



UNITY AGAINST OPPRESSION AND IMPERIALISM

International womens day represents the significance of women in struggle both for their rights as women and against political, social and economic injustice. And we as women in Ireland both North and South, have many examples of women in struggle. March 8th is also a day of celebration of the womens movement Internationally. It is a day for celebration for Irish women also. But we must not let it go by, without taking stock of exactly where we are.

It is honest to say that the movement as a whole is in decline. And that within it, the feminist layer, outside the small numbers of women organised in particular campaigns, are unorganised demoralised and without direction. This is most true for the womens movement in the South, especially in Dublin.

Over the last eighteen months, the initiative and leadership has fallen by default to the more conservative elements, the bourgeois feminists, who have predominantly entered parliamentary parties as part and parcel of the status quo political parties. Within the likes of Fiaan Fail, Fine Gael and even the Labour Party, we have seen our interests subordinated time after time to the implementation of the overall party policy and "national interests". The growing cutbacks in Health, Education and Public Spending, both sides of the border drastically affects how women live. The current austerity policies of the Thatcher government and the Parties in the South in reality mean, more "cosmetic" change and little or no finance for child care, family planning, community amenities etc,

In the North : Womens struggles have begun to re-emerge : the opening of the RAPE CRISIS centre, the Belfast "Unity" meetings, the organisation of women as women in the Hunger Strikes campaign and the anti-imperialist and republican organisations and the tremendous solidarity with the Armagh Women prisoners. But these struggles are hampered by a state which for its very existance, depends on the discrimination against the minority and the very real seperation of the working class and women. The lack of real commitment from progressive and democratic forces to womens rights also makes the growth of a womens movement, in the short term and without fundamental change, extremely unlikely.

Predominantly efforts to organise and win change, both sides of the border come up against similar problems :

- Economic instability and real impoverishment.
- Political instability and lack of democratic rights.
- Integration of Church and State.
- weakness of the women movement.

These are a direct result of imperialist domination and Britain's stranglehold over the whole 32 counties. In order to overcome these problems, we must clearly identify them. We need to be aware of and understand why Ireland cannot and will not advance in the mode of other European countries. We need to be aware that integration into the EEC exacerbates these problems. It does not remove them.

Anti-imperialist who are involved in political struggles and the womens movement and who are in broad agreement with these points, should come together around a programme which unifies our experience and marks the way over the barriers. We urgently need to come together to discuss a programme which combines action with an understanding of the nature of our oppression throughout the 32 counties.

We propose the following should be discussed:

- National unity within the womens movement.
- Austerity policies North and South and how they affect women
- The need for Separation of Churches and States.
- Democratic Rights : Divorce , Contraception , Abortion.
- Equality in the workforce-the right to work, equal pay
Unemployment andw women.

An open conference of all those interested to establish such a discussion and in the future a basic programme which can unite us in common action is a vital necessity in the next few months.

Those interested should contact : _____ at.
or write to **F. COHEN** at: 3, Belvedere Place,
Dublin I. tel 787801.

An open planning meeting will be held soon.

produced by: WOMENS COMMISSION
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