

October, 1968

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

voice of the women's liberation movement

Tentative plans have been made to hold a national conference of radical women and women's liberation groups this Fall, near Xmas. This would commemorate the 120th anniversary of the Seneca Falls Convention which began the first women's movement in addition to giving us a chance to get together.

For more information, write Laya Firestone and Marily Webb, c/o The Institute for Policy Studies, 1520 New Hampshire Ave., Washington, D.C., 20036

WLM vs Miss America

ATLANTIC CITY IS A TOWN WITH CLASS--
THEY RAISE YOUR MORALS WHILE THEY
JUDGE YOUR ASS

by
Judith Duffett, New York

On Sept. 7, nearly 150 women committed to women's liberation from New York, New Jersey, Washington D.C, Florida, Boston and Detroit, converged on Atlantic City to protest the degrading image of women perpetuated by the Miss America Pageant.

Our goal was: No more Miss America! Our objections to the Pageant: its racism (there's never been a black contestant); its use of Miss America as a military mascot to entertain the troops abroad and symbolize the "unstained, patriotic American womanhood our boys are fighting for"; the degrading Mindless-Boob-Girlie symbol which puts women on a pedestal/auction block to compete for male approval; the consumer con-game which makes Miss America a walking commercial and oppresses all women into commodity roles; the cult of youth and the American institution of planned obsolescence which makes last year's Miss America as stale as yesterday's news and makes all women "useless"

when they are no longer ripe for exploitation as sex objects; the Madonna Whore image of womanhood which means that Miss America must be seductive in a bathing suit and at the same time be pure and untouched; and the whole idea of beauty contests, which create one "winner" and



REALWOMEN CHAINED TO AMERIKA-DOLLIE in guerrilla theatre skit in Atlantic City.

TOWARDS STRATEGY

by Florika, New York

What strategies do radical women, in groups and individually, consider necessary for female human social liberation?

This is one of the questions that brought twenty women from different groups across the country together at Sandy Spring Friend School in Maryland for the weekend of August 2-4. While the group developed no definite answers either for a strategy of liberation or for dealing with the system, they did raise and examine some very crucial questions.

We began by discussing the purpose of the individual groups, their members, activities, and political orientation. Two basic positions prevailed. One view feels that women's liberation leads logically and necessarily to the destruction of capitalism. The other believes that the existing system, with its technological sophistication, might be able to absorb and accommodate new social patterns and should therefore be attacked directly.

It is important to stress here that the issue was not whether women's liberation should be separate from the struggle against capitalism or the latter undertaken at the exclusion of our own liberation. It was a matter of emphasis. We realized that before we can come up with a long-range strategy we must first know our enemy.

The women who view women's liberation as leading directly to an anti-capitalist stance tend to define men and the system as an interconnected enemy (the dominators). Men are controlled through their jobs by the system, but women, in addition to being subject to the same domination by the system, are also under the direct domination of men.

Implied in this analysis is the feeling that despite the diffusion and impersonalization of power capitalism is not undergoing fundamental changes. Accordingly, male chauvinism and its counterpart, white racism, are not only interrelated and supportive of each other but may also be considered to be two of the underlying roots of capitalism.

The other position raises doubts about the intrinsically revolutionary nature of the woman issue. It begins by locating certain key sources of power in the system and examining their contemporary tools of expression.

To say that people are controlled or manipulated by the system means that the corporation is the institution which dominates our lives. It is an all-pervasive social, cultural and political force. For the majority of people in this country, it has superseded the "free enterprise" system.

Woman is directly oppressed and subjugated by the corporation whenever she functions as a consumer. Her mind is saturated with ads, products and gadgets at all times. She is not only projected by the mass media as an object and a commodity for consumption---she has in fact emulated and reinforced that image by becoming a self-conscious, self-acting commodity.

Under modern capitalism there are two main kinds of exploitation. One is the blatant oppression of the non-consumer, and the other is the invisible control of the consumer. For the middle-class woman, consumption and the mass media have totally obliterated her sense of reality. Nothing but a full-fledged attack by women on these invisible powers of manipulation is going to put her back in touch with reality.

White racism and male chauvinism, two characteristics of capitalism, unquestionable exist. But they exist

as conservative leftovers from the era of industrial revolution, nationalism, the bosses and state power. We still must deal with them, but we must recognize the new forms of power that now prevail.

We must also question why the corporations---business, not politics---seem to emerge as the power that can effectively circumvent the threat of black revolt by altering the slave economy that produces it. The way the corporations will go about managing and, therefore, neutralizing that threat should indicate the extent to which the system can absorb and control socio-economic change.

A similar pattern might develop if the dissatisfaction that women feel today becomes a political force. The dissolution of the family, legal and inexpensive abortions, day-care center for children, co-ops, etc., would not be possible, for economic reasons alone, under present American capitalism.

The two positions outlined did not constitute a theoretical split; they actually tended to overlap. They also give a very narrow view of the range of ideas discussed at the conference.

We generally agreed on certain areas of weakness within the movement: (1) the need to develop an analysis of contemporary capitalism; (2) the need to define the enemy; (3) the phenomenon of decentralization: does it imply an erosion of state power? Why are the corporations supporting it? (4) how does technology control us? What is its potential as a liberating force? (5) the need to reveal the subtle and often subliminal methods by which people are controlled.

We did agree that we all have a great deal more to discuss and that we should work to involve all concerned women #

NATIONAL NEWS

The Radical Women of Seattle held a series of classes last summer on "The Women Question in America: the saga of a 3-century struggle for equality," which featured speakers on different aspects of the fight for women's liberation. The classes were open to men and were well-attended. Janet Hews of RWS reports that after the last lecture "a couple of male members of the audience... almost apologized for being members of such an oppressive sex." RWS has also written a very impressive eight-page Program and Structure covering the major areas of the women's struggle and how RWS is organizing to fight them. Anyone wanting further information should write to Janet Hews or Jill Severn at 2021 E. Lynn, Seattle, 98102.

Chicago women arranged a series of discussion sessions for women delegates to the Democratic Convention last August, intending to raise questions of concern to women. Although there were 1,300 delegates to the convention, their participation in decision-making was minimal. The elsewhere-discussed events of that week, though, prevented these sessions from taking place.

Women around the New York City Resistance group have recently formed a "women's independent caucus" to try to deal with the problems which are particular to resistance women.

A group called The Feminist Rebellion has been formed at UCLA. It is planning to organize a feminist union on the campus. They want the University to offer classes on feminine cultures, history, political forms and economic

(continued on p. 7)

millions of insecure, frustrated losers, who feel they must meet the imposed standards of beauty or face disaster -- "You won't get a man."

Our purpose was not to put down Miss America but to attack the male chauvinism, commercialization of beauty, racism and oppression of women symbolized by the Pageant

We arrived on the Boardwalk at 2:00 p.m., Saturday, and began picketing in front of Convention Hall. Some of our signs read: "Everyone is Beautiful," "I am a Woman, Not a Toy. Pet or Mascot," "Who Dares to Judge Beauty," and "Welcome to the Miss America Cattle Auction"

Guerrilla theater was used to illustrate some of our points. A live sheep was crowned "Miss America" and paraded on the liberated area of the boardwalk to parody the way the contestants (all women) are appraised and judged like animals at a county fair

"Women are enslaved by beauty standards" was the theme of another dramatic action in which some of us chained ourselves to a life-size Miss America puppet. This was paraded and auctioned off by a woman dressed up as a male Wall Street financier. "Step right up, gentlemen. get your late model woman right here---a

PEGGY DOBBINS FACES 2 to 3 YEARS IN JAIL

for her participation in the Miss America Pageant protest. She is now out on \$1,000 bail charged with disorderly conduct and "emitting a noxious odor"

SHE NEEDS YOUR HELP

send contributions and letters of support to PO Box 531, Stuyvesant Station, New York 10009

lovely paper dolly to call your very own property. She can push your product, push your ego, or push your lawnmower."

The highlight of the afternoon was the giant Freedom Trash Can. With elaborate ceremony and shouts of joy, we threw away instruments of torture to women - high-heeled shoes, Merry Widow corsets, girdles, padded bras, false eyelashes, curlers, copies of Playboy, Cosmopolitan, Ladies Home Journal, etc

Throughout the afternoon activities, we were observed by some five or six hundred onlookers, mostly men, who were by turns amused, perplexed, and mostly enraged by our presence. The heckling was led by two young men: "You're just jealous---you couldn't be Miss America if you were the last man(?) on earth." "Get back on your broom!" "Why don't you go back to Russia?" "Which one of your girlfriends is your husband?" The women in the mainly lower middle class crowd by and large agreed with them. One woman, however, crossed the police line with her three children and joined us.

We generally ignored their jeers, but in the evening (we stayed until midnight), when the crowd was somewhat less hostile, we changed our tactics. Many of us put down our signs and went right up to the police line and began engaging in dialogue with the people. Two more women crossed the line to our side, though we did not make many noticeable conversions.

But a dialogue was established, and women who had felt confused and hurt by the signs and leaflets which they didn't understand and demonstrators with whom they could not identify, began to go through some changes in their heads when we began to talk to them personally. Proving what many of us have felt for a long time---women who are unreachable on most radical issues can be reached on this one, since it involves their daily lives.

Sixteen of us purchased tickets to the Pageant and, from seats in the balcony near the stage, began a disruption as the outgoing Miss America was making her farewell speech. Although there was no

(Tune "Ain't She Sweet")

Ain't she sweet
makin' profit off her meat.
Beauty sells she's told so she's out pluggin' it,
ain't she sweet.

Ain't she quaint
with her face all full of paint.
After all how can she face reality,
ain't she sweet.

Chorus:

Just cast an eye
in her direction.
She has to buy--
It's her oppression.



(Tune "A Pretty Girl Is Like A Melody")

A pretty girl is a commodity
with stock to buy and sell.
When the market is high,
and you see her pass by,
count up your shares
in what she wears
that pay you dividends.

A pretty girl in this society
is judged by looks alone.
What you see on her face
is often the waste
of chemicals developed for the War.

sing

WOMEN MILITANT IN WEST GERMANY

Leftists Throw Tomatoes in

Drive for Wider Rights

By DAVID BINDER

Special to The New York Times

BONN, Sept. 14—Shouting "counterrevolutionary agent of the class enemy," a young woman threw two tomatoes at the left-wing student leader Hans Krahl in Frankfurt last night—and hit him.

It was the high point of a struggle for women's rights in the radical socialist German Students League at its 23d annual conference.

The unidentified suffragette rose amid a stormy controversy over a proposal to establish an "action council for the liberation of woman." The proposal was put forth by the fiery delegate from West Berlin, Heike Sanders, who cried to the predominantly male student gathering:

"We don't want to put up with your repressions any longer. We must liberate ourselves from your oppressions."

She was laughed at by the men. Then the tomatoes flew.

Last year eight West Berlin students invited three girls to join them in forming a utopian commune to experiment in practical socialism. It ended up with the girls doing all the cooking and most of the washing for their classmates, and after six months they withdrew.

During the summer more than a hundred students of West Berlin's Free University decided they were not seeing enough of their female classmates and moved unopposed into the girls' dormitory at Schlachtensee.

According to reliable reports, the girls have since been burdened with housekeeping work, as in the unsuccessful 1967 commune.

The left-wing girls are understood to be rebelling against the inequalities of the arrangement. They are part of a larger female uprising in West Germany against the traditional domination of males.

According to Government statistics, 31.9 per cent of West Germany's women work full time for a living, carrying out household and family tasks as well. While refrigerators, washing machines and prepared foods have eased their obligations, they are still treated as second-class citizens.

pilgrim's progress

OP: NEW LEFT NANCY AND LIBERATION LINDA:
A serialized morality play (in the
style of the early thirties)

by Naomi Weisstein

Start Here



Nancy chains herself
to Jim, and they get
arrested at the
induction center

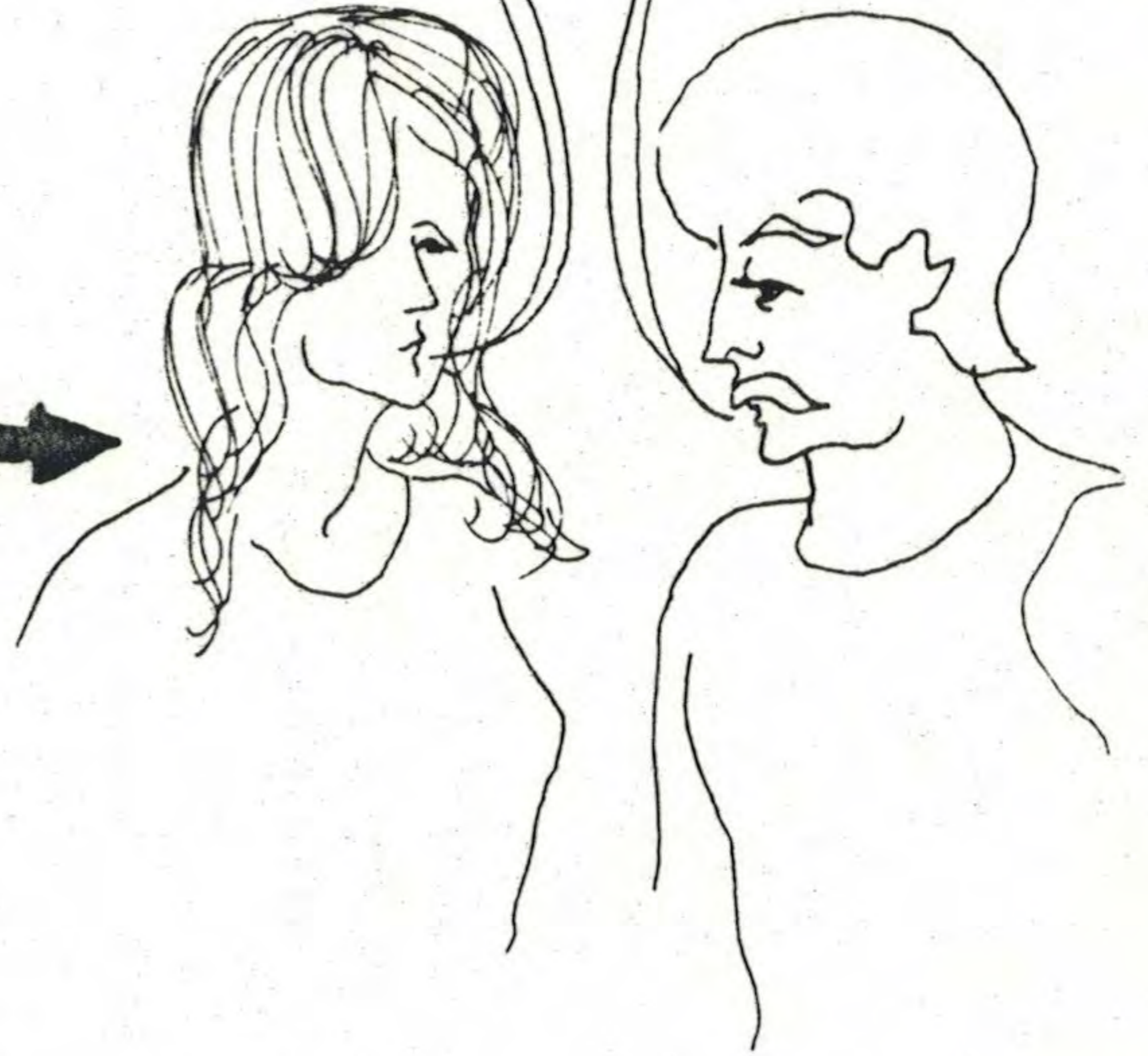
LET NO PIG PULL
THESE CHAINS
ASUNPER!

KICK
STOMP
/ / / /



Later that day:

I WASN'T INDUCTED.
I'M DEAF IN ONE EAR.
OH, BABY!
WHAT?
OH BABY!



GO AWAY, NANCY I HAVE IMPORTANT
POLITICAL THINGS TO THINK ABOUT—
ORGANIZING, DEMONSTRATING, PUTTING MY
SEVENTEEN BALLS ON THE LINE

TALK TO ME ABOUT THEM. I DO IMPORTANT
POLITICAL THINGS, TOO

SURE, SURE
BABY

YOU'RE BEING
UNFAIR

YOU'RE CUTE
WHEN YOU'RE
ANGRY



NANCY SCRATCHES
HER HEAD. CAN THIS
BE RIGHT? DOES JIM
HAVE MORE IMPORTANT
POLITICAL THINGS TO DO
THAN SHE DOES? SHOULD
SHE TELL HIM TO GO FU
HIMSELF? IS SHE CUT
WHEN SHE'S ANGRY?
READ NEXT THRILLIN
INSTALLMENT



Weisstein

TV coverage of the disruption (we were told later that one of the cameramen was about to pan to the balcony when he was told that if he did he would lose his job), the cameras and microphones did record the visible

ATLANTIC

CITY

turning of heads and the stuttering and trembling of Miss America as we shouted "Freedom for Women!" and "No More Miss America" and hung a banner from the balcony reading, "Women's Liberation."

The sixteen were quickly hustled out, and five were arrested, charges against them later dropped. Earlier Peggy Dobbins had been arrested and held on \$1,000 bail. She was charged with disorderly conduct and "emanating a noxious odor" for spraying a can of Toni home permanent throughout the audience.

The Pageant and city officials were undoubtedly sensitive on this area of commercial products. We had already declared a boycott of the products sponsoring the Pageant, of which Toni is one (the others are Pepsi-Cola and Oldsmobile). We expected that they would sweep Peggy's case under the rug. Instead the charges against her were escalated to an indictable offense, with a possible sentence of two to three years.

All in all, the day was a tremendous success. We intend to be back in Atlantic City next year and every year until Miss America Pageant is closed down. It may not take too long. There have been rumors that because of the disturbance, the Pageant next year may be taped with no studio audience.

We have also been in contact with a former Miss America who is on our side, and have heard from a woman who was asked to be a judge but declined, partly because she heard of our plans. I suppose it's possible to have the Pageant without an audience, but you can hardly have one without contestants or judges. #

needs. Ann Herschfang reports that many "small, isolated, feminist groups are springing up spontaneously from Berkeley to San Diego."

It has been suggested that each newsletter contain names of chapter contacts to help local recruiting in various areas. Chapters that would like to be listed should select contact women and send

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the particulars to VWLM. If you live in an area where there is no chapter and would like to start one, write us for the names of other interested people.

NOTES FROM THE FIRST YEAR, a 34-page booklet of writings by New York women put out last June received favorable reviews in The Guardian and The Village Voice. Copies are selling for 50¢ to women and \$1.00 to men and are available from Marion Davidson, 125 E. 4th St., NYC 10003. Cindy Cisler reports that distribution in bookstores and word-of-mouth publicity has brought in many new members.

New chapters have started in Los Angeles, San Francisco and New Haven. Contact Devra Weber, 1044 1/2 Scenario, L A 90024; Pam Allen, 3740 25th St #101, S F 94110; or Harriet Wolff, 464 Edgewood Ave., New Haven, 06511.

A Cambridge chapter has published a literary journal on women's liberation with poems, essays, graphics and photograph collages. It is nameless---can be purchased from \$1.25 from Roxanne Dunbar, 62 Pleasant St., #2, Cambridge, Mass.

The State College, Pennsylvania chapter is fighting to get equal representation on the Town Independent Men's Council, the civic governing body. The council has offered to give women two of its twenty-six seats.

The Women's Radical Action Project in Chicago (WRAP) held its first meeting open to men. Of the nearly 80 people attending the meeting, over half were men. Out of a discussion of the mutually dehumanizing roles imposed on men and women developed plans for a men's liberation group. The general tone of the meeting was one of openness and sympathy.