

We call what follows a 'basis of unity' because these words about ideas are a digest of our current agreements with each other in Bread and Roses. We will change our basis of unity as our group <sup>develops</sup> changes, as we learn more about our agreement with each other through trying to do things together and learning from successes and mistakes. We think it is important to keep a record of our agreement with each other for two reasons: first, because it is helpful in making decision about the work we will do together, and second, because we can look at the development of our basis of unity over a period of time, and see than our work together really has changed our ideas about the world. In addition to learning from our own experience, we want to make our learning accessible to others.

The basis of unity of Bread and Roses is not intended to be a test. If you are thinking about joining this group and want to know more about it, the basis of unity will tell you about some of the fundamental ideas and current tasks that we have agreed upon..

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### PATRIARCHY

We think that it is important to base our understanding of the world on the experience of women. We are feminists. To see the world through the eyes of women, to act in the interests of our sex is to begin to build a new society.

We refuse the old ways, today's ways. We reject the patriarchy. Since the dawn of human history women have been oppressed: treated as inferiors, as objects, made powerless. Our potential has been smothered, our history denied us.

The reasons for this are deeply rooted in the evolution of human economic and social institutions and this is not the place for attempting a definitive explanation of thousands of years of domination of women by men. But some realities are clear enough in present day society. There exists a sexual division of labour between men and women. We women are primarily responsible for ensuring the reproduction of the human species. We are the nurturers, the emotional supports, the domestic labourers within the family unit. The work we do in this realm is isolated and unrecognized. It is our role within the family which is at the root of our oppression: it affects all other aspects of our lives.

If we must work for wages, as most of us are increasingly forced to do, then we have a double day of labour. Small wonder we have little time or energy for politics, union activity, all the things that men do which give them more power. Since our wage labour is seen as secondary to our 'real' role of wife and mother this is used to justify our being used either as a reserve labour force or to lock us into low-paying jobs at less than 60% of male wages. Our secondary economic status is reinforced by the lack of any decent social services such as child care, collective eating and living facilities which would lighten our domestic load. As a result, if we are single parents we live in poverty; if we have husbands we are economically dependent on them.

If this was not enough, we are denied control over our own bodies and our own sexuality. Our sexuality is male-defined, turned into a commodity designed to please male fantasies. Our bodies are bruised, battered and raped by men who believe us to be lesser beings. The state, which is dominated by men, not us, determines whether or not we shall have access to decent birth control and abortion facilities. The practice of the justice system shows that this society continues to view rape as a woman's fault, to give husbands control over their wives' bodies, as if our bodies were their private property. The state tells us who and under what conditions we are to be allowed to love, maintaining numerous laws against love between homosexuals and between adolescents. All this is in the name of defending the family. All this to perpetuate women's oppression.

These daily realities are reinforced by anti-woman ideas which bombard us constantly. In educational institutions, in churches, in the media, in every-day conversations and jokes the message is clear: women are less capable, less intelligent, weaker than men.

Women are too emotional to make rational decisions. Women have passive masochistic personalities, should be prepared to sacrifice all for love and family. Women are sexual objects who want to be dominated by men. A lot of energy goes into teaching us to act out inferior rôles, to accept our oppression.

\* It is not only women who are damaged and maimed by the patriarchal nature of our society. Most men gain very little: the small privileges they gain from not having to be responsible for domestic labour result in an inability to be nurturing, to express their feelings, to relate to women and children in an open way. In addition, it wins them the permanent resentment and anger of their wives. The feelings of superiority over women are small comfort when confronted with the fundamental fact that they too have little control over their lives. And the sexual objectification and physical brutalization of women ensure a sexual and emotional wasteland for both sexes. *great difficulty*

AND CAPITALISM

It should be clear that the misery of women's lot in life cannot be explained only in terms of our domination by men. We have said that we are looking at the world through the eyes of women; this also means to look at the world from the point of view of humanity as a whole. We are feminists and socialists. The patriarchal domination of women is intertwined with class domination. We live in a capitalist society -- one which produces profits for a few while the human needs of the majority are denied. The labour of working men and women is exploited for the benefit of a few parasites who own and control the bulk of the wealth: the land and resources, the factories and offices, the money. We workers must fight for every penny we receive in order to live -- from the profits that only we have produced.

To maximize profits and to divide those who might fight back against this exploitation, cheap labour pools are developed. Women are ghettoized and paid low wages which only serve to keep male wages down. Similarly immigrants, especially of non-white races are brought in at the bottom of the heap to do the worst jobs at the lowest wages. Whole nations of people (with long histories and common cultures) are denied economic and political self determination -- again in the interests of profit. The role of corporations in resisting the demand by Quebecois for self-determination has been abundantly clear. For the native people of this country, the policies of those who decide control have been the most abhorrent. The destruction of their land, their resources and their culture has not been enough. Social policies have been implemented which are genocidal in their intent + results.

Not content with what can be taken from us, giant imperialist corporations maximize their profits by extending their tentacles throughout the world. Fifty years ago it was done through colonialism. Today, the mask of 'independence and freedom' hides the continuing economic and political control over the development of these countries. There, the peasants and workers produce even greater profits for these corporations and are rewarded with abysmal living standards, destruction of their traditional cultures, brutal ruling elites which deny the most basis of democratic rights and the constant threat of imperialist military invasion should they resist.

These same corporations use (the agencies of the state) control and their control over governments everywhere to maintain their positions of power -- ensuring favourable taxation arrangements, government subsidies and giveaways to corporate endeavours, laws which protect private enterprise and which ensure that those who are born wealthy will remain so. And if necessary the corporations have the use of the police and army to protect their control. A clear demonstration of which side the police are on is in a strike, any striker knows that cops will never be on their side.

This international system of imperialism has brought us to the brink of complete destruction of the global environment. There are two very real possibilities: the ecosystem will collapse as a result of the cut-throat grab for resources and the deliberate dumping of noxious waste in the land, waters and atmosphere; or, the madmen who presently decide the future of much of humanity will engulf us in total nuclear destruction as they defend their right to feed their greed.

As is true in the oppression of women, from our earliest years we are taught ideas which make us accept this state of affairs, which make us accept the right of a few to take away the fruits of our labour, which tell us that we too can 'make it' if we try hard enough, which tell us that most workers are lazy. Ideas which tell us that

\*Must be clear about ideas & physical\*

it's immigrants who take away jobs. Ideas that buy-off men by telling them that they really do have power, at least over women. Ideas which teach us that we are not capable of controlling our own lives.

Patriarchy and capitalism reinforce each other. The whole system must go. It is rotten to the core. cliche

### OUR VISION

We seek to replace this social system with one which is both socialist and feminist. By this we mean a society which is without classes, which is democratically controlled by those who produce the wealth, which plans its activity from the point of view of human needs, which takes full responsibility for the raising of new generations, which seeks an harmonious relationship with the global environment. By this we mean a society in which all of those who suffer special oppression today -- women, racial and national groups, children -- take an equal place. By this we mean a society which overcomes the age-old domination of women by men by eliminating the sexual division of labour, by ensuring the economic and sexual autonomy of women, by developing collective and supportive arrangement for daily living, by allowing full development of our capacities for pleasure and creativity. We know that socialism does not automatically lead to the liberation of women. It only creates the conditions for making it possible.

implied classless-ness

### A MOVEMENT OF WOMEN

To achieve this, we must act and we must struggle. A workers' movement must be built which is conscious of the stakes and the possibilities. So must a strong, self organized and self-defined women's movement be built. Only the oppressed can lead their own struggles. Only when we women organize independently and insist on our needs will be be able to ensure that our liberation is not put off to some distant mythical future. Only when we fight for our own liberation, as we also fight for all of humanity, will we discover our true strength. By refusing to subordinate our needs we create the conditions for an alliance of equals between men and women. And, not least, by understanding women's experience, by building a strong and powerful women's movement, we will make a central contribution to the vision and reality of what the future society will be. In the words of our South African sisters, "You have touches a woman,/ You have found a rock,/ You have dislodged a boulder..."

### A MASSMOVEMENT

We have a long way to go. Until recently, the women's movement has been small, largely white and middle class, toooften inward turned. Instead it must become an instrument of struggle and support for the majority of women. Today the possibilities exist for such a transformation as more and more women workers organize into unions, set up women's committees, demand equal pay, maternity benefits, etc.,; as more women fight for abotion rights; as feminist ideas spread. ← other women's issues

If the future lies with a women's movement which draws its greatest numbers and its strenght from working class women, so too it lies with a movement which is consciously anti-racist. It is non-white women who bear the heaviest burden in this society, but who also have the least stake in maintaining the whole rotten affair. The women's movement must not only be a place where women from racial minorities feel their needs are being put in the forefront, it must also actively seek to include the understandings of the relations between sex, class and racial oppression and the capacity for struggle which themost oppressed of our sisters can share with us.

The building of such a movement of women cannot occur at the expense of women whose needs can be ignored because they are in a minority, or because they raise demands which are 'unpopular.' If it has been a struggle to win many women to supporting aboriton rights, if it will be a struggle to build a movment of women of all races, it will also be a struggle to denfend the interests of lesbians. Anti-homosexual, or homophobic, ideas are deeply embedded in popular consciousness. Women who chose to live independently of men in every way are often the frontline targets of the most sexist men, the right-wing reactionaries who defend family, church and state, and even of the government itself. [We must make no mistakes here.] Lesbian feminists are not only part of the women's movement, [they] played a key role in leading and building ....4

lesbian-feminists have

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lesbian + gay  
rights & liberation

it. And the broader fight for homosexual rights must always be part of our struggle.

TO CHANGE THE WORLD WE MUST ACT

We will not be given what we want. We must fight for it. By acting together, by seeking the ways to build the greatest unity and numbers of the women's movement, we will take more steps along the road. Through action we most clearly express our commitment to change the condition of women, and through our movement we will draw in more and more feminists.

We think that part of the way to build such a women's movement, to act effectively, is to take up tasks which are grounded in women's experience, to press women's issues at every opportunity and to build alliances with individuals and groups who support specific actions and demands.

If we mobilize effectively we believe that it is possible to make some gains for women within the system, by organizing ourselves in great numbers and bringing pressure on the government and corporations. At the very least, we will be able to prevent erosion of gains we have already made. But our ability to make gains, rests first and foremost on our own organized strength. (and that of the allies we develop). We do not rely on the government to make changes in our interests, we mobilize to force it to do so. We do not lose sight of the fact that there will be no real liberation of women under this system.

outward

ALLIES/BUILDING ALLIANCES

Our struggle will be made stronger if we can win allies. Those potential allies are to be found within the mass popular organizations, for example, the trade union movement, movements against the right and racism, anti-imperialist movements, the gay movement, community groups and left organizations. In other words, alliances can and must be built with those whose real interests lie with challenging the capitalist patriarchy. We do not have illusions that this will be an easy task, we will have to fight to convince our potential allies of the necessity to support women's demands and we will not sacrifice our autonomy in doing so. In some ways, it's more than a question of making links, it's a question of extending the women's movement in all mass organizations and unifying it. Success in this endeavour will make not only women stronger. To the extent that male dominated popular organizations take up women's interests, they will be in a stronger position to challenge the system as it exists, will have gone beyond the narrow definitions of self-interest which keep us divided.

trade unions

BREAD AND ROSES

How do we fit into this rather broad framework? First, we have no illusions that a small group can bring about great changes. Our perspectives are modest and we are only beginning to sort out many things.

We want to help build the women's movement in the ways we have described above, to be an activist group, to develop our analysis through our experience. In the process we hope to win more women to a socialist feminist perspective on how to change the world. We don't consider ourselves in anyway to be the only socialist feminists in Vancouver, nor do we consider ourselves in competition with other groups of women who are building the women's movement. Any do not demand that the women and groups have a socialist feminist perspective in order for us to work together.

Rather, we have felt the need to collectively discuss strategy for building the movement, and to focus at present on two task areas which we think are important and which require more energy from socialist feminists. These two task areas are consistent with some of the ways in which we would like to see the women's movement change.

First, we want to educate ourselves and our potential allies about the connections between the attack from the right on racial minorities, on homo-sexuals, on working people and on women, and to develop a feminist and activist response to that attack.

*We want to take an active role in fighting the right.*

Second, we also want to help build the support of the women's movement as a whole for the struggles of working people around feminist issues, doing strike support, helping popularize women's demands, making links. For too long the women's movement in Vancouver has been too divided into different sectors -- and we have been weaker for it.

We have only just begun to work out what it means to do this kind of work, to define our role. We know that sometimes we want to take initiative, other times act as a support group (for each other and other groups). While we want to be an activist group, we also want to provide support to women who are working in other groups and who want to talk with women with a similar perspective about what is happening in their workplaces, unions, mixed political groups, etc.. And we include in the notion of support problem solving, help analyzing actions and decisions to be taken, difficulties dealing with sexism, racism, and homophobia. And too, we also want to help in the elaboration of theory and strategy for our movement. How those different roles will fit together for Bread and Roses is not yet clear.

Finally, a few words on the composition of our group\*. We have made some strong statements about the way in which we think the women's movement must change. We also think that applies to Bread and Roses. We want to build an organization of socialist feminists in which working class and non-white women feel is their own, where they do not feel like strangers. This won't be easy because it means dealing with classist and racist attitudes in our own midst. But we believe this is important and necessary; that it will strengthen us. And we are optimistic.

\* need amendment  
lesbian & heterosexual

- distinction trade unions & voluntary organizations -
- anti-imp. connection w/ \$ in other countries
- Strengthen material base -
- clean up class stuff -
- self-determination for nations: clarify
- anti-racist - composition
- change stuff on ideas - to include
- vision: deeply rooted

- male privilege -  
\* physical violence over \$ \*

intended for internal & recruiting document - not Kenesis but