

from the Notting Hill Group, Women's Liberation Workshop, London

We would like to suggest an approach for the discussion of the six demands which were presented at the Manchester conference.

1. Nearly all the campaigns that Women's Liberation has initiated have either never got started or have faded. For example, of the Four Campaigns, only the abortion and birth control campaign has got off the ground. Few women from the movement came to support the Night Cleaners' strike. Support came from established political groups and other non-affiliated people, including men. We have to ask why, and to ask it differently from the way men do: not what's wrong with women in the movement but what's wrong with the situation in which all women find themselves. We have to ask if Women's Liberation politics spring from the situation of women or if they are superimposed on that situation.

2. Many women would like to get into activities, but it has not been clear how political activity relates to our own struggle for liberation. Quite the reverse: we have been encouraged to think that our struggle as women is peripheral to mass struggles, that it's only personal and politically irrelevant.

Our involvement with the struggles of the working class is posed either as more important than our own struggles as a movement or as individuals, or irrelevant to our own struggles. We haven't helped women with kids who can't get out and are therefore limited in their chance of involvement: this means we haven't considered them important. We must see that the situations of all women are deeply related under capitalism, in what ways they are related, and how we can overcome the way class divides us.

3. All institutions, organisations and political parties are male dominated, and therefore either perpetuate and/or ignore women's exploitation and oppression by considering them only in relation to men. From these institutions, organisations and political parties we have brought into the movement influences which prevent us from creating our own politics and therefore our own demands out of our own collective experience and consciousness as women.

When we come into the movement, we must shed, layer by layer, everything that we have been conditioned to believe. To do this, we must continually resist attempts to superimpose on the movement ideologies or interests which originate in our male-dominated past - and present. Rather, continually developing our own politics from the resistance and rebellion of women, we can take these outwards into the places where we happen to be working, living, struggling. Each of us may see different possibilities for using Women's Liberation politics; the point is that the best way of working out our differences is to discuss different kinds of activities - possibilities, successes and failures - rather than turning inward to fight each other over abstractions.

4. Not all the women in the Notting Hill group agree with the six demands, but we believe that they provide the best basis for a discussion of what to do. We think we can only discuss what to do if:-

a) from the beginning the demands are discussed, not the pamphlet, not the unions, but the demands, in terms of actual situations and actions;

b) when we look for additional demands or to replace these demands, we always keep in mind that every demand must be feminist - that means putting women first, political, and not co-optable by capitalism at this time.

5. WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD HAVE THIS DISCUSSION FOR AS LONG AS WE FEEL NECESSARY, STARTING FROM 10.30 SATURDAY UNTIL THE FULL SESSION, WHICH WE THINK WOULD BE BEST PLACED AT THE END OF THE DAY,