

NOT A WOMEN QUESTION, BUT A CLASS QUESTION

[Reply to: wwo@brain.net.pk Re: WWO Pay Tribute to Women Of the World]

In the present class divided society women too are divided into classes, which is why you are recognizing yourselves properly as **working women**, as I understand. Working women belong in the **working class** who own or control little but their only means for survival - their labour power, *i.e.*, their ability to work (unskilled or skilled) - to be sold as a commodity in the labour market (capitalist employment) for a subsistence called wage or salary. Capitalism exploits working women much the same way as working men – both comprising the industrial reserve army. Since it is also the last exploited and oppressed class in society, history has conferred upon it the task of emancipating the whole humankind by emancipating itself from the class divided formations of society "*for making this world better place for every human being*" - as you have aptly remarked in your message. The emancipation of women can only come hand in hand with the emancipation of their class through establishment of Socialism. Common ownership (not state ownership) and democratic control of the means of production and distribution will mean the end of economic exploitation and social classes. Women and men will be free to cooperate in arranging their personal lives in accordance with their individual inclinations and choices, whatever form the family takes. This task, therefore, could be accomplished only by a class wide and worldwide unity irrespective of sex-divide and so-called race-religion-nation tangles.

Let us read a little from works of Socialists in this regard:

"On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution.

"The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complements vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital. ...

"But you Communists would introduce community of women, screams the whole bourgeoisie in chorus.

"The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion than that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to the women.

"He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.

"For the rest nothing is more ridiculous than the virtuous indignation of our bourgeois at the community of women which, they pretend, is to be openly and officially established by the Communists. The Communists have no need to introduce community of women; it has existed almost from time immemorial.

"Our bourgeois, not content with the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each other's wives.

"Bourgeois marriage is in reality a system of wives in common and thus, at the most, what the Communists might possibly be reproached with, is that they desire to introduce, in substitution for a hypocritically concealed, an openly legalised community of women. For the rest, it is self evident that the abolition of the present system of production must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from that system, *i.e.*, of prostitution both public and private." - Marx-Engles, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Progress Publishers, 1977 edition. pp. 55-56.

Under the present society the private property relations and economic dependence rule over personal inclinations and love, legal provision for divorce notwithstanding. Such relations actually boil down to prostitution.

In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Marx pointed out - "**marriage (certainly a form of exclusive private property)**" - *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1975, p.294, and, "**Prostitution is only a specific expression of the general prostitution of the labourer, and since it is a relationship in which falls not the prostitute alone, but also the one who prostitutes - the latter's abomination is still greater - the capitalist, etc., also comes under this head.**" - Note by Marx, *ibid.* p. 295.

"Assume man to be man and his relationship to the world to be human one: then you can exchange love only for love, trust for trust, etc." – Marx, *ibid.* p. 325.

Love cannot flourish under capitalism, based on greed, competition and hatred.

Before class society there was no need, no reason, to treat one sex as inferior – there being no owners and non-owners of property – hence any competition. From the inception of class society, women have suffered discrimination.

Biologically women and men are equal – one being the complement of the other – producing two kinds of sexual cells in the reproductive process of the species life - the only distinctive traits, perhaps, relate to the instincts directly concerned with sexual intercourse and child care. The two sexes are far more similar than different – in getting upset and hurt, looking for love, companionship and security. Both need each other as woman and man.

So we do not have a gender problem, but a social problem – a class problem to solve. Once the private property and its concomitant economic insecurity and exploitation of working men-and-women by capitalist men-and-women are removed from the foundations of society, the ground is cleared for raising amicable human relations including sexual relations.

"The legal inequality of the two partners bequeathed to us from earlier social conditions is not the cause but the effect of economic oppression of women. ...

"The modern individual family is founded upon the open and concealed domestic slavery of the wife. ...

"... the peculiar character of supremacy of the husband over the wife in the modern family, the necessity of creating real social equality between them and the way to do it, will only be seen in the clear light of day when both possess legally complete equality of rights. Then it will be plain that the first condition for the liberation of the wife is to bring the whole female sex back into public industry, and that this in turn demands that the characteristic of the monogamous family as the economic unit of society be abolished. ...

"What we can conjecture about the way in which sexual relations will be ordered after impending overthrow of capitalist production is mainly of a negative character, limited for the most part to what will disappear. But what will there be new? That will be answered when a new generation has grown up: a generation of men who never in their lives known what it is to buy a woman's surrender with money or any other social instrument of power; a generation of women who have never known what it is to give themselves to a man from any other considerations than real love or to refuse to give themselves to their lover from fear of the economic consequences. When these people are in the world, they will care precious little what anybody today thinks they ought to do; they will make their own practice and their corresponding public opinion about the practice of each individual – and that will be end of it." - Frederick Engels (1884), *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Lawrence & Wishart) pp. 136-138, 148.

And what can be said about the future of the family?

"... it must advance as society advances, and change as society changes, even as it has done in the past. It is the creature of the social system, and will reflect its culture. As the monogamian family has improved greatly since the commencement of civilization, and very sensibly in modern times, it is at least supposable that it is capable of still further improvement, until the equality of sexes is attained. Should the monogamian family in the distant future fail to answer the requirements of society, assuming the continuous progress of civilization, it is impossible to predict the nature of its successor." – Lewis H. Morgan, *The Ancient Society*, Kerr edition, p. 499.

Lastly, we do not press hard the point that women have an equal opportunity with men to work for Socialism. And for that matter, we welcome both women and men to contribute to this awakening towards equality. Only when a majority of the working class takes conscious political action electing socialist delegates to Parliament to get control of the machinery of the government, to dispossess the capitalist class of their property and establish common ownership and democratic control as the foundation of the new society, we all will get emancipated from all fetters of class societies.

Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains, you have a world to win.

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