

August 16th, 1981

Sara.

"CLEARING UP DISAGREEMENTS"

Frances and Sara

It is my intention to point out what I consider mistakes and to suggest more useful ways of speaking about our work. The basis for this criticism comes from my belief that we are united by our common work as serious, long term, committed feminist organizers.

These are mistakes I've heard both at the group meetings for lesbians interested in increased mobilizing and organizing-"Lesbians Against the Right", in a letter from Sara after the lesbian conference and from both of you during the workshops at Gay Unity:

- I. When you say (verbal and written): "it's time for us to start organizing now against the right" and you do not specifically define "the right" as another part of the oppression we all experience as women, as lesbians

When you speak and write of beginning to organize now as though there are no organizations already active now that are working to end our oppression as women, as lesbians

I am disappointed by what I see as a limited analysis of the work of the women's liberation movement and I am frightened and angry that once again my political work as a lesbian feminist is being made invisible- not by the media, not by homophobia in the women's liberation movement, but by other lesbian feminists.

- II. When, in the workshops at the Gay Unity and in the LAR meetings you do not ask for full rounds with names, reasons why women are there, what political organizations they are put of, what concrete work they are doing to fight oppression

I am sad that the realities of women's lives are not exposed and I am worried that the concrete organizing experience of women in the room is not being called on to assist us in developing our strategies.

In my opinion, both of these work against our fight to end oppression by:

-creating the idea that my, and other women, being lesbian feminist activists within the independent women's liberation movement (BCFW and other autonomous feminist groups) has not been and is not now directly a part of organizing against the forces that repress us ie. "organizing against the right".

-making my work in organizing women, and that of other lesbian feminists and feminists invisible and not making clear the very painfully won connections and alliances we have already built- (for example- during the report at the last LAR meeting- Frances lumped in as part of homosexual organizations- media the Lesbian Radio Show and said it was not "possible to make alliances with them but we could use them". Sara had a question about CCCA's position on lesbianism. Frances placed the Lesbian Drop In and the Younger Lesbian Drop In under Lesbian Social Groups. All of these groups are members of the BCFW, the lesbian groups are part of the Rights of Lesbians Subcommittee and all have a consciousness and agreement with the policy on Lesbian Rights in BCFW. To not give serious recognition of this

fact, regardless of your opinion of BCFW, ignores and glosses over the strong intergration of a lesbian feminist politic that exists in the BC women's liberation movement and does not give credit to the work of Lesbian Caucus or other lesbians who were instrumental in developing that analysis and acting on it in early BCFW days-)

- lacking the contact and experience of BCFW - this perspective also seems to lack experience in grass roots feminist organizing ?
- leaving women who hear information about "the right" confused because they lack concrete information about both the right and about the purpose and work of the organized women's liberation movement- creating the illusion the organizing against the right is separate and distinct from serious organizing as feminists
- does not acknowledge the real experience of women in the room or the real fears that women may have hearing scary information- not doing rounds in full does not quickly put women in contact with active lesbian feminist and feminist organizations which would more appropriately meet their needs- for example- during the workshop at Gay Unity- a round would have let the isolated lesbian mother fighting a custody case in Chilliwack know that Yvonne from the Rural Lesbian Association was in Mission and give her contact with women from LAFMPAG

What I think would be more useful and beneficial to us as organizers and to the women we are organizing:

1. Give women specific information about "the right"- describe the groups attacking us- Moral Majority, increasing police attacks, government repressions, increasing violence against lesbians..... and give a short analysis of that being an extension of all the other ways we are held down. Using "the right" as a shorthand for sexism, racism, heterosexism, capitalism makes our ideas inaccessible to ordinary women
2. Give women specific information about groups and activities that already exist- including BCFW- why it exists and how it works what work the member groups are doing. This is in order to build a strong sense of feminist analysis, identity and presence within the discussion about fighting back. Also values the work done- not only a question of developing alliances but expanding what we've got.
3. Take the time (round or some other form) to find out what women in the room are going through- / they are fighting back- connect what women are already doing and going through to the work of "organizing against the right". Providing care and contact for women and referring them to other groups is part of our work, and involves women in the process by seeing her life and her individual and political struggle as beginning steps in organizing for her own and our freedom.

4. Ask Silva when she's speaking at the Bread & Roses event in Sept (representing LAR) to speak about BCFW- the work of Lesbian Feminist groups in BCFW- the connections between us- the Rights of Lesbians Subcommittee- to again build a strong sense of the connections between lesbians and feminists here in BC *

5. Be specific about what you mean by "organizing"- who are you interested in organizing, from what perspective and for what purpose- it is essential for us to be clear about our terms when we are working together- to decrease suspicion and create strategies that will work for us and all women *Is there a difference in organizing as socialist-feminists and feminists?*

Some of my additional reasons for these changes: →

-Organizing as a feminist means a fight for my freedom and the liberation of all women and therefore of all people. The term "organizing against the right" does not accurately or adequately describe the struggle in relation to our purpose as lesbian feminists active in the women's liberation movement.

-As feminists we acknowledge that our emotions (and those of all women) are valid and as a result of our experience, we develop an analysis which describes the experience and our emotions and we plan and act concretely on our analysis. We organize women from the perspective of giving and receiving emotional support on the basis of commonality of experience and educating one another and developing an analysis out of our experience as women and acting on that analysis to effect change. Ending the isolation of women is central to our work of organizing. Our work is based on self-help and grass roots organizing- by organizing we mean to bring all women into a political context with us. We teach women our political analysis and agreements so that we can struggle together as equals toward unity.

(we are not organizing actions- we are organizing women to plan and carry out actions on an individual and group level- we want to encourage women to become leaders- not just follow a new leadership)

-It is possible and essential to make radical feminism real and accessible to ordinary women- fostering their discontent and acting as a catalyst and support for women to transform their lives. (developing a critical consciousness)

-Using the experience of organizers is necessary to prevent reinventing the wheel

- As feminist organizers - evaluate work, set new perspectives based on vision of anti-sexist, anti-heterosexist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist vision
- need to constantly reevaluate strategy to be more effective - talk to each other - *the capitalist reality we need to deal with is the reality about the political situation we're in - this is in order to increase our impact.*

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-not active in BCFW, not BCFW group, not speaking of BCFW as viable

-if criticisms must be raised with BCFW - not to criticize & raise more ~~the~~ comprehensive perspective is to disregard seriousness as organizers -

*-(because - assume that B + R. has position -)