see them together at anti-Hitler rallies and meetings to aid Loyalist Spain; they'd come in together and leave arm in arm." But their sons Michael and Robbie "were the peak of their 'success.' In a very real sense the kids were to both of them the mainspring of their lives."

In June 1950, nine days before war was declared on Korea, Ethel's brother David Greenglass was arrested and the anti-Communist campaign burst open. On July 17 Julie was arrested. Bail was set at $100,000. Less than a month later, as she left a grand jury hearing at the Foley Square Courthouse, Ethel was arrested and the same unreachable bail set.

Perhaps the most beautiful descriptions of Ethel came from the women who were her sisters in the Women's House of Detention in New York City. Ethel's cell was known as "Rosenberg's delicatessen." The women came to her cell for a small treat of whatever she had to share with them. One religious Latin

IF WE DIE

by Ethel Rosenberg

You shall know, my sons, shall know
why we leave the song unsung,
the book unread, the work undone
to rest beneath the sod.

Mourn no more, my sons, no more
why the lies and smears were framed,
the tears we shed, the hurt we bore
to all shall be proclaimed.

Earth shall smile, my sons, shall smile
and green above our resting place,
the killing, end, the world rejoice
in brotherhood and peace.

Work and build, my sons, and build
a monument to love and joy,
to human worth, to faith we kept
for you, my sons, for you.

Ossining, N.Y.
January 24, 1953

prisoner said, "No matter if the Pope himself was to tell me Ethel Rosenberg was bad I wouldn't believe him because I know she was a saint on earth." Ethel had nursed this woman when she was going off drugs "cold turkey."

When the women were locked in their cells after lights out, Ethel's clear sweet voice often filled the corridors with Brahms' "Lullaby" or a song the women asked for.

She told her prison sisters that when she had been arrested a month after Julie, she was given no opportunity to provide for her boys. She had called 7-year-old Michael, and in a reassuring tone began, "Michael, you remember what happened to Daddy, dear?" The child gave a long terrified cry. Many times Ethel's sleep was haunted by that scream.

Often during the 8 months spent in the House of D before the "trial," a van brought prisoners to court. There was a small opening covered with coarse wire mesh between the women's and men's section. The men prisoners always saved the seat next to the grating for Julie and the women did the same for Ethel. A woman prisoner recalled, "It was dark in the van. I didn't even know at the time where Julie was—you couldn't see any faces. Then I struck a match to light a cigarette. I'll never forget Julie and Ethel kissing each other through that darned screen."

After the death sentence had been passed on April 5, 1951, Ethel and Julie were in the basement of Foley Square in separate tanks. Until then, Julie had held onto the hope that Ethel would be spared. Now they knew the terrifying truth—they were both to be executed. Their two children were not to have the comfort and protection of even one parent.

Joe, a brother prisoner in the tank with Julie, describes how Ethel sang to him "One Fine Day He Shall Return" from *Madame Butterfly*. "She had a good voice—a small voice, true—but in fine pitch. And she sang without a tremor or quaver. When she finished, Julie called out, 'Ethel, the other one.' And she began 'Oh Sweet Night.' And then they sang together, song after song."

When Ethel was brought back to the House of D, she spoke to the women there only of how the judge had attacked them as parents; this aroused her greatest indignation. A guard offered her a sedative and an arm to steady her, but she proudly refused both. She knew that accepting even such a trifle as a sedative would be reported to the press and used to prove demoralization.

On the day they took Ethel to Sing Sing, women gathered at the cell window and took turns watching the entrance far below. When they saw the cameras cocked, they began screaming with all their strength, "Goodbye, good luck, Ethel. We love you."

When Julie was transferred to Sing Sing and their lawyer Emanuel Bloch (who fought for them without reserve) made his first visit to them, Julie and Ethel embraced—they were never again allowed to touch each other. For the two years that they were in the Death House, separated by 100 feet of stone and steel, once a week a heavily screened cage for Julie was placed before Ethel's cell for an hour.

Only after they had been in Sing Sing a year were they allowed to visit with their children together. The ordeal of their children, which began the night they witnessed the brutal arrest of their father, was the sharpest pain of all for the Rosenbergs.

Ethel's mother, who gave her no sympathy or support, had the children for only a short time after Ethel was arrested, before she turned them over to a city "shelter." Mrs. Rosenberg, Julie's mother, had the children for a time. Then they stayed with a family in Toms River, New Jersey, where they were doing well in school until newspapermen heartlessly exposed them to publicity and harassment. School authorities said the boys were not "legal residents" and could not attend. Bloch accused the FBI of leaking the Toms River address to newsmen. Bloch then found a fine home for them, which the Rosenbergs approved.

The murder of the Rosenbergs did not appease the sadistic appetites of the authorities. The children were settling in happily

(continued on page 25)

ALCOHOLISM:

The Struggle Within The Struggle Without

By a Member of Chicago YAWF Women

Madison Street is Chicago's skid row on the West Side. It's a wasteland of human desperation and loneliness, the bottom of the bottle for alcohol addicts, where drunken oblivion replaces the pain and anguish of isolation and uncommunicated despair.

It is said there is a potential skid row in the life of every alcohol addict. From a medical standpoint, alcoholism is a progressive addiction. The symptoms intensify, drinking increases, and the addict deteriorates mentally and physically. It is during this process of deterioration that the skid row within every addict is reached—a condition, a state of mind and being, not just a geographic location.

At that point, you've forgotten how many times you've awakened in your own urine and vomit, gotten into drunken brawls, and slept in two-bit taverns to wake up and start drinking all over again. You've forgotten how many times you stole money to buy booze, crawled around in alleys because you were too damned drunk to stand up or figure out where you were, and wondered where you were the next day because you couldn't remember how you got there the night before. Nor do you remember the times you cried yourself to sleep in a drunken stupor because you couldn't bear the uncertainty of another day as an addict, but felt helpless to do anything about it.

There is no doubt in my mind I had reached that point in my 12 year period of drinking when I admitted myself into a psychiatric hospital January 8, 1972. I knew I had no control over my life and was terrified I was losing my mind. At the time, I was going through withdrawal panic. I had been through many and this was the worst.

Every institutionally instilled feeling of fear, guilt, anxiety, remorse and despair, a sense of dread, and creeping madness enters your consciousness. You are a dehydrated, shaking, sweating, nauseated shambles. And every institutional method is used to deal with those feelings, from medication, which dulls them along with all the healthy emotions; to a therapy program, which ignores social conditions as underlying causes of alcoholism; and AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), which requests you relinquish your will to God.

There were no programs in the hospital for either therapy or recreation for addicts. Officially, there was medication. Unofficially, there were liquor, marijuana, nonprescription barbiturates (uppers and downers), and just a constant and general run of easy drugs. Many patients have returned to the hospitals with a dual addiction of alcohol *and* pills, because medication has become a fast, easy method of *treatment*—otherwise called controlling people.

During the two months I was in the hospital, my doctor requested to see me *once*. At that time he poked me with questions about my sexual activities, for previously I had told him I was an overt homosexual. I didn't even have the "decency" to be sneaky about it. I was open and what's more enjoyed it. He did not ask me questions about my feelings, nor my drinking, nor what sort of work I did. He asked me for intimate details of my sexual relations—stroking, fondling, etc. Clearly this male doctor thought that if a woman hasn't achieved a smashing, roaring, whoopee of an orgasm contributed by a male, then she is just plain lacking—that's all—and it's cause for a whole bunch of neuroses, including alcoholism.

Now, my alcoholic hell is not an isolated one. There are approximately 9 million alcohol addicts in the country, and some two and a half million of them are women. However, many experts say that women make up at least half the alcoholic population, but they are hidden at home, often by a husband who doesn't want the world to see his wife "out of control." You must wonder why we would put ourselves through such hell. Such a question is not uncommon. It implies that individuals have the means and the power to determine the quality and condition of their lives.

This is the attitude that pervades the institutions which claim to treat the alcoholic: a sign on Chicago's skid row reads "Jesus Saves—Christ Died For Our Sins." We are sinners? Corporate manuals say our emotional instability is the cause of our alcoholism. But emotional instability can very often be a side effect of alcoholism—not its cause. Psychiatrists claim alcoholics use declining social and economic conditions as cop-outs or excuses to keep from facing our own inadequacies. How can there be an effect without a cause?

But Alcoholics Anonymous is the humdinger of them all. Their program would reduce you to a meek and resigned penitent. They implore you to turn your will over to a Higher Power, greater than yourself. Imagine—after years of turning your will over to the bottle, the bosses, the government, and every other parasite of their ilk, AA wants you to relinquish it to a vague, mystifying source

outside yourself!

The psychiatrists, religious do-gooders, AA, and the bosses all seem to forget that racism, corporate greed—which inspires inhuman methods of production, speed-ups, and barely subsistence wages—sexism, and just a whole list of daily miseries constantly experienced in this society by women and men, working and unemployed, poor and minority people, are the real causes of alcohol addiction. Certainly no doctor or social worker I've ever heard of who has anything to do with treatment wants the alcoholic to think that these things have anything to do with his or her alcoholism. Those who call us sinners and emotional cop-outs don't want us discovering our own potential and using it to fight back against our oppressors.

Alcoholism in Western cultures, and drugs in Eastern cultures, have not only been tolerated but actually used by the ruling classes—whether they be feudal landlords or capitalist bosses—as a means of dulling the senses of the serf and working classes and keeping them in tow. And, of course, in this country drugs have been consciously funneled into the Black communities for years in hopes of keeping the Black people passively enslaved.

Ever since big business began booming in the nineteenth century, the working man has been stereotyped as drowning the pressures and dehumanization of the job in a few beers before heading for home. This was fostered by the bosses as an acceptable escape for the working class so long as it only affected them *after* working hours—how alcohol affected family relations really wasn't the bosses' "business."

In the late fifties, when the man in the gray flannel suit began demanding greater productivity for the "affluent society," a new theory gained widespread popularity. Known as the "billion dollar hangover," it showed that alcoholism was a widespread sickness infecting all sectors of society. And more importantly, it cost the bosses $1 billion a year in loss of trained manpower, absenteeism, "excessive fringe benefits," poor job performances, inefficiency, and accidents. Alcoholism was recognized as a national disease, officially ranked second to heart disease and affecting at least 8 times as many people as cancer.

When alcoholism showed up in the profit and loss columns, big business began to sit up and take notice. But as statistics prove, they have no solution. Some recent estimates are that $4 billion is lost to business annually due to alcoholism.

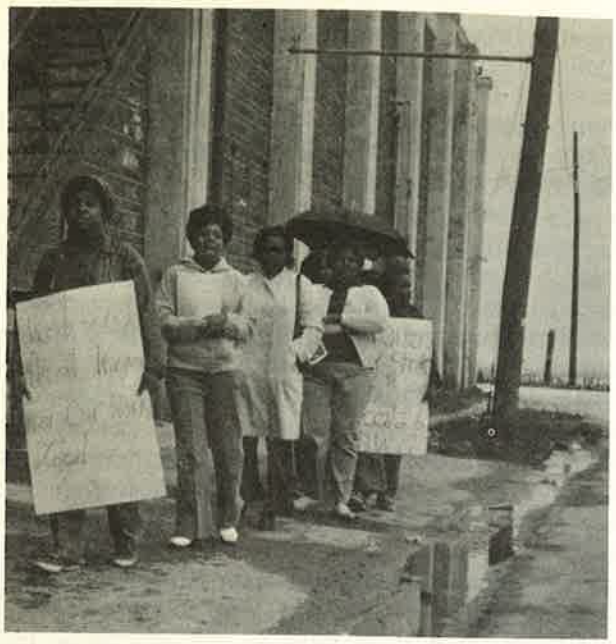
The government, too, has done little or nothing about alcoholism. While complaining about it, it has cut funds for research and rehabilitation with one hand and received billions of dollars in revenues from the liquor industry with the other. The liquor industry is the government's second largest source of income, and magnanimously it donates $450,000 annually to alcoholism rehabilitation—hardly a drop in the bottle.

Well, I could hardly accept the perspective of professionals who make their smug analyses of human suffering, or wait for a boss to decide that my alcoholism was affecting his profits. My decision was very basic, like a primal gasping to survive; to control my life, in spite of all in my environment that would deny it and despite all inside myself I had yet to understand.

As a woman, I had not been prepared to fight back. It is a terrifying struggle in this society, freeing some part of yourself, to maintain some leverage, amid confusion and chaos within and without, while the rest of you struggles to catch up. It is a painfully slow process and a lonely venture with no security at the end.

But, slowly I came to realize what I know today, that there is a quality of humanness hard to describe, a tremendous joy in discovering, for the first time in your life, that the courage to live *does* exist within you. Had I relied on what is available in the system today, that would not have happened, and I would have remained on skid row.

But with the help from my sisters in the struggle, I gradually became aware of my strength and worth as a human being and as a woman. And now I am a part of the revolutionary struggle—that of freeing all the oppressed, women, men, and children.



We demand b

By Veronica Mason
Women of the Center for United Labor Action, Norfolk, Va.

Veronica is a hospital worker and a member of the Center for United Labor Action which has been actively supporting the Miles strike. This interview was done in the strikers' office. Anna, a young married Black woman, is a member of Local 26 of the Distributive Workers of America. She is the youngest woman in the plant, and one of the many spirited and committed people to the strike.

Veronica: Tell me about the reasons for the strike at the Oyster Packing Plant and what has been happening on the line.

Ann: Well, our main reason for striking is for better working conditions. We get no heat when it's cold and no ventilation when it's hot and we have to work in cold water. We have to buy all of our working tools, while the men get theirs free.

We wanted a raise. We get $2.15 an hour, and when we asked for a raise, the boss offered us 5 cents an hour more. In the year 1973, who can live on a 5-cent raise? And our 26 Security Plan is all we have in the case of sickness. The boss wants to take all of that away and give us Blue Cross and Blue Shield, which doesn't cover us nearly as well.

When we went out on strike, the boss went out and hired scabs and brought them back in his own car. When we tried to defend ourselves—well, the scabs can defend themselves, too. We can't have any weapons. We can't say anything to them because the cops are there and seem to be on their side. It seems like everybody is against us, and the only thing that we can do is picket, which we don't feel bad about doing. If the boss is losing, well, that's his prerogative. If he would only give us what we ask for, it wouldn't be so bad. Even if we hadn't gotten a raise—if we had gotten better working conditions—it would have been just as good.

Veronica: What demands are you specifically asking for?
Anne: Like I said, it is mostly better working conditions. Like now in the summer there is so much heat, and we still have to work in the water and in the rubber gloves and boots and sleeves—which we all have to pay for. The gloves are $1.00, the apron is $1.50, and the sleeves are $1.50—all of which comes out of our pay. If they wear out soon, we just have to buy them again, even if it's only a week later. We have to wash our hands in Clorox, and then put on the rubber gloves. Many of the women's hands get messed up, and also the oyster meat is so strong that we get rashes on our hands. If you complain to the boss, he may consider sending you to a doctor and he may not.

Veronica: How do some of the other women feel who are out on strike?
Anne: I guess that they feel that in years to come as food prices and milk prices and the price of clothing go so high (and some have large families), they think, "How can we make it with 5 cents more?" When you really think about it, it's *nothing.* At first he offered us 10 cents, but nothing else—no better working conditions. And he wanted to take away some of the benefits that we had. Conditions are the main thing, for example, the medical care. There is no nurse in the plant.

Last winter I got my hand caught in the door downstairs. They didn't have anything there to help me, so the only thing they could do is bring me over to Norfolk General Hospital. If somebody gets cut real bad, there's no nurse that can look after you until you get medical attention. They don't even have bandages. The plant is just not properly equipped.

Veronica: How many people work in the plant?
Anne: Approximately 100 workers. Everyone voted to go on strike except one. The actual vote was 74 to 1. The plant is predominantly Black and the bosses are white. They never respect us. For example, when I was working in the packing room, the boss told one of the women, "When I'm talking to you, you stand at attention." When she refused to do it, she was discharged for insubordination. Another woman was harassed so much by the foreman she had to go to the hospital for a nervous breakdown, and when she went, they sent her discharge papers.

Veronica: What do you think of the bosses?
Anne: Well, I don't think that he has ever wanted a union here. My opinion is that he still thinks that it's slavery times. They just don't mind if you know that they're prejudiced. Sometimes the boss will tell you to do something, and he will watch you, and then come over to you and say, "Did you hear me tell you to do this or that?"

better working conditions

and RESPECT!

BOYCOTT Campbell's clam chowder and oyster stew to help the striking sisters at the Miles plant!

If you say, "Yes, I'll do it as soon as I can," he says, "No, you'll do it now because I told you to do it." The only thing that we really ask them for is *respect!* Respect when we're working and respect for our picket line. If he respected our picket line, there would be no trouble at all. He's really the first boss I know who went out and hauled scabs in his own car....

The only thing that Mr. Miles does is sit up in his office. He has two prejudiced foremen and they don't mind letting you know they are. They crack jokes and try and make you feel ignorant. They always ask about the Black women's sex lives. Mr. Miles has his foremen, which I consider to be nothing but flunkies downstairs, and the only thing that they do is fix the machine if something goes wrong with it. But really what they do is to sit in their office and spy on us.

Veronica: What is it that you do, and what are some of the jobs in the plant?
Anne: I have worked mostly in the packing room. I've lifted 45-pound boxes of frozen meat. And I've worked on the quality sheet, which is simply picking out the bad clams, separating the good meat and writing it down on a sheet which is turned in to Campbell's Soup Co. And I've worked on a belt weighing the meat in the 45-pound boxes, and on the tipper tie which staples the bags of meat.

Veronica: What is the daily routine like?
Anne: No matter how early we get there, we can't punch our cards until exactly 7:00. You have to stand in line in the packing room, and then take your card out of the rack, punch it, and go on. First though, you have to wash your hands (in Clorox like I said before), and if you have irritated hands, you still have to wash them in that stuff. Upstairs the foreman is there to pass out your cards. You don't touch them.

We have only a 10-minute break and in that break you have to punch a card. If you stay out over 10 minutes, even if it's 1 minute over, on Friday there is a warning slip tacked onto your paycheck. If you get five warning slips, then you get a discharge for 2 days. If you get another warning slip, you're out 5 days, and with another one—you're fired.

Really we don't get a 10-minute break. They should realize that we are all women, and we have to have breaks sometimes, you know, for personal things. But the boss just doesn't care. He just thinks that we're animals.

Veronica: What are the facilities when you do get a break?
Ann: Well, all we have is a locker room with a toilet in it, which really isn't decent. We don't have any protection. If we're in a bathroom and if the mechanic has any work to do, he can walk right in on us. What can you say? What can you do? He has his job to do too. He doesn't have to consider whether you're on your break or not. If you have something personal you want to do, well, it's just too bad. Plus the bathroom is in another building. In the middle of winter we have to go over there, and you know, with just a 10-minute break, by the time you get there and back, it's over.

Veronica: What happens if you take a day off sick?
Anne: If you take a day off, then you have to have a doctor's slip to bring back. If you don't, you'll get a warning slip. If you stay out again, then you get suspended. You just have to have a doctor's note. If you are not sick and you just have to take care of some business, you have to tell them exactly what kind of business you are going to do. And the secretary checks up on you. If you were getting paid when you stayed off, it wouldn't be so bad.

Veronica: Tell me more about yourself.
Anne: Well, if I had my choice of working anywhere, it certainly wouldn't be J. H. Miles. There's nothing there. You can be 98 and when you retire, you just retire. You get no benefits. Just government benefits, and that's hardly anything at all. You know maybe if Nixon were out of the chair, things would be much better. But the way things are now, the way life is now, the way that he is making it for us, you can't plan a future.

If I could plan the future it certainly wouldn't be Miles and it certainly wouldn't be Nixon in the chair. Life would be beautiful. I would love to have a good paying job, and help my husband. And I don't want my daughter's life to be like mine. I want her to have the best of everything. And if I live, I intend to give her the best of everything. I want her to be somebody. Really, it's for that and for respect that we're on strike.

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Liberation
Equality
Struggle
Break the Chains
International Solidarity
Anti-Imperialism
No More Oppression!

New York City

by Mary Jo Wuetrich
Chicago Gay Caucus of YAWF

"You had better be careful," warned Steve, a gay cook whom I had been working with for the past year. "I overheard the bosses talking about you and they know you're gay."

I thanked him for his concern and went on with my job as a waitress, smiling politely at and serving those fatcat businessmen who disgust me so much. Their conversation always centered around profits and women, and the way they talked about women, you couldn't tell if they were discussing human beings or their merchandise.

I no sooner got home from work that day when the phone rang. It was my boss's head flunky, the manager, telling me I had been fired (they didn't even have the guts to tell me to my face). I demanded to know why, and was told he "couldn't discuss it." But, thanks to the warning I had received earlier in the day, I knew the reason.

I went to the restaurant the next day to confront the owners and they also refused to tell me why I had been fired.

The bosses like to use the issue of homosexuality to divide the workers, but in my case it had the opposite effect. My fellow workers were so angered and showed so much hostility toward the bosses that they were forced to hire me back. I only went back because I was waiting for another job to open up. I quit after three days—with the boss begging me to stay.

This is only a small example of the oppression gay people face every day. The pressures on two women trying to build a loving, human relationship are powerful. Landlords won't rent to you or kick you out when they find out you're not really "cousins"; jobs are lost as soon as you're found out; harassment, threats, and beatings are commonplace on the street—Lesbians face all this on top of the discrimination and oppression of just being women. Of course, for our Black and Third World gay sisters, the oppression is compounded again, for they must daily face the exploitation and oppression of racism.

We know that prisons are concentration camps for the poor and working people who are forced to exist in them and that prisons are meant to be brutal and dehumanizing. In order for this process to work, the prison authorities must keep you isolated—alone and caring only for yourself. A woman in prison, in a natural, human effort to seek love and friendship, must turn to another woman. This is discouraged as much as possible. For example, at Dwight Reformatory, a women's prison in Illinois, women are forbidden to touch each other. Even if they are playing cards, the guards watch their legs to make sure they are not touching. Anyone even suspected of being a Lesbian is thrown into solitary confinement. I used Dwight Reformatory as an example, but these conditions exist in every prison.

A recent UPI news item told of two women in another kind of prison—a high school—in California. The women were not gay, but as an experiment to find out the attitudes of the other students to homosexuality, they went around for three weeks holding hands. They would occasionally embrace each other or kiss each other on the cheek—signs of affection taken for granted with any heterosexual couple. As a result of this experiment, they were snubbed, insulted, and threatened by the other students. These two heterosexual women knew their oppression was only temporary, but every Lesbian has to endure such threats and harassment every day of our lives—with no end in sight.

There is another group of Lesbians who face special oppression—Lesbian mothers. The term "Lesbian mothers" surprises most people because it doesn't conform to their stereotypes of what a Lesbian is. But there are many gay mothers who must battle husbands, the courts, and society to keep the children they love and want to raise in an atmosphere of love and mutual respect.

Gay relationships are difficult to maintain because gay people find it a necessity to live two lives. As one gay man said, "Love and an enduring relationship were impossible. In my day-to-day work, school, sports, and social life, I wasn't identified as gay and could not share these aspects of my life with my lover. Yet an important part of richness of a relationship is sharing—so our secret

relationship finally starved and died."

I, myself, sometimes used to be filled with hatred and disgust for the women I loved. It bothered me very much and I couldn't understand why until I realized I was blaming the women for my oppression. But I know it is not their fault.

I know who my oppressors are now. They are the same rich, white businessmen who run this country, who, to maintain their own corrupt power, use sexism and racism to try to keep the masses of poor, oppressed, and working people pitted against each other. These people who call us "sick" for expressing our sexuality naturally are the same people who use sex for power and profit. Putting a price tag on human sexuality—through sexist advertising—in order to satisfy their own personal greed for power and profit is *sick*—not homosexuality! The sickness of the ruling class is their attempting to bomb the Cambodian people into submission and imprisoning Black Vietnam veterans such as the De Mau Mau Brothers in Chicago who were trying to get the drug pushers out of their community.

A lot of other gay people understand this too, and we are fighting back against the ruling class and their propagandists—such as psychiatrists, the media, etc., who call us "sick and unnatural."

We won't hide in our closets any more! We're going to continue to struggle until racism, sexism, and all forms of oppression are totally smashed.

Milwaukee

STONEWALL Means Fight Back!

By Denise Harmon
Milwaukee Gay Caucus of YAWF

On June 29, 1969, the police attacked the Stonewall Inn, a popular gay bar in New York City. The raid was not unusual, but the response was, because for the first time gays fought back in a rebellion that lasted three days. The raid was not unusual because all through history gay people have been beaten, harassed, drugged, and even murdered for being gay. Only a few years ago James Clay, a Black transvestite from Chicago, was shot down in cold blood by the racist cops simply because he was Black and gay.

The New York cops claimed that the Stonewall was supposed to have a state liquor license, but in actuality since the Stonewall was a private lounge, it was not required to have one. The police marched into the bar and announced the raid, and then started to release the customers one by one. Instead of running away, the gay customers stayed outside to await the outcome of the raid, and soon 400 gays gathered.

Many people, including gays, think that men started the Stonewall rebellion, but this is not exactly true. As the cops were arresting three gay men, those standing by were yelling threats and curses. Then the cops made the mistake of attempting to arrest a gay woman. She fought back and called for her gay brothers' and sisters' help. The cops were met with bricks, bottles, cans, coins, fists—real gay power. The next night gay people from all over New York marched down Christopher Street in the first Gay Pride March in history.

In fact, for several nights running, large crowds of gay people challenged the right of the police to invade their social gathering places. The street battles that occurred as a result of continuing police harassment and brutality (with the police actually drawing their guns on one occasion) made it clear that gay people now had the consciousness to fight back when pushed too hard. The Stonewall rebellion was more than justified and long overdue.

The next year Gay Pride Week was called to commemorate the Stonewall rebellion with numerous marches, demonstrations, and rallies. And each year in cities all over the country similar celebrations are held.

Gay pride is gay unity, strength, and love for each other. It affirms our pride in ourselves and in our lifestyle. For us to come to the realization that our love is right and good is a beautiful and courageous act. Gay pride is also not feeling guilty about being gay, but feeling beautiful, strong in love, and unafraid. We refuse to be frightened any more. We must join with all our oppressed sisters and brothers, gay and straight, to build a new society, one where all can determine their own lives free from all forms of oppression.

SHOPPERS STRIKE BACK!

By Fran Meyers
New York City YAWF Women

You can't turn on the TV or radio these days without hearing about some new sales gimmick on how you can beat the high cost of food. One ad tells you how "hamburger helper" can save the day—another tells you what great bonuses you'll get if you'll only buy their product. It's as if all the rich food industry executives are trying to tell us they're so concerned with our budgets and our families' nutrition, while in fact they're cashing in on the skyrocketing prices and making all-time-high profits.

Each supermarket tries to appear as if it's the exception—each week offering specials (usually for rotten food they were unable to sell the week before). And the biggest food chain of all portrays shoppers ecstatically exclaiming "Weooo" in the aisles of their stores in disbelief at their "discount" prices.

But for all the fantasies and tricks the food companies come up with, the real people who shop at their stores have found no relief from the mounting cost of food. Nixon continues to exempt food, the basic necessity, from price controls, and has given the food monopolies a free hand to set prices at their will, while real wages are declining, unemployment remains high, and Welfare is cut.

In the poorest communities, especially Black and Spanish-speaking neighborhoods, supermarkets are guilty of marking up prices even higher than in other areas and selling the lowest quality food. Women, searching for ways to stretch their budget to provide decent food for their families, are becoming more and more frustrated. Each week shoppers are forced to pass by more and more items that have become out of their reach because of the rising prices.

But in the spring of this year, consumers started fighting back in a unified way. Millions of people all over the country participated in the week-long meat boycott in April, bringing meat sales down, from 50 to 80 percent nationwide. While the declining demand should have brought prices down, the meat monopolies, showing their fear of our protests, tried to frustrate us by withholding livestock from the market to keep prices high.

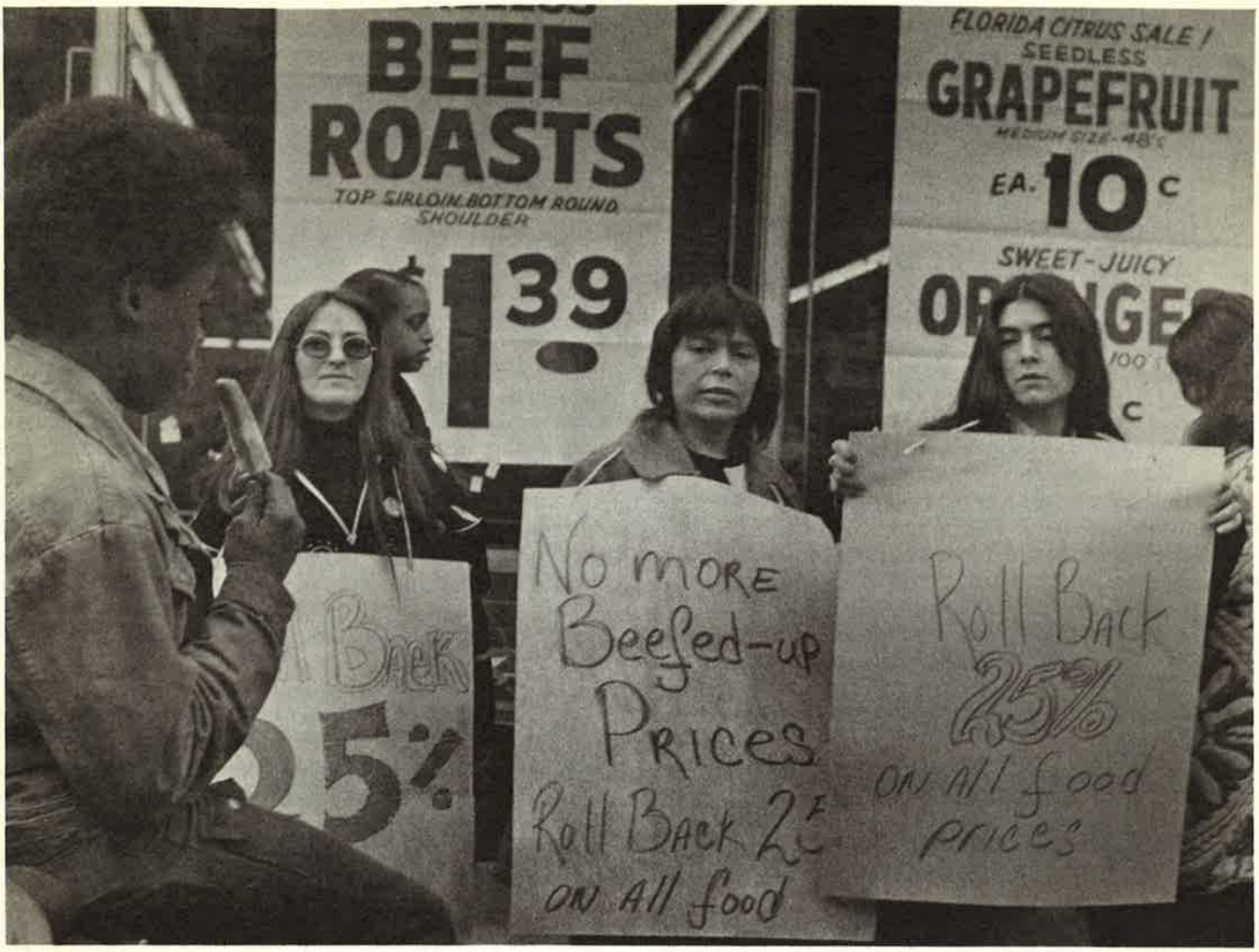
Consumer groups organized by women began springing up all over the country—with names such as Irate Housewives, WARPATH (We Are Rebelling, Prices Are Too High), SHARP (Support Harried Americans—Rollback Prices), and LAMP (Ladies Against Meat Prices), to name a few. Thousands of women participated in petition drives, picket lines, marches, rallies, and motorcades to demonstrate their anger at the rising cost of food.

Another group, Women United for Action, had almost a year of experience in fighting for food price rollbacks by that time. Just about a year after Nixon's wage-price freeze, the group was formed by women from all races and occupations, women on Welfare, housewives, and students who saw the necessity to struggle for the needs of women, such as low food prices, adequate welfare, and good, free child care. They launched Operation Food Price Rollback to win their demand for substantial rollbacks in food prices. In response to the fact that supermarkets charge the highest prices in the low-income neighborhoods, Women United initiated Project Equal Pricing. Their members are distributing questionnaires to shoppers in many different areas, asking them to fill out what prices are charged for certain food items where they shop. The evidence has begun pouring in of how poor people have to pay up to 20 cents more per pound for meat and other staples.

During the boycott week in April, Women United for Action organized protests in Buffalo, Detroit, Chicago, Houston, Wilmington, and many other cities, where women came out into the streets to make their voices heard and show their determination. They joined together with labor groups, community organizations, day care and welfare rights groups to unite more and more people in the campaign for food price rollbacks. New York City was the scene of the largest single protest, where Women United organized a march from Herald Square, a busy shopping center, to the meat-packing district on 14th Street. Hundreds of people took part, spiritedly singing and chanting: "Meat Up, Milk Up, Bread Up—We're Fed Up!" and "We Want Meat That's Cheap Enough to Eat!"

After the massive consumer protests, representatives from

by Grace Mitchell



many consumer groups got together in Washington, D.C. Seeing the effectiveness and need for unified actions, the groups formed the National Consumers Congress. At this meeting, May 5 was declared a national day of protest.

Women went back to their cities to organize for this day. In Kingston County, New York, Irate Housewives held the second "tea party" in that area (the first was held during the American Revolution when the women of Kingston actively fought against the tyranny of King George). In Milwaukee, Women United went to the doors of the A & P and demanded that A & P clean up all their stores and lower their prices. In communities all over the country, food chains were for the first time in many years facing the resistance of the shoppers.

As women are getting together to fight for the right to have decent food at decent prices, the food industry, already organized into giant monopolies, is trying to increase its control over food production and raise prices to even higher levels. The biggest corporations are crying poverty at a time when corporate profits are at record levels.

One example is the dairy industry, openly implicated in the Watergate scandal. It has payed off millions of dollars to politicians to pass legislation legalizing monopoly practices. This legislation includes restrictions on dairy imports, increasing parity payments which would add 4 cents to the cost of a gallon of milk, and legalization of the large milk coops' practice of converting liquid milk into other products in order to keep the supply down. The dairy industry hopes that their illegal monopoly and pricefixing practices will be sanctioned by law before their anti-trust case comes up in court.

With each new attack against the people by the food industry, women are more determined to do something about it. When the provisions of the dairy bill came up in June for discussion at the House Committee on Dairy and Poultry, Sharon Colangelo and Janet Miller of New York City's Women United were there to express the sentiments of millions of women all over the country who depend upon milk as a major source of nutrition in their children's diets. Sharon stated:

"I am here today to express the outrage that I feel as an expectant mother trying desperately to manage on the $96.81 my husband brings home each week as a machinist," she testified.

"I and many others like me are angry at recent attempts by the large milk cooperatives to push legislation like the dairy provisions set forth in House Print No. 1. We feel those provisions represent merely another attempt on the part of the monopolies to line their already bulging bank accounts and to attack the nutrition of our children by hiking the already too high price of milk."

The Northeastern Region of the National Consumers Congress met Saturday, June 23, and, among other progressive proposals, endorsed the campaign to fight milk product rate hikes. The struggle against rising prices is going strong!

WOMEN IN PRISON

By the Women of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee Washington-D.C. YAWF

A few months ago the Prisoners Solidarity Committee had a workshop on "Women in Prisons," in Washington, D.C. One of the first things we learned was that there is hardly any accurate and detailed information on women in prison in the U.S. We found one institutional study and a number of articles, but nothing really complete. However, there was a wealth of personal experiences from former inmates who came to the workshop as well as from sisters at the Women's Detention Center (WDC) in D.C. with whom we are in contact. From the women's testimony it became clear that women's prisons sharply reflect the economic, racist, and sexist oppression of women.

Women in D.C., as elsewhere in the U.S., are sent to prison because they tried to get the money they needed. Most frequent charges are for petty larceny (most often for shoplifting), fraud, forgery, and counterfeiting, and for so-called "victimless" offenses, such as drug use and sale and prostitution. In 1968 about 800 women were arrested for prostitution in D.C., while only 112 men were arrested for soliciting. (You can be sure that the suburbanite businessmen who exploit these women will never face any criminal charges or see the inside of a jail!)

Black women make up 73 percent of the women held in the District of Columbia's WDC. Eighty-three percent of the women who are tried are Black. Ninety-two percent of the women sentenced from 30 to 90 days are Black, and 97 percent of those sentenced to 90 days or more are Black women. It's not surprising that many Black women refer to the conditions outside prison as "minimum security."

Medical care is grossly inadequate in prison. There is no regular testing for VD and no adequate prenatal care. Women with children must find their own means of child care until their release—a time that is always uncertain. A woman who bears her child while in prison must find a "proper" home for the newborn or face the possibility of giving her child up for adoption or placing the infant in some sort of foster home. There is no program to meet the special diet needs of pregnant women or of women with special medical needs, like diabetics. All medication and health care are irregular and confused at best—pure butchery at worst.

While 80 percent of the women in WDC have drug problems, there is no organized drug treatment program in the Center—just a little "counseling," cold turkey, and methadone.

"Job training" is limited to a few privileged women who learn how to do low-paid, stereotyped jobs for women, but the work most women at the Center are employed at is "housekeeping"—scrubbing floors, doing dishes, sorting laundry, and general cleaning and upkeep of the prison. No matter what their health, women work in the kitchen. They earn a few cents an hour, and/or an "extra" half hour of visiting time a week, which used to be given automatically.

Some women have been able to go out for training in an introductory computor course. Sounds good? Yes, except that the amount of training received, only for keypunch, is not enough to get a job on. Women might have to spend months to get permission to take the course, only to have it stopped because of some minor infraction of arbitrary rules.

There are some new typewriters that have just arrived, but it's not clear if there is a typing teacher. And the "lucky girls who behave" might get a position such as an office staffer and save the Corrections Department the cost of paying another employee. The already few "job training" and other services will be getting even sparser with Nixon's cuts of OEO programs and related funds, which are often the sources of any such programs.

There is only one halfway house for women who have been imprisoned in D.C.; but conditions there are so bad that we have heard of women petitioning the court to be allowed to go back to the general population of the Women's Detention Center. The house was built for about 50 women but is constantly holding from 80 to 100 women. A fourth floor is supposedly being built—but all the construction materials have been kept in the recreation yard, filling it, for over a year. At the same time, officials say they plan to tear the whole place down and put women in a proposed new "magnificent" jail, where the women will get to do the cooking, laundry, and ironing for *all* prisoners in D.C.

Recently, about 50 women have been transferred to the federal Women's Reformatory in Alderson, West Virginia. Many were moved with only a few hours' notice, giving them little or no chance to contact family and friends. Besides this, Alderson is a 7-hour drive from D.C., which makes visits just about impossible. Out of our workshop came the Alderson Women's Busing Program, through which we are planning to transport family and friends for weekend visits about once a month.

Women have always resisted the irrationality and tyranny of the prison system. The first strike in support of the Attica rebellion and in solidarity with the relatives was at Alderson. When the D.C. Jail, Jessup Penitentiary in Maryland, and the Baltimore Penitentiary rose up last year, the women at D.C. Detention Center went on strike. Sit-down strikes have also been held when a sister couldn't get out to see her dying mother, and when a sister had a miscarriage and couldn't get immediate medical help.

This April, the women again went on strike to show their outrage at prison conditions, demanding the firing of

the Warden, Patricia Taylor, and the jail doctor, "Dr." (Butcher) Bullock, as well as 24-hour *decent* medical care, decent food, an end to "slave labor," more visiting time, and better visiting conditions (women must visit with their children and relatives through a glass and wire enclosure over a telephone).

A demonstration was immediately organized to support the sisters' demands, with representatives from the Prisoners Solidarity Committee, RAP (a community-based drug program), ALERTS, Spark, and other community groups. The many signs and spirited songs and chants let passersby know that the strike was going on (most such strikes are carefully kept quiet by the prison administrations). The Black Youth Prison Workshop sent a message of solidarity, as did the brothers from inside Lorton Reformatory, where men federal prisoners from D.C. and Maryland are kept.

Through prisoners' resistance and people's support, a powerful tool of the "Corrections System"—isolation—is being stripped away. As communication and recognition of the unity of the struggles inside and outside grow between sisters and brothers, we find more and more incidents of resistance to all these forms of brutality, until the day when we will free our sisters and our brothers and tear the walls down!

(To make contributions to the Alderson Women's Busing Program, or for information or correspondence, please write to the Prisoners Solidarity Committee, P.O. Box AB, College Park, Md. 20740.)

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"An example for women..."

by Meira Pomerantz
New York City YAWF Women

I recently spent two months in Cuba, with several other YAWF members, on the Venceremos Brigade. The brigade was first organized in 1970 so that North Americans could go to Cuba to show solidarity with the Cuban revolution by participating in the work of building the socialist country. This is necessary not only to break the economic blockade the U.S. has imposed on its former colony but also to end the blockade of silence about life in Cuba today.

We participated in the construction of a new, planned agricultural center by building several houses which will be given, completely furnished and rent free, to those who work there. We traveled all over the island and as we visited the factories, schools, and hospitals, we were able to see many of the benefits provided in the once impoverished, colonized country that answer the needs of all the people now.

One day that I shall never forget was International Workers' Day, May 1, when workers from all over Cuba come together in Havana to celebrate their accomplishments with a parade and speeches. This year the highest honor a worker can receive, being named a National Hero of Labor, was given to a woman, Victoria Miranda Ravelo. She is the first woman cane cutter to have cut over 1 million arobas of cane.

"I wanted to serve as an example for women....I wanted to show that when a woman starts out to accomplish something she can do so, regardless of the obstacles." Victoria, and 31 other workers, all men, volunteered to cut cane, which is Cuba's primary economic resource, in the Van Troi Brigade (so named for a hero of the Vietnamese liberation forces). While the brigade's daily average is 112.5 cwt, Victoria cuts 247.5 cwt a day. "I'd never be able to catch up with her," says her brigade chief, who has one of the highest averages.

Another man described her: "I don't know where she gets all that pep and endurance. You should see her filling plastic bags with soil for coffee seedlings, or spreading fertilizer. That woman never gets tired! But the greatest thing about her is her modesty and naturalness. She always sees to it that things are done right. And the way she treats us. All I can say is that we love her as if she were our own sister."

Victoria, who is 37 and divorced, has an 11-year-old son who is in a semiboarding school during the harvest. The first two years of the five she has worked in the cane fields, she kept her son with her in the camp. Before that, she was the housekeeper in a restaurant at El Megano Beach. Her fellow workers elected her general secretary of the trade union local which she still runs and she is a member of the Communist Party.

Victoria is an exceptional woman, but it isn't unusual for a Cuban woman to be awarded high honors or to receive recognition for her work. It isn't unusual because Cuban society is organized so that it is easy for a woman to participate in work outside the home. The responsibilities of housekeeping and childrearing are being assumed by new institutions so that women can give their full attention and energy to their jobs. If Victoria had all the worries so common to women workers in the U.S. she couldn't be such an exemplary worker, nor would she have any reason to try.

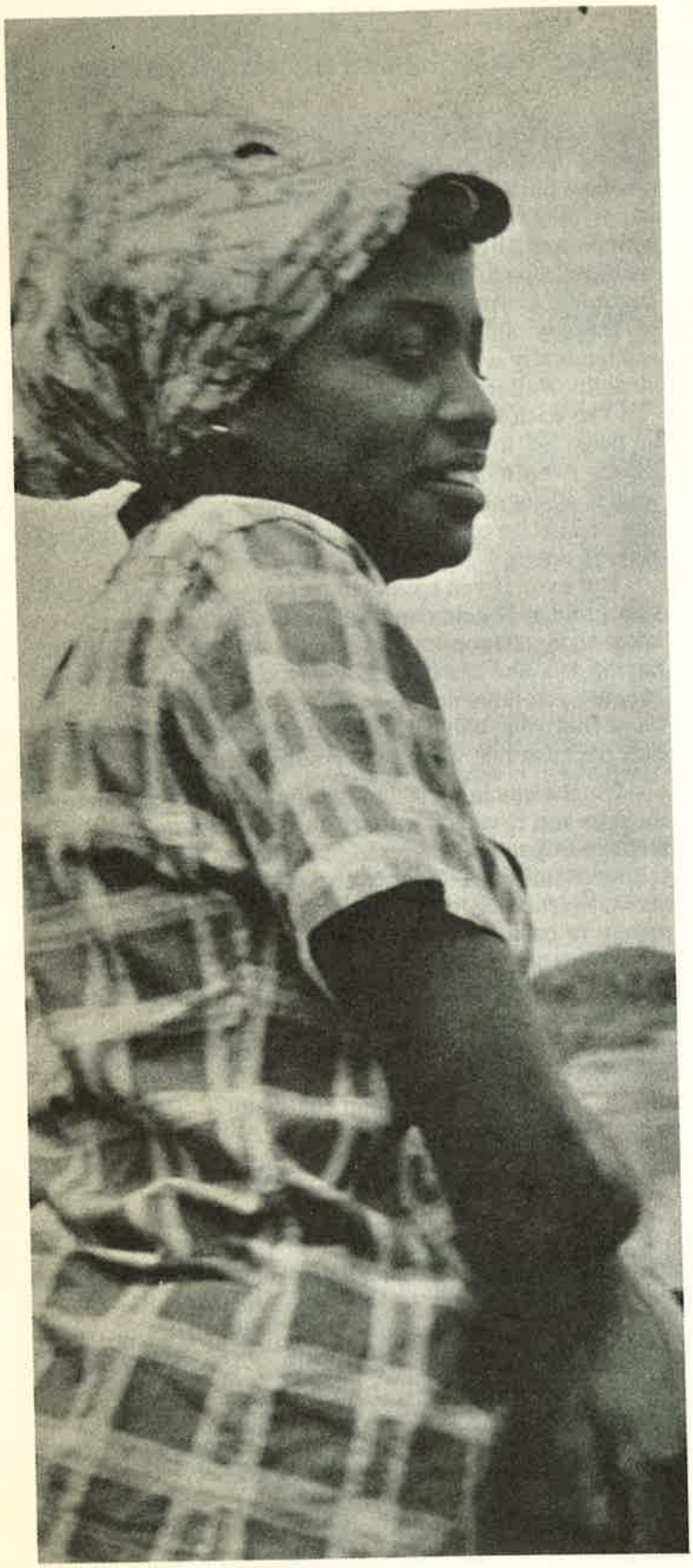
Every pregnant woman receives prenatal medical care and a three-month paid maternity leave, with no loss in status or seniority. A mother is given an hour off of work each day to care for her baby and there is postnatal care for the infant. Starting at the age of 45 days, children of working mothers are taken care of in beautifully designed child care centers. When the children arrive, they are given clean clothes to play in, and when it's time to go home, their own clothes are put on again, still as clean as they were in the morning.

For older children, of course, there are schools that provide well-balanced, hot meals and semiboarding schools for children who want to study away from home—but they are places with as much love and attention as home. Everyone in Cuba is encouraged to go to school; there are schools in the factories and the fields where workers take a few hours off every day to study.

The Federation of Cuban Women has made an arrangement for working women so that they can leave a list of the groceries they want and while they work other women do their shopping. Hot meals and snacks are provided free in most industries and there are many new dining rooms being set up for whole communities. It's no wonder women are participating in many varied types of work as doctors, technicians, and teachers as well as agricultural, day care, and construction workers.

The experiences of most Cuban women before the triumph of the revolution in 1959 are probably very similar to those of the poor and oppressed women in the U.S. in 1973. Each woman has her own story of oppression and Victoria is no different:

"When I was about 13 years old I started to work as a maid in the home of an optician in Havana. A lot of things happened to me there. For example, the woman wanted to force me to address her husband as 'Caballero'; she wanted to be addressed as 'Senora,' and her daughter was to be addressed as 'Senorita.' But all I would do is call the man 'Senor.' I called her by her name and she would



always rebuke me for it. Besides, it was impossible; I really couldn't call her daughter 'Senorita' because we were almost the same age—and they didn't call *me* 'Senorita.'

"But above all, I couldn't understand—and the roots of my rebelliousness go back to this—that when my mother would come to visit me, they'd say: 'Hey you, what do you want?' Or, like the first time, when, knowing who she was, they asked me in an arrogant manner: 'Who is that old woman?' "

"...They paid me 15 pesos a month for washing, cleaning and doing almost everything. I told the woman one day that I wanted to go home. I asked her for permission, but she refused. We argued, and she couldn't convince me so I went off on my own because it was my right. What did she do? She had me blacklisted in the Neighbors Association so I wouldn't be able to get a job anywhere...."

But with the people's victory in 1959, these conditions changed immediately. Cuba had had the largest number of prostitutes in Latin America—50,000 to 80,000—when the U.S. sugar and fruit monopolies dominated it. But prostitution was eliminated as the need for it was eliminated—as women were able to support themselves on well-paying jobs. Not only was prostitution wiped out, but so were hunger, malnutrition, ignorance, and unemployment within a few years after the revolution.

Today Cuba is an inspiration to everyone that all forms of oppression can be eliminated through the socialist reconstruction of society. And Victoria is an example for women the world over. She, too, has further ambitions. "I asked to be sent to Vietnam several times, to fight or help out in other ways during the war. It wasn't necessary. I know there are many peoples in Latin America who are still exploited and subjected to Yankee domination. Now I would like to participate in the struggle in one of these countries so I could at least throw a rock at the Yankee oppressors."

Right on, Victoria!

Quotes are taken from Granma, *vol. 8, no. 21 [May 27, 1973], pp. 4-5.*

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Buffalo—

Welfare mothers demand decent pay for babysitters!

By Eva Donovan
Buffalo YAWF Women

Twenty-seven women in the Buffalo, New York, area are challenging an old idea—and it makes me feel good to see how hard and well women can fight back when they know they're right and when they get together. The women are all Welfare mothers and they all work. The Welfare Department is supposed to pay for babysitters, so that going to work does not take such an enormous bite out of already skimpy wages that Welfare mothers are economically *worse* off working than they would be on a straight Welfare grant.

The trick is that Welfare pays the sitter only 50 cents an hour! So, in order to work, you have to find a woman who is even more desperate than you to work for slave wages, 40 hours a week. And if your conscience won't let you do that to anyone, "Well," says Welfare, "you can stay at home."

But even if you have to agree to let someone care for your child at 50 cents an hour, you're still not secure. You know that as soon as the babysitter can find a better-paying job, she has to take it. And then you lose *your* job because you have no one to stay with your child. And you know that your babysitter has every right in the world to quit because her wages were so rotten anyway.

When I was laid off and getting "Welfare assistance" (believe me it wasn't enough to raise a family on), the Welfare Department refused to find me a job because my youngest child was under 6. They said I should stay home and take care of him—but they didn't give me enough money to care for him decently!

Well, the 27 Welfare mothers who are fighting this system first brought their grievances to the attention of the Welfare Department. But Welfare refused to discuss them. They might just as well have said to the women, "There is no problem" and "It's okay to exploit your sisters." But this didn't stop the women. They went to Legal Aid; and now they're bringing a class-action suit in court against the Welfare Department on behalf of all working Welfare mothers. They are demanding that Welfare pay *at least* minimum wage to babysitters.

The editor of the local paper took note of the case and commented that he thought $1.85 an hour was pretty steep for babysitters. Of course, this fine man never tried to live on that kind of money. Nor has he ever tried to teach, guide, and care for other people's children at 50 cents an hour, while keeping your own house together. Along with the Welfare Department, this editor thinks that babysitters shouldn't be considered workers—any more than any "women's work" is considered work.

The 27 Welfare mothers know that caring for children is not only hard but vital work. They are waging this struggle not only for the well-being of their children and their own security, but for the women workers who care for their children and who deserve decent wages.

—the forgotten women

(continued from page 3)

away in lonely rooms and staring into empty space, these patients are rewarded with the knowledge that their lives have value, that they are contributing to Cuban revolutionary development.

All this has been made possible because the poor, the oppressed, the working class have risen in revolution seizing control of the means of production, and transforming the very basis of society to a social system that serves the needs of the people. No longer is value determined by production for profit as in capitalist society. Every person is encouraged to contribute to social development to the best of his or her ability.

In socialist society no one is forgotten.

—of strength and love

(continued from page 11)

with the New York family whom they had begun to call "Mommy" and "Daddy." Then Bloch, who had been appointed the children's guardian by the Rosenbergs, died of a heart attack several months after the execution. Soon after, five police and Welfare Department representatives entered the home with a summons from Children's Court. The next day, the court placed them in an institution. Finally, after much difficulty, Julie's mother was awarded custody of the boys.

Virtually no support was mustered for the Rosenbergs until after the trial, for the fearful tentacles of the witchhunt spread far and wide and people were afraid to come forth. Even some of Ethel's closest friends abandoned her for fear of guilt by association. But as all legal alternatives were exhausted and the last two years of the Rosenbergs' lives came near the end, there was worldwide protest in their favor. Prominent scientists attacked the government's case and new evidence was found. Large demonstrations were held throughout the world in their support. But the Supreme Court turned down their final appeal to reopen the case. Eisenhower refused clemency. The government had set the trap and sprung it and would not let these innocent victims go. Five thousand kept a death watch in Union Square and 400 picketed the White House as the crime against the Rosenbergs was completed on June 19, 1953, one day after their fourteenth wedding anniversary.

It grew clearer as the end came closer that the Rosenbergs could have saved their own lives. Seventeen days before the execution, Federal Director of Prisons James V. Bennett came to Sing Sing as an emissary from Attorney General Brownell with an offer of clemency in exchange for saying that the Communist Party had asked them to spy for the Soviet Union. Two days before the very end a hot line from Washington was installed in the Sing Sing warden's office so they would be able to recant at the last minute.

As they said goodbye to their children for the last time—as they heard Michael scream, "I'll never see you again"—with what unspeakable anguish did they stand strong and unassailable!

We would give Ethel and Julius Rosenberg back their lives if we could. We would erase the horrible episode from history if we could—yet the memory and example of their living and dying are precious to us. On the twentieth anniversary of their deaths, we pay tribute to Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. Ethel Rosenberg will remain forever in our hearts and minds as one of the staunchest sisters in the struggle against oppression.

—Sparta

(continued from page 5)

readjustment period out here. I did the best job I was capable of, and it seemed that it just wasn't good enough. I was fired after 7 months, of which one-third was 11 to 12 hours of work a day.

I can't collect workman's compensation, because the reason he stated that I was fired was insubordination. This consisted of my asking to see my manager's boss, and he felt that in my position, I just don't ask things like going over his head. At workman's compensation, they were even interested in the reason, but still I was denied my money that I felt I rightfully earned.

Since I am single, it makes it very difficult for me to get on welfare. As far as a job goes, it just seems I can't get hired. The people seem to have all kinds of excuses and then some just write me a form letter, which is really the best way to get out of it, seeing as this way they really don't have to explain anything.

I feel the telephone company is at fault on this, having really ruined my work record. The people that I owe don't care about my situation. They just want their money back. It has ruined my chances for getting my children back as soon as I wanted, seeing as I have no set income.

Granted, it has been in my head to say, "the hell with society," and do what is necessary, if I didn't have my boy friend constantly encouraging me not to. All my associates say, "hang in there," but it isn't them that all this is happening to. They all have their jobs and things are going smoothly for them. Right now, I can't see myself accomplishing anything too quickly.

I have come to the point quite a few times to just go on back, but I still got this silly idea that society will give me and my family a chance. I want my two kids to grow up happy and not like their mother.

If things do keep going the way they are, then I really can't say what I will do.

In an on-going campaign to win a public inquest into the conditions at the House of Correction, the Milwaukee Prisoners Solidarity Committee leaflets visitors every week and has held several demonstrations publicizing the prisoners' demands for better conditions. The PSC met Vivian after she contacted them through a coupon on the leaflet, and drove her to the House to visit on several weekends.

An interview

THE SPIRIT OF WOUNDED KNEE

The following is an interview with Anita, a Chicana woman and a member of YAWF, and Judy, a Winnebago. Both women, who live in Milwaukee, spent 8 weeks inside Wounded Knee. Peggy Geden of Milwaukee YAWF Women conducted the interview for **BattleActs.** (The child on the back cover is Judy's son.)

BattleActs: Why did you go to Wounded Knee?
Anita: Being a Chicana woman, having Indian blood in me and being a descendant of the Mayas and Aztec, I felt that Wounded Knee was something that was very important. I felt I could understand why Wounded Knee had to be. The Indian people wanted to bring out to the public just their basic needs, the exploitation that they face every day, the lowest employment, the highest suicide rates. I really think that these were a lot of the basic reasons why they were there in the first place. I really felt it important to be a part of their struggle.

Judy: When I went up with some friends, we really didn't know what was going on inside, except what we had seen or heard on TV. Another person and I decided to stay, and in the process of being there, we all realized, all of a sudden, that it was an actual war, and people couldn't be playing around. Everybody tried to find places in Wounded Knee to fit in. Most of the women worked in the kitchen and the men on security, digging trenches or building bunkers, and so on.... I signed up for the carpentry section, you know, helping dig bunkers and make housing for people.... Eventually women were out in the bunkers and doing guard duty. Most of the men did the shooting though.

BattleActs: Maybe you could go into how the takeover of Wounded Knee came about.
Judy: From what I understand, the Oglala wanted outside help, so they decided to call on AIM (American Indian Movement) to come on in. So AIM came in and they started asking other people from the United States, Mexico, and Canada. The takeover was basically for the Indians to live according to the 1868 Treaty, living as Indians, as a sovereign nation. So everyone went there to help fight with the Oglalas for that way of life, to live as Indians.

BattleActs: What were some of the demands the Oglala had?
Anita: Well, I think one of the biggest demands they had was about Dick Wilson, the head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) on the Pine Ridge Reservation. They wanted him removed. He was expropriating all the government funds and using them for his own things. I guess it was a big Gestapo camp on all the reservations surrounding Wounded Knee. When Wounded Knee was going on, like everything was under martial law, all the schools were closed down, people couldn't even walk down the streets without getting attacked by one of Dicky Wilson's goons. The Oglalas wanted to have a meeting set up and revise things, so they could have representatives who did represent the interests of the Indians, instead of one person dominating everybody else....

BattleActs: How were decisions made inside Wounded Knee?
Judy: Most of the meetings were pretty much closed, just the Oglalas themselves, so I don't know actually how they made their decisions.

BattleActs: There wasn't any so-called outside influence as the media tried to portray?
Judy: No, everyone respected the decisions that came from the Oglalas. We were there as fighters and not to tell them how to run their lives.

BattleActs: What happened with the final Treaty that was agreed upon?
Anita: The government was supposed to set up a commission to investigate the treaties and complaints, but from the last we heard it looks like it's going to be another whitewash job. The only reason we held out so long was that we wanted the government to recognize the 1868 Treaty they themselves drew up. They were going to have a meeting with the Oglala people, but we haven't heard anything, and like, if it's just another one of their thinking that we are going to just let it lay, well, there's just going to be other Wounded Knees.

Judy: Let's talk about some of the shootings.

Anita: Well, they varied, but there was one incident in which we were trying to corner three cows to kill for food, and after shooting the second cow, the federal agents opened fire on us. About eight of us were pinned down for a while, and we had to crawl back through this barbed-wire fence to get into a ditch. And like the FBI could see from the hill that we had only spent two bullets and they were able to see two dead cows. I think they were only using this as an excuse to open up on us.

BattleActs: What about the stories about Russell Means leaving and the disunity among the people inside Wounded Knee?
Anita: That was just another example of press distortion. Like they said Russell had left and he was right there. They wanted to get people to believe that without our leaders, we were nothing, or something like that. I believe that everyone who was in there had leadership qualities, so it wouldn't have mattered anyway.

BattleActs: What about the trading post that burned down?
Anita: Two girls knocked over a kerosene lamp and it didn't have a cover on it. You see, our electricity was cut off during a gun fight and a lot of the covers we had were makeshift. The women

tried to put the fire out by themselves and when they saw they couldn't and went to get help, it was too late. Another one of our buildings burned down, too, the White House.

This whole thing was a big danger to us all the time. The government would send these flares up at night so they could catch people coming in or out, but it was a fire hazard, and if it landed on a building, it could easily catch fire. What we always dreaded happened the last night we were there. One of the flares caught on the White House and burned it, and there wasn't anything we could do. There was a pickup truck nearby that exploded. Like, the government also burnt a lot of the countryside with their flares, purposely burning the perimeter around us.

BattleActs: Those flares can be pretty well aimed, right?

Anita: Oh, yes, I saw times when they deliberately tried to hit trailer houses. We saw lots of incidents like that.

BattleActs: After the occupation was over, the press showed pictures of plundered buildings and ruined homes. What was Wounded Knee like when you left?

Anita: We tried to make all the buildings and houses livable. We washed the dishes and swept and did things pretty much like we would do in our own homes. We had days designated as general clean up. What happened, I'm sure, is that we had a promise from the federal government that they wouldn't let the BIA pigs in, but they did. For a fact I know that none of the Oglalas could leave Wounded Knee the last day without leaving their cars with all their personal belongings in the Wounded Knee perimeter. When the BIA pigs came in after the federal marshals came, they totally smashed the cars and threw out all the personal belongings. That even happened to the Medicine Man; all his medicine was just totally destroyed. They let the FBI in, and the BIA, and *then* the press.

BattleActs: Would you want to go over the indictments?

Judy: There are at least 68 men and women who were indicted altogether, but there are also people who will be added to the list, you know, people inside Wounded Knee. Altogether about 200 people were busted....I was busted for, let me see, "committing and attempting to commit an act to obstruct and impede federal officers of the U.S...."

Russell Means' bail was set at $150,000, another at $100,000, and still another at $125,000....Three are still in jail and there are many people who got busted trying to get inside Wounded Knee in different states. I don't know the exact number of them. At least a million dollars needs to be raised. I know it probably isn't right to make a pitch for money, but it is needed so badly.

BattleActs: Perhaps before we leave the topic of Wounded Knee, you could say something about the role women played inside?

Anita: When the shooting got really heavy, women would stand erect cooking over the stove or the fireplace knowing that the men would be coming in cold and hungry. A lot of times the bullets would be just whizzing by. At times you'd have to flatten out, but you'd have to get right back up.

I think it is also important to bring out the courageousness of some of the women who lost their brothers or husbands at Wounded Knee. Frank Clearwater's wife really set an example when she chose to stay after her husband had been seriously injured. She felt she had come for a purpose and that Wounded Knee wasn't over yet and she had come to stay....

I remember some of the men tried to protect us. I feel if we wanted protection we would have stayed behind in our homes, but we came to stand our ground too, and have a voice, and let the government know we are ready to pick up the gun too, side by side. We didn't feel we had come all the way to Wounded Knee to get down in the basement when the shooting was going on. If our Indian men had fallen, we wanted to be ready to be there and pick up the gun and fight back.

BattleActs: It seems to me that it was a tremendous inspiration to all the oppressed nations within the United States, not just the Native Americans, but the Blacks, Chicanos, the Puerto Ricans, and so on.

Judy: Oh, yes. That brings to mind that some of the guys inside Wounded Knee were Vietnam Vets, and sometimes they compared it to Vietnam. Many, many things were different inside Wounded Knee, and certainly not on the scale of the struggle the Vietnamese waged, but we were fighting the imperialist U.S. government and that was one of the similarities....

BattleActs: Do you see the attempt as deliberate by the U.S. government to destroy the Indian culture?

Judy: Oh, yes, that was what the whole 1868 Treaty was for. The government doesn't want us to live as Indians and the Indians are fighting for that right.

BattleActs: In what ways is Indian culture different from the white man's?

Judy: Oh, the whole Indian culture is so...it is so down to earth. We deal with the whole spiritual thing, with the whole human aspect: like doing our religious thing, doing our peyote meetings; the Sioux have Sun Dances and so on. That is a good example. The government does not want the Oglala Sioux to do their Sun Dances, because they say it is not healthy. For the Sioux, the Sun Dance is a really heavy spiritual thing and the Constitution says you are supposed to have freedom of religion, but we don't have that. Even among my tribe, the Winnebagos, about 6 years ago the government tried to stop our tribe from using peyote because it was a form of drug, but for the Indian it isn't a drug—it is a part of a spiritual religion. That is what we are fighting for today, to win all these rights.

BattleActs: What about Native American women?

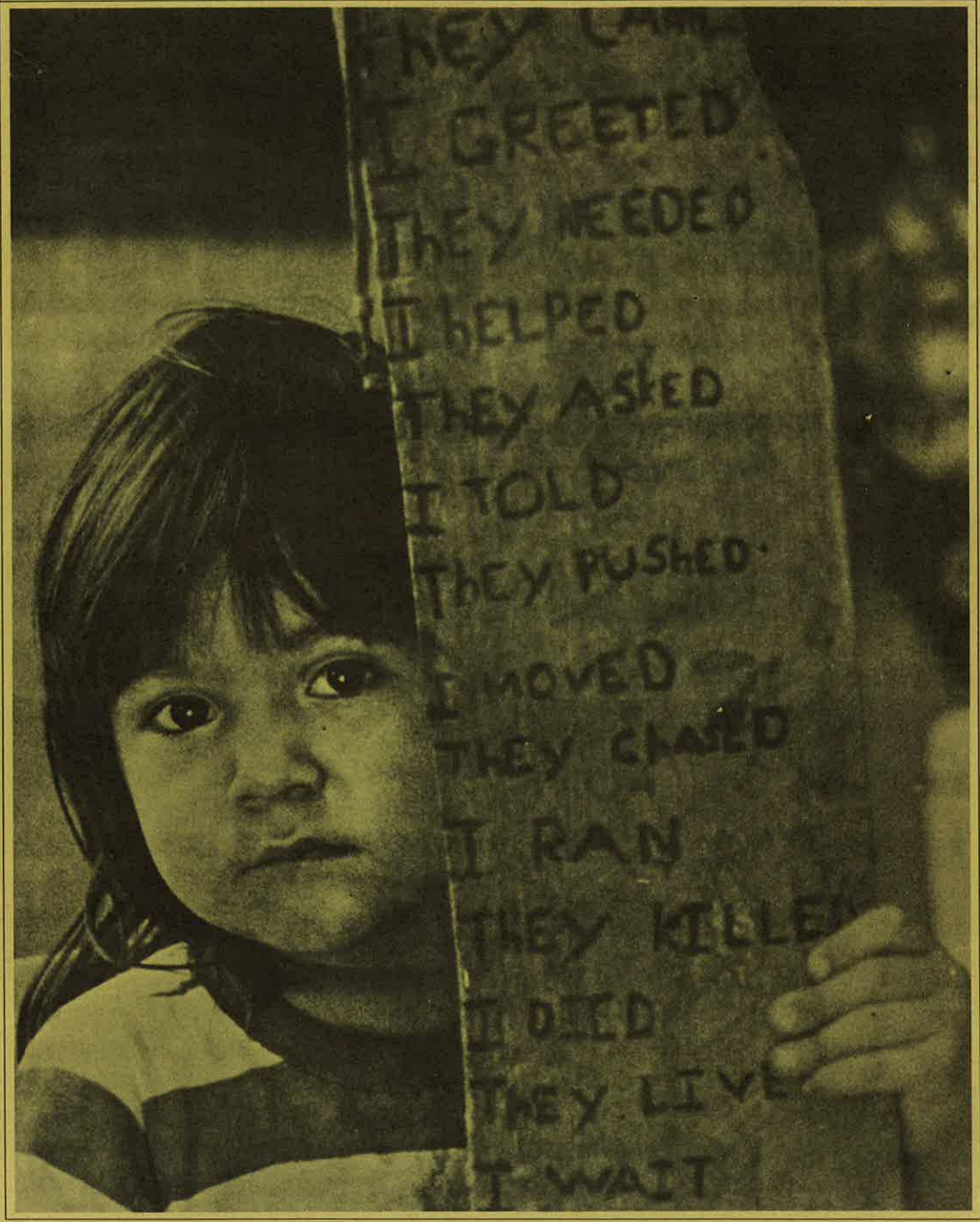
Judy: I can only speak for myself. We were brought up in the whole outdoors, living in the environment, like woods and birds. My family raised us to be pretty much strong. We helped my father cut wood and get water, and we had to walk about 50 feet to the pump. We did just about everything, a lot of hunting with the family, going out and getting deer and squirrel and things.

Basically I think most Native American women were pretty strong. I think when the white man came along, he succeeded somewhat in softening the Indian women. But I myself am still stronger than most white women.

BattleActs: Is there anything else either one of you would like to say that you feel is important?

Judy: Yes, before we leave the subject of Wounded Knee, I would like to say how everyone got into the whole spirit of Wounded Knee. For the first time in my life I could really look at myself for a change, as a person, as an Indian, as a woman, as a whole human being. Even though I was in this whole war zone, I was really happy. I had friends and people to love. Inside my heart I felt all this love. Although I was there fighting in the war, I found peace. I think a lot of people shared that together. We all knew what we were there for. We were fighting a common enemy and most of the minor differences were put aside. We all had one goal there. A lot of childhood memories were brought up. It was like a renaissance. I was born again. Here I am, Judy...I can live again. I feel I'm still growing up now, that I have a lot of fighting to do and that is what I got from Wounded Knee.

Funds can be sent directly to the:
Wounded Knee Legal Defense
P.O. Box 147
Rapid City, South Dakota 57701



an interview

The Spirit of Wounded Knee

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