

Address material needs

A successful strategy for the liberation of women must be rooted in the needs of the working class women — the overwhelming majority of women who own nothing but their labor power which they must sell to survive.

The idea of relating the women's movement to poor, working class and Third World women often escapes the white, educated elite of the women's movement. But the demands and needs of working class women present a historic choice for the women's movement: either to build an essentially bourgeois feminist movement or to organize a women's movement based in and led by the working class. Working women in their demands for jobs, a living wage, health and safety improvements and day-care are fighting to get organized.

Women serve as the largest reserve army of labor for monopoly capitalists. Women are forced into the work force by economic necessity and the demand for labor — pushed out or held to the lowest paying jobs according to the needs of profit. Women, along with Third World workers, are the last hired and first fired.

For over 100 years, the number of women workers in the United States has been steadily increasing. Today 40 per cent of the work force are women but half of all women workers are concentrated in occupations which are the lowest paying in the country. Ten million women are clerical workers. Another 10 million are service and factory workers. Four point five million workers are professional and technical workers (two-fifths of whom are teachers) and one million women are domestic workers.

Women work at wages that average half those of men. The pay gap widened six per cent in the years between 1955 and 1971. Virginia Slims can sell all the cigarettes on earth, but the fact remains women's pay has not come a long way: the median wage of women workers is 59 per cent that of men.

Women with one to three years of college makes less than men with eighth grade educations. To pile up even more bad news, 45 per cent of women workers earn less than \$5,000 per year.

The meaning of these statistics is clear: women have more to gain from liberation than simply not having to make coffee for the boss. The women's movement must address itself to the material conditions of working class women. Today, International Women's Day, grew out of the struggles of working class women and whatever advances women can expect in the future will come as the result of further struggle.

Letters

Carmen wronged

The summary of the opera Carmen offered in last Thursday's "Surface and Symbol" illustrates a sexist perspective that is thankfully absent from most pages of the Emerald and points to an unfortunate ignorance of the opera. According to your account, Carmen is the story of "a simple country boy and his gradual downfall from soldier to murderer" because he was "beguiled by the seductive Carmen." Under the spell of this femme fatale, Don Jose loses his soul, but, of course, this "Sacrifice of her lover's moral character is not enough to keep elusive Carmen from the arms of still another man." In this logic, Don Jose's final act, stabbing Carmen, can only be described as a crime of passion, for his "despair and jealousy" allowed no other manly response. This approach ignores Carmen as the main character in the opera and denigrates her character more than is Bizet's intention. Your summary is an example of stereotyping that limits some interpretations of great works of art.

If it is true that Don Jose is the central character in this opera, it must seem strange that Bizet entitled this work Carmen. Perhaps we should focus some attention on the woman character after whom the opera is named. Carmen cannot easily be reduced to a femme fatale; she is an independent woman who refuses to be controlled by anyone. She is not swayed by romantic foolishness and warns prospective lovers that love knows no laws and thus everyone must beware. Nor does

she lack any courage, for the cards have told her that she will die and yet she does not hesitate to go to the bullfight with her new lover. None of this would get her canonized, but nor would it point to a catty, seductive bitch who leads poor, innocent men astray. Don Jose, on the other hand, is even a less likely candidate for sainthood. He is a hotheaded simpleton who has never been able to control his emotions. He has killed a man before the opera begins, a fact we learn from the opera-comique dialogue that is often omitted from contemporary performances. Since he has never been able to control his emotions, he can hardly be described as an innocent forced into a crime of passion. This version of the opera was evident in the 1972 production at the Met with Marilyn Horne and James McCracken playing the leading roles. This interpretation of Carmen was one of the most imaginative and viable approaches in recent times; I can only hope that the Eugene version will offer such insight.

A perspective which accounts only for stereotypes and perhaps looks for them will provide a limited interpretation of any good work of art. Your description of Carmen did much worse; it allowed stereotypes to take over the facts.

Marilyn R. Farwell —
Assistant Professor — English

Shining example

In response to Charles Silverstein's letter of Feb. 7: It is important to remember that rape is a cruel, debilitating, emo-



opinion

Capitalism exploits women's labor

*"The bosses ride big fine horses,
While we walk in the mud.
Their banner is the dollar sign,
While ours is striped in blood."*

International Women's Day is an excellent opportunity for those of us in America who call ourselves socialist feminists to examine the changing nature of the women's movement and our part in it.

We call ourselves feminists because we are daily reminded of our unique oppression as women in this society. We believe that the capitalist system has given privilege to white men and necessitates that we organize as women to insure that any transformation of society will include new social institutions that actively fight sexual and racial oppression.

We call ourselves socialists because we know our oppression as women stems from an exploitative economic system. That system requires that there be a large enough group of workers available to work for low wages to control the more organized labor forces. We believe that only with a re-structuring of society will we gain control over our lives as women and as workers.

Control over our work means utilizing our skills and talents in ways that we see as useful. It would be an exciting and fulfilling experience to examine how our talents could best be used by our community so we could put our energies there. For example, my option is to sell my skills in newspaper production work. I utilize my time maximizing the profit for a company whose purpose is to inform readers and to sell products.

Yet everyday I must question the truth of the information, the quality of the products and the nature of the audience.

I see myself as an academic hit with the realities of our over-educated, under-skilled society. I work with women who come from the same place. We all saw academic futures for ourselves; we are all working for a little more than minimum wage. It is the ability to see societal problems that helps us see the truth through the rhetoric.

As women workers we are told to be nice girls and to be glad we have a job, but we must be increasingly critical of the nature of our work. It is true that more women are working than ever before, but it is also true that we are still being paid the least.

We must fight the myths that perpetuate the ideas we are working for "pin money" and vacations in Hawaii. In reality, we are working to support ourselves and our children.

We do not accept the notion that we are "unnecessary" to the labor force or that we are lucky to be working. We realize the enormity of the contradiction that by entering the work force we are providing the cheap labor that feeds the needs of the capitalist class.

It is only through our solidarity and organization that we see the link between women's struggles and class struggles. It is only when we stand up united in our own interests that we will no longer be pitted against other working women and men.

Margaret Hartnett
ODE Production Worker

tionally devastating crime, one whose effects 20 minutes can hardly erase. If Inez Garcia took those few minutes to get a gun and kill her assailant then we (and apparently her jury) agree: it was not murder, it was response/defense to not only the rape itself, but also to a subsequent call Garcia received telling her she "better not" tell anyone what happened to her moments before. We are amazed, Mr. Silverstein, that you are so ignorant of human feelings and psychological processes, especially since you claim to be a graduate student in psychology.

As to your comparison to Idi Amin we can only suggest that you think a bit before you speak. What does a man like Amin have to do with the principle of self-defense? Joan Little, Yvonne Wanrow and Inez Garcia are three shining examples of women who have finally stood up to their oppressors and said, "No!" They are only three of many women who will no longer allow their bodies and minds to be crashed and

abused by the sick men who assault them. It is everyone's responsibility to change a society that produces such men, but in the meantime it is a woman's right to defend her body, to the death if necessary.

Jean Vignes
Freshman — Music Comp.
Myra E. Delay
Senior — History
Kathleen Canning
Senior — History
Sally Stein
Junior — General Science

Backward attitude

It was with a feeling of disappointment that I read Heather McClenaghan's observations regarding the Back Door's "wet t-shirt contest."

It is really sad to see the efforts of so many sincere people, who have attempted to eliminate the sexual-object status of women which is at the root of sexual discrimination, treated with such contempt by a saloon.

That this wet t-shirt spectacle is being staged in the name of profit and to provide cheap thrills to a crowd of leering delinquents in various phases of intoxication suggests unfeeling and backward attitudes regarding women's rights on the part of the management and patrons of the Back Door.

No doubt someone will raise the tired claims that the event is "in good fun," that it is "too petty" for anyone to get upset over in defense of the contest.

I cannot see any difference between those who would defend wet t-shirtism and those who would like to see black persons "sort of" sit in the backs of buses. There is no such thing as something being only slightly oppressive.

The following caveat should be affixed to the entrance of the Back Door: "Sorry, human dignity not allowed on these premises."

Bill Powell
Senior — Journalism
Tuesday, March 8, 1977