

MOTION I:

BASIS OF UNITY

Motivation

There has been some concern expressed over the proposal to develop a "basis of unity" for the organization. This concern seems to be over having any type of defined basis of unity at all as well as over what type of statement we should have.

Should we have any type of basis of unity?

The main objection to having any type of basis of unity seems to be concerned with whether or not it would exclude women. We agree that some women might not feel prepared to agree with our basis of unity - whatever it is - and may not want to join us. However, we also think that a statement of what we stand for will encourage others to join us and to stay with us since they will know what we stand for. As well, many women who are members have felt unhappy about the fact that we seem to have operated on the basis of certain assumptions that are not explicit. A statement of what we stand for will help to eliminate these concerns about covert or unclear assumptions and help us keep women who now feel "shoved out" by this lack of clarity. Finally the IWDC would be able to make decisions regarding priorities and activities consistent with an explicit statement of what it stands for. This greater consistency and clarity would also help us to attract and maintain membership in the IWDC.

What type of basis of unity?

Virtually all organizations - the YWCA, IODE, Girl Guides, etc. - have, in fact, some sort of statement of what they stand for and what their purpose is. The question is, what type of statement should we have?

In our proposal we are proposing that our basis of unity reflect what we considered to be the three main underlying principles of the IWDC already. (refer to original proposal - pg. 2). Adopting these three principles would make us a left-of-centre current in the women's movement.

Again there are objections that this basis of unity is too "high level" and would exclude women. Our arguments are:

- 1) The IWDC cannot be all things to all women. In the first place, there are other organizations which can encompass women with other concerns that those outlined in our statement of principles. In the second place, most of us have expressed deep dissatisfaction with our relative lack of strong, clear direction over the past year. It is time we clearly identified what we stand for so we can move forward strongly in the work we want to do. We build the women's movement better by doing this than by floundering and losing women from our organization. Finally we must recognize that whether or not we make these principles explicit or not, what we stand for is already implicit in our work and activities and serves to "exclude" those who disagree.
- 2) This proposed basis of unity does not establish the IWDC as a socialist or as a revolutionary group. There are several members and many women who are not socialist and not prepared to join a revolutionary group who could and do agree that capitalism must be altered fundamentally to achieve the liberation of women, that mass action is necessary to win gains from the state, and that we need to ally ourselves with progressive forces. They would be able to join the IWDC on this basis of unity. Similarly there are several revolutionaries and/or socialist women who would also be able to join this group although their positions extend further than the proposed statement. This basis of unity, we think, encompasses most of the range of thinking of the current members of the IWDC and does not exclude anyone. Similarly we think there are many, many women who are feminists and not yet members of the IWDC who could go at least this far in their own statement of their beliefs regarding women's liberation and how to achieve it.

The basis of unity for the IWDC versus the basis of unity for the campaign

It should be clear that we are not proposing this basis of unity for the campaign. The campaign, to be carried by and through a number of different organizations working together in a coalition, would have its own basis of unity - probably one issue and several agreed on slogans. We, as one group in the coalition, might argue our position as the one to be adopted but would not insist that it be the one adopted before working with the coalition. Needless to say, many women, unable to join our organization or other organizations or with a previous lack of contact with the organized women's liberation movement, would be drawn into and could work with the campaign coalition, on this less demanding basis of unity.

Why not demands?

There are two main reasons why we did not opt simply for a statement of demands. First of all, this is not less exclusionary than a more general statement of principles. It all depends on the list of demands adopted and the extent to which they reflect the underlying principles agreed on by members of this organization.

Secondly, our experience has taught us in the IWDC that it is extremely difficult to develop a general list of demands which satisfies everyone's concerns and which are expressed in a manner satisfactory to all. In other words, in a certain sense, to adopt a list of demands, especially if we are not going to have an endless list, would demand perhaps a much higher degree of agreement than a more general statement would demand at this stage. We think that a general statement of principles allows us to incorporate demands and struggles as they arise which are consistent with this general statement without tying us to a certain set of demands and struggles. At the same time, the statement gives us greater direction than we currently have regarding our choices and priorities in adopting certain actions.

Motion I: Basis of Unity

We move that

- a) the IWDC adopt a basis of unity
- b) this basis of unity be constructed on the political principles outlined in the document in such a way as to highlight key issues and the mass action strategy
- c) a committee be struck to write a draft of the Basis of Unity Statement for our next meeting.

Motion II: Building the IWDC as an Organization

We move that

- a) the IWDC adopt a perspective of consolidating a membership around the basis of unity statement
- b) that membership be based on agreement with this statement and participation in the work of the IWDC; that voting be restricted to members of IWDC but participation be encouraged for all women
- c) the IWDC adopt an organizational structure which incorporates the principles outlined in part 6 (p. 3) of document

d) the following committees be established:

- orientation committee(integration of new women)
- media committee
- action committee
- lesbian perspectives committee
- newsletter committee
- co-ordinating committee

Motion III: The Campaign

We move that

a)the IWDC adopt a perspective of establishing a united coalition of organizations and individuals to struggle around a key issue of the women's liberation movement with the purpose of winning real victories and countering the demoralizing setbacks of the past few years

b)that over the summer the action committee of the IWDC

- (i) should investigate the political issues related to trying to establish such a coalition (eg. the basis of unity of the coalition, type of campaign, etc)
- (ii) investigate the various possibilities for the focus of the campaign (eg. daycare, unemployment etc)
- (iii) prepare a report for the summer meetings of IWDC concerning its investigations and proposals

Motion IV: Agenda of Next Meeting

We move that the agenda for our next meeting be the following:

- a) final discussion of the basis of unity
- b) establishment of committees and clarification of their mandates
- c) finalization of summer agenda

Motion V: Summer Agenda

We move that

- a) Committees should meet and prepare, on the basis of their mandate, a one page clarification of their task and a list of concrete proposals for the fall
- b) the IWDC schedule one general meeting in July and one in August at which the committee reports would be discussed
- c) a series of social events be organized over the summer months

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