

# The Political Economy of Male Chauvinism

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'Women!—give 'em an inch and they'll take a mile!'

—Grumpy, in Walt Disney's  
*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*

The past few years have shown a growing awareness of a most important problem: the degrading way in which women are treated in our society. That awareness has given rise to organized attempts to fight against male chauvinism. Part of this attack is the growing literature which seeks to identify and analyse the ways in which male chauvinism operates to hurt women—and men. An important part of this literature has described the social and psychological aspects of male chauvinism—the existence of distinct male and female roles which we are conditioned to accept, fill and endure; the social and personal interactions which are built around and founded on sexist attitudes; the pervasiveness of those attitudes and the damage they do; etc.

In this essay we wish to explore the problem from a different angle, exploring the economic aspects of male chauvinism. For the secondary role of women in our society is not solely a cultural phenomenon: to fully understand it we must understand the nature of the economic system under which we live. Women in our society are especially exploited and oppressed by being paid less for equivalent work, channeled into more undesirable jobs, or simply excluded from the labor force. As a result they form a gigantic reserve labor pool, are forced into dependent relationships with men, and are condemned (without pay) to household drudgery. In our capitalist society, being born female automatically calls down special penalties and restrictions. The growing struggle for female equality is therefore necessarily a part of the anti-capitalist struggle—and vice versa.

Any system of exploitation can survive only if those who are exploited fail to rebel against their situation. The crudest and most direct barrier to such rebellion is force; less direct, but more efficient means are the granting of concessions and the manipulation of ideology. Capitalism, while ready to use force whenever it is deemed necessary and willing to offer concessions within the limits of exigency and practicality, prefers to win voluntary acceptance through a broad complex of ideas and values which divide and weaken the working class by distorting its understanding of reality. Anti-communism, racism, nationalism, sectionalism, anti-intellectualism, anti-scientism, religion, liberalism and male chauvinism are among the ideologies that serve capitalism in this way, and to understand how capitalism maintains itself, it is necessary to understand how these various ideologies work.

This essay deals with one such ideology - male chauvinism - which in its simplest sense involves the belief that men are innately superior to women in many ways. It is a belief widely held by both men and women, and is used to justify inferior treatment of women, including their economic exploitation under capitalism.

Chauvinism justifies treating men and women differently on the basis that 'natural' differences between the sexes inevitably determine the roles that are appropriate to each. In this view, women are 'naturally' intended to complement men, who are 'naturally' intended to work, provide and command. Thus women 'belong' in the home, and it is their biologically determined nature to be full-time mothers, housekeepers, and helpmates. Cleaning, cooking, shopping, sewing and child-raising are 'inherently' women's work, and 'real' women find these tasks far more self-fulfilling than work outside the home, which is 'inherently' a man's domain.

Perhaps the most compelling 'natural' role of woman, according to the chauvinist view, is that of the sex mate — who fulfills her husband's sexual needs as seductively - but unaggressively - as she possibly can.

This male chauvinist view of the proper relationship between men and women is pervasive and powerful. It molds our views of ourselves and others, dictates our tastes and buying habits, shapes our attitudes and, to a large degree, determines our social and work patterns and controls the sex and nature of our labor force. The majority of women don't work outside the home unless there is an economic need. And when they do they most often gravitate to 'women's jobs' — housekeepers, clerks, secretaries, social workers, nurses, teachers — rather than working as

mechanics, riveters, truck drivers, doctors, administrators or college professors, all of which are considered male jobs. And while some men may sew, cook or clean professionally, most consider it demeaning to do so in their own homes.

So pervasive are the influences of chauvinist thinking that, even when some aspects are recognized as wrong and harmful, others continue to be accepted, despite the fact that such thinking condemns one-half of the population to a more restricted, less respected, less interesting, less independent way of life and robs society as a whole of the skills, talents and creativity that half of the population might otherwise contribute. What accounts for the tenacity of chauvinism in the face of ever mounting evidence that it is costly to most men and women and is based on a lie?

There is, of course, a real difference between the sexes: women bear children; men do not. During earlier stages of social organization this difference provided a rational basis for various divisions of labor. In pre-industrial society it made sense for childbearing women who were needed to nurse their babies to work in or near home and for men to venture away from home to hunt or fight.<sup>1</sup> But in an industrial society such a division of labor has become senseless because the 'maternal' role - insofar as it is biological and not otherwise parental - has become very much less time demanding. 'In the 1890s in England a mother spent 15 years in a state of pregnancy and lactation; in the 1960s she spends an average of four years.'<sup>2</sup> And the secondary physical differences between men and women - size, strength, musculature, cyclicity - have at most marginal effects on workers' participation in the larger economy. The United States Public Health Service reports that employed men aged 17 years and over lost an average of 5.3 days from work due to illness during the period from July 1966 to June 1967, while employed women lost 5.4 days.<sup>3</sup>

If the homebound and economically dependent woman is anachronistic and irrational in modern society, why does the practice survive? A partial but insufficient answer is that it is part of our heritage. Sex role divisions have existed for millenia and have had a profound effect on our history. But the same may be said of witchcraft, cannibalism and many other ancient beliefs and practices; yet these have died out as science and technology have left them behind. To understand why chauvinism remains socially and economically powerful, we must look at the role it plays in modern capitalist society. Viewed from this perspective it becomes clear that the role of women in our society and the ideology that supports it play an important part in capitalist exploitation of the working class.

First, as long as society continues to accept the notion that a woman's primary place is in the home, women will constitute a large available source of unpaid domestic labor, economically dependent on the men who support them. Second, the assumption that women are inherently less capable than men at tasks outside the home makes it possible to keep those women who are in the work force at the more menial jobs and to pay them less for doing the same work men do. Third, since women are considered peripheral members of the work force, they provide capitalism with a flexible supply of labor which can be drawn upon as needed. And finally, the socio-economic division between men and women encouraged by the chauvinist ideology makes it much more difficult for the working class to unify in opposition to capitalist exploitation.

Let us discuss these four points in order. The unpaid work of women in the home is considered far less important than their husband's paid labors. It can be made a secondary function during periods of labor shortage, but becomes the woman's main role when jobs become scarce. In addition, the fact that housewives are not expected to be paid for their labors in the home makes it possible to keep the wages of their husbands far lower than they would have to be otherwise.

The fact that women are not paid directly for their work at home makes them dependent on their husbands for any improvement in their working conditions. To lighten their housekeeping load they must convince their husbands to reapportion the limited family income toward that end, or to make increased funds for housekeeping an issue in bargaining. But male chauvinism makes it hard for working men to demand a wage increase for housekeeping expenses, with the result that housekeeping costs and conditions more often become family issues than the wage issues that they really are. Thus, women are uncompensated domestic workers often pitted against their husbands, an example of how male chauvinism benefits capitalists by dividing the working class.

Furthermore, the capitalist profit level is supported in an important way by reliance on 'unpaid' women who provide the household chorework for the society; i.e., keeping these jobs off the market. The value of such unpaid domestic labor has been estimated at one-fifth to one-third of the total gross national product, or approximately \$150-250 billion.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the work of women in the home actually builds male chauvinism by making women seem less essential to the economy of the family. It does this by keeping women in 'supportive' roles and by restricting the vistas and experience of housewives - making them often in fact quite limited. In a society that prizes earning ability and versatility, 'women's work' has attached to it a whole aura of worthlessness and failure.

That women who work outside the home are paid less for their labors is an acknowledged fact. In 1967 the median income for men in this country was \$6,020 as compared to \$2,351 for women. This discrepancy particularly reflects the higher proportion of women who do not have jobs, but even if only year-round full-time workers are counted, the median income figures are widely separated at \$7,182 and \$4,150.<sup>5</sup> What is even more important, this differential in median income ratio has been steadily growing over the past several decades.<sup>6</sup>

Today over one-third of the total work force is composed of women, most of them concentrated in traditionally 'women's jobs'.<sup>7</sup> The President's Commission on the Status of Women reports that, 'The largest concentration [of women workers] - 7 million - is in the clerical field. Three other main groupings - service workers (waitresses, beauticians, hospital attendants), factory operatives, and professional and technical employees (teachers, nurses, accountants, librarians) - number between 3 and 3¼ million each.'<sup>8</sup>

'By and large,' as one recent study of employment points out, 'women are found in jobs that men don't want - jobs with low wages and poor prospects for advancement.'<sup>9</sup> And most often they receive lower pay for doing the same work as men. This situation is often justified on the grounds that women are only working to supplement their husbands' incomes and therefore do not need to earn as much as men. But this is clearly more myth than truth. One of every eight urban families is headed by a woman. And two-thirds of all women employed in 1965, for example, were either single, widowed, divorced, or separated, or married to husbands earning under \$5,000 a year.<sup>10</sup> Of the remaining 34% one would expect that a significant proportion were in families where the husband's income was insufficient to maintain a decent standard of living (given that the US Department of Labor has suggested somewhat over \$9,000 as the income necessary for a 'modest but adequate' 1966 budget for an urban family of four).

Overall, then, women earn lower incomes and have less appealing jobs for no reason other than their sex. The result of this situation is difficult to calculate precisely, but clearly it amounts to a significant percentage of total corporate profits. The magnitude of the male-female wage differential is suggested by the fact that in 1967 the total difference between the mean income for full-time employed males and that for full-time employed females, calculated for corresponding durations of work, amounted to \$70.4 million.<sup>11</sup> While some of this differential is based on simple dual pay scales (for example, the 1968 average wages in Boston for the same job description of 'clerks, accounting, class A' was \$126/week for men and \$107/week for women<sup>12</sup>), much of it was due to a more complicated difference in skill levels and job classification, resulting from the systematic discouragement of skill acquisition by women. All in all, however, it seems safe to look to the sexual wage differential to account for a sizeable portion of total corporate profits.

It is hardly surprising, then, that the number of women in the work force has been rising steadily - mainly in non-unionized, poorly-paying service jobs. Thirty-one percent of all women in the country were employed in 1947; 34 percent in 1957; and 39 percent in 1967. Women make up nearly half the nation's white-collar force: three out of every four clerical workers are female.<sup>13</sup>

'Equal opportunity [for women],' writes Caroline Bird, author of *Born Female*, 'could raise our labor costs, make it harder for us to adjust supply to demand, and reduce the flexibility of our economy... Equal opportunity would have the same effect as raising the minimum wage.'<sup>14</sup> The advantage to capitalism of an inequality between the sexes is clear: it delivers one-quarter of manufacturing profits. Capitalism would have great difficulty surviving 'equal opportunity for women'.

The third enormous benefit of male chauvinism to those who control the capitalist economy is that women constitute a vast reserve of labor power which can be mobilized when needed, but is not considered unemployed when jobs disappear.

TABLE I: Employment of persons 14 years and over as of March 1968 <sup>15</sup>

	MEN		WOMEN	
	Numbers in thousands	Median income	Numbers in thousands	Median income
TOTAL	66,519	5,571	73,584	1,819
Employed	47,622	6,610	27,887	3,157
Unemployed	1,680	3,017	1,332	1,382
Armed Forces or not in labor force	17,217	1,634	44,365	913

As Table I above indicates, the majority of women, unlike the majority of men, are not gainfully employed; and the current popular ideal is that of the happy housewife busy with home and children. When the labor market is glutted, the ideal gets a great deal of publicity; in times of labor shortages, the ideal that is publicized is that of the working woman.

During World War II, when the nation was desperately short of labor, women were assured that their menstrual periods

did not have to immobilize them for several days a month, that bottle feeding was preferable to breast feeding, and that it was better for them and for their children if they got out of the home and into a job. Thousands of day-care centers were set up to make it possible for women to contribute to the war effort. But as soon as the war ended 300,000 women workers were fired.<sup>16</sup>

'Immediately following World War II,' writes Joan Jordan, 'when the returning veterans needed jobs, women at work created juvenile delinquents at home, were competing with men, and surveys showed eight out of ten infants who died of stomach ailments within the first year of birth were bottle-fed.'<sup>17</sup>

World War II demonstrated how easily women could be moved in and out of the labor force — and also how profitable it could be for business to employ women. As soon as the postwar recovery permitted, the employment of women sky-rocketed. The 1950s was the first decade in American history in which more women than men entered the labor force.<sup>18</sup> The number of working mothers also increased dramatically. In 1940, one out of ten mothers of children under 18 were working; by 1967, the figure had risen to four out of ten, or 38 per cent of all women in the labor force.<sup>19</sup>

So persistent are the chauvinist assumptions, however, that many wives and mothers feel guilty about the fact that they work. Nine out of ten working wives in a 1956 Detroit area study, for example, felt that their job made personal relations in the home more difficult, hurt their husbands' pride, or simply disrupted the home.<sup>20</sup> Thus, there is little danger of organized rebellion when women are forced out of their jobs by a tightened labor market.

The flexibility in the size of the labor force provided by male chauvinism is especially important because of the inability of capitalism to provide full employment — at least without runaway inflation. Thus, the lesson of this century has been that capitalism can have full employment and full scale war, or full employment and intolerable price levels, or — the option usually followed — a relatively high level of unemployment. But if the real unemployment level were widely recognized as being at about 15 per cent,<sup>21</sup> the capitalists would run a high risk of a working class rebellion. This true level is camouflaged, however, because unemployment does not strike the working class across the board, but is concentrated within certain sub-groups. Very old and very young workers, unskilled workers, black workers, women workers have unemployment rates far above the national average — and workers who suffer less severely are convinced that their own situations would worsen if conditions were appreciably improved for other, worse off sub-groups. This antagonism between parts of the working class is fostered by such ideologies as racism and male chauvinism, with the result that the true unemployment picture remains an unchallenged obscurity.

Dependable statistics on unemployment are generally hard to find; with respect to female unemployment they are virtually non-existent. This is because standard tallies count as unemployed only those who are actively looking for work. But there is no way to measure how many of the 45,000,000 women over 14 not in the labor force would want to work if they could find jobs and if society sanctioned their working. It has been estimated that as many as ten million women might be added to the labor force under such circumstances,<sup>22</sup> and even this may be a conservative estimate.

The fact that a large number of women are employed in part-time jobs helps ensure the female-based flexibility in the size of the working force. In 1960, for example, 13 per cent of all employed men held part-time jobs; it was true of 32 per cent of all employed women.<sup>23</sup> In other words, although women constitute only 37 per cent of the total work force, they hold over half of all part-time jobs.

Part-time work is convenient for some women, but its greatest value is to the capitalists. It is a great deal easier to fire and replace part-time than full-time workers. Job security is generally viewed by full-time workers and their unions as a privilege of full-time employment; and in most instances part-time workers are looked upon by their employers and their full-time co-workers as temporary employees, without the protection of seniority. In addition, many hard-won fringe benefits, such as sick leave, vacations with pay, medical insurance, retirement pensions, and so on, are often denied to part-time employees; and where this is so, huge savings in labor costs may result from breaking up full-time jobs into two or more part-time positions. Finally, extensive use of part-time workers makes it much more difficult for all the workers on a job to unite in organized struggles for better wages, working conditions, benefits, and the like. It is interesting to note that in clerical work, a major area of female employment, temporary jobs have been institutionalized in the form of temporary worker agencies — Kelly Girls, American Girl Service, Girl Power, etc. — which provide part-time labor and insure all these advantages to the employer.

Because so many women hold part-time jobs and women workers provide flexibility for the labor market, many people still believe that female workers are marginal to the economy (e.g. Juliet Mitchell, Margaret Benston). But while it is true that the major increase in female employment over the past 15 years has been in those industries where — because of little technological advance — productivity has increased least, it is also true that more than one out of every three employed persons in America today is a woman. Approximately one out of every four factory workers is a woman, and two of every five such women work in 'heavy' industry.<sup>24</sup> Clearly, a high percentage of the total GNP and of all profits can be attributed to women workers. Far from being marginal, women constitute a crucial part of the productive capacity of the economy.

Nevertheless, working men most often fail to recognize working women as equals, a fact which weakens and divides

the working class in struggles against their bosses. The capitalists, of course, recognize this situation and try to perpetuate it. For example, one-fifth to one-third of all companies have different pay scales for men and women doing the same kind of work.<sup>25</sup> In other companies, work which could be done equally well by men or women is defined by the employer as 'men's jobs' or 'women's jobs', closing off employment opportunities for one group or the other. And in a tactic often used by employers during strikes, letters are sent to strikers' wives, calling upon them to urge their husbands to return to work.

By failing to fight for equal wages and job security for women, trade unions have weakened all workers' struggles. For as long as men must fear replacement by lower-paid women, they are weakened in their fight for better wages and working conditions; and as long as women are not fighting alongside men, all workers are weakened. Yet working men have been conditioned to believe that their own exploited situation is relatively 'good' because it is slightly better than that of a woman, and have been misled into believing they have a vested interest in keeping women down.

Women workers, as a result, often resent the men who work alongside them, and the two groups who should be working together are kept - profitably for their bosses - at odds with one another.

The same harmful division is often carried into the home, where wives must frequently bear the brunt of their husbands' anger and dissatisfactions on the job. Frustrated by the economic treadmill they must run on, working men all too often come to view their families as burdens and blame them, rather than the exploitation of capitalism, for their discontent. Thus, male chauvinism divides the working class and turns its discontents back upon itself.

It is important to be clear, however, that male chauvinism not only hurts women, but hurts men as well - and quite directly. For as long as women are kept economically and psychologically dependent, men are charged - psychologically, if not always in fact - with the sole and complete burden of providing for their families. (And this is true even if their marriages should be dissolved by divorce.) To be sure, men are reputed to enjoy many advantages in their 'superior' role. But the so-called advantages tend to crumble under examination.

The light and lively companion who is so flatteringly unchallenging to the male ego is seldom a friend with whom to share experiences, doubts, and problems; and the wife who is sheltered - and isolated - by the confines of her home and family all too often becomes a bore and a nag that her husband yearns to escape from. Keeping women 'in their place' may help some men avoid housework. But a good marriage calls for more than being kept by a housekeeper and a marriage based on shared burdens and desires is a good deal more satisfying than one based on a well-darned sock. The satisfaction of feeling superior compares poorly with mutual respect, and command and subservience compares poorly with cooperation.

Despite the fact that male chauvinism hurts both men and women, it persists. For the attitudes that support it are pervasive and deep. Boys and girls are taught practically from birth that men are expected to run the world and women are expected to stay sweet, sexy, and at home. While most young men are raised to prepare for a job in order to support their family (their role being that of provider and authority first and only secondarily that of husband and father), the goal for women, first and foremost, is that of wife and mother, and they learn early that they are expected to venture beyond those roles only as required to help husband and children get along. The implications of such conditioning are profound and all-pervasive, and they serve capitalism well.

Because it helps them, capitalism fosters male chauvinism. The media they control are well-run schools for indoctrination in male chauvinism. Sex-oriented marketing practices serve the dual function of increasing markets (e.g. two razors) and maintaining male chauvinist ideas (be a real man; win a real woman; wear, use, buy) that increase profits through a sex-divided labor force. The survival of male chauvinism in advanced capitalist societies rests firmly on its economic basis. And unless that basis is clearly understood, the persistence of chauvinist myths and prejudices will be quite confusing.

Why, for example, if there are shortages in professional, technical, managerial and some skilled occupations, are women denied access to these areas? At the same time that the numbers of working women rose sharply, the proportion of professional and technical positions held by women fell - from 45% in 1940 to 37% in 1966.<sup>26</sup> Why, since women are clearly as intelligent as men, are there not more women in business and government leadership roles - especially when some of the available women are more capable than some of the men currently holding down such positions? Why are the intelligence and ability of women so often ignored and unused? The answer, we believe, is that male chauvinism is too profitable for capitalism to risk, and too vulnerable once the barriers are lowered. For example, an increase in the number of qualified and respected women in Congress would not directly challenge the capitalists' special exploitation of women workers; but such a development would convey the message that women are equal to men - a message that threatens dangerous repercussions not only in the halls of Congress, but also in the ranks of a currently sex-divided work force.

This explains, we believe, much of the irrational discrimination against women in diverse areas of life. The woman who would like to become a college professor and finds the road to that goal virtually blocked, despite having always stood at the head of her co-ed class, understandably rails against the prejudice in academia and within her chosen profession. But, in fact, barriers to professional women are inextricably tied to the discriminatory treatment of working class women and will yield only as the latter are able to overcome male chauvinism on their jobs.<sup>27</sup>

Professional jobs for women will increase in number, but they will increase quite slowly, because male chauvinism is very strong, and an important pillar of capitalism itself. Indeed, the two are so closely linked that to attack one is to attack the other.

These facts are not always immediately evident to college students, particularly those who are middle class. For though they suffer from capitalism's irrationality and are alienated by its inability to provide a decent life, they are not directly exploited by providing the exploited productive labor that keeps the capitalist system going. Yet male chauvinism does hurt them. It hurts middle class women by tantalizing them with professional success and torturing them with the 'masculine' tint of such success, making their relationships with men and with other women more difficult. It hurts them by giving them college educations, praising their intellectual and academic work, and expecting them to marry, have children and settle down to being 'happy wives and mothers'. More often than not, it stunts their intellectual development, and it usually keeps them from taking leadership roles.

Male chauvinism hurts middle class men - as it hurts all men - by making them view women as competitors rather than as allies and by leading them to pin their masculinity on their command of women. They tend to consider their wives primarily as their caretakers rather than as people with whom to share their lives and responsibilities.

Male chauvinism hurts men and women of all classes, directing their goals and lives along sexual lines, often against their needs, talents, and affinities. The chauvinism that hurts the middle class and the chauvinism that helps to maintain the exploitative capitalist system are parts of the same ideological framework and can be most effectively fought by a united opposition to all of its manifestations. It is not an easy fight, for it means attacking all the myriad beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, myths, that make up the male chauvinist superstructure. All of us, to one degree or another, share the ideas and values which underpin capitalism. To varying degrees we are all either male chauvinists or chauvinized. Until we recognize this fact and fight our own chauvinist attitudes we cannot effectively fight chauvinism elsewhere.

But this does not mean that only when we purge ourselves completely of chauvinism can we do battle against it elsewhere. Attitudes cannot be changed in the abstract, they change only when they are - and are recognized as - useless or harmful in practice.<sup>28</sup> Male chauvinist attitudes can best be fought by exposing - to ourselves and to others - their destructiveness to our economic, psychological, and social lives, and by demonstrating how their elimination benefits us all. How, then, is this to be done?

The economic aspects of male chauvinism are, of course, best fought on the job: with drives for increased job opportunities for women, wage equality, and improved working conditions, as well as for such work-related issues as day care centers for children and paid maternity leaves. Trade unions - and especially the radical caucuses within them - must stress the elimination of sex discrimination among workers, and the struggles to improve conditions for women workers must, if they are to be successful, be carried on by men and women equally. This means, among other things, putting an end to the widespread tradition of male leadership in predominantly female union locals - and ultimately eliminating altogether most predominantly female locals and occupation; it means that women must play important leadership roles in labor struggles, and that the non-working wives of workers must be included as important and respected partners in these efforts. (A dramatic example of this was the role played by the wives of Gary, Indiana firemen in summer 1969; it was their 'illegal' picketing that initiated a firemen's strike.)<sup>29</sup>

Such united campaigns against the economic profit base of male chauvinism do three vital things: (1) they improve working conditions, not only for women, but also for men; (2) they demonstrate how the division between men and women workers weakens the working class, thus undermining through experience male chauvinist attitudes; and (3) they strengthen the working class as a whole while weakening capitalism.

At the same time, other efforts must focus on the social and psychological framework that supports male chauvinism. Emphasis on shared husband-and-wife responsibilities for child raising, housekeeping, and other aspects of family life, and on greater community interest in lightening such chores would distribute these responsibilities and tasks in a more rational way, lessening the special burden on women and strengthening the family, the home and the neighborhood so that they become havens of mutual support and comfort instead of the misplaced focus for the discontents of exploited people who abuse and weaken one another.

Some of the same issues pertinent on the job and in the home are also pertinent on the college campus, especially at working class colleges and junior colleges, and for employees at all colleges. But the focus on campus must include the attitudes of students themselves, the way the educational process builds and reinforces male chauvinist attitudes, and the way these attitudes weaken student unity.

The radical student movement is not at all immune from most aspects of male chauvinism; radical men tend to look to women for envelope-licking and 'moral support' rather than as fully involved thinkers, speakers, and leaders. But in campus-based attacks on male chauvinism there is the danger of focussing only on its superstructure, and ignoring its economic base. It is quite easy, in a middle class student environment, to concentrate on irrationalities as if they were the fundamental causes of male chauvinism - just as in the early days of the civil rights movement, when the goals of desegregating restaurants, opening voter registration rolls, and so on, centered on the racist superstructure and benefitted only middle class blacks, who tended to lead such struggles.

There are many women's liberation campaigns that seem incapable of seriously hurting male chauvinism, such as the denunciations of bras, girdles, hair rollers, and makeup. It is true, of course, that such items are by and large, although not entirely, needed and desired because they are produced, and not vice versa, and that the artificial creation of consumer demands is one way in which women are selectively manipulated. But it is also worth considering whether this is among the injustices most urgently in need of correction, or even most typical of the way male chauvinism hurts us. Aren't men, in fact, also manipulated at the marketplace? Are underpaid, overworked women significantly better off without bras and makeup?

These questions are not posed glibly. The choice of focus in the campaign against male chauvinism is a serious issue, and it is important to concentrate on significant changes. Bra and girdle-less women free of makeup can be as badly treated and paid as those who are tightly corsetted and amply camouflaged.

It is also easy, at times, to lose sight of the real causes of a problem and attack the manifestations of that problem instead. Thus, for example, because of the ways in which capitalism has used anti-communism, racism, male chauvinism and so on to weaken and divert American labor unions, some people have come to erroneously attack trade unionism as the source of these very underpinnings of capitalism. An analogous example is the attack of some women's liberation groups on the institution of the nuclear family, citing it as the cause of the subservient role of most wives, the economic and psychological domination of husbands, and the psychological harm to women and children caused by the typical, inequalitarian family relationship. If women were not tied to their husbands, the argument goes, the perpetuation of male chauvinist attitudes could be halted, the stifling bondage of women could be terminated, and male chauvinism in all its economic, social, and psychological aspects would begin to crumble. Abolishing the family would therefore be a revolutionary step.

We believe that this approach mistakes the problem and attacks the victim rather than the disease. In fact, it actually magnifies the problems created by male chauvinism, because breaking up families can only feed existing antagonisms between men and women. Capitalism nurtures many institutions, including the family, as parochial bastions of the divisive values and practices needed to maintain that economic system. But this function does not have its source in the institutions themselves. The problem with the family, as with so much else within our economic system, is the way in which capitalism uses and distorts it. This point is crucial, for it indicates that alternatives to the nuclear family - extended families, communes, free floating individuals and groups - could be made to play the same bad functions as the family currently does. Female subservience, economic domination by men, parochialism, possessive control of children - all these serve capitalism's needs and would be fostered by capitalism in all social institutions. Thus the fight against male chauvinism must focus on the poison itself - not on the nature of the bottle that contains it.

Furthermore, to attack the institution of the family, which is so vital to the economic security of workers, is of no practical help to working people, with the result that the focus on the family isolates the middle class struggle against male chauvinism from that of the working class, leaving the overall struggle divided and impotent.

Finally, the attack on the family ignores the possibilities for non-chauvinist alternatives in family life, adoption of which can be an important part of the fight against chauvinism. How would a family function without the traditional chauvinist aspects? As mentioned above, childrearing, housekeeping, cooking, and related family duties would be shared by husband and wife. Divisions of labor would be made along individual, not sexual, lines, and all decisions affecting the family would be made cooperatively, eliminating all allocations of decision-making powers along sexual lines. With the chauvinist aspects of marriage removed, husband and wife would be able to help one another in many more ways than is common today, and would be far more likely to respect each other's ideas, problems, opinions, and plans. The same mutuality of responsibility and respect would be extended to the children, both male and female, as soon as that becomes possible, enriching the total family life and avoiding the transmission of chauvinist attitudes to the next generation. The rule should be to struggle with one's problems, with one another, and with the world, so as to improve the lives of everyone concerned. It is not an easy task.

This does not necessarily mean that the traditional family structure is the only possible arrangement of men, women, and children - or even that it is intrinsically the most desirable arrangement. But it does mean that as a strategy for change, a campaign to abolish the family in the foreseeable future is both futile and destructive. It is quite possible that the defeat of male chauvinism will ultimately lead to basic changes in the structure of the family - such as the reinstitution of extended families, cooperative child-raising, or other arrangements not yet thought of. But such changes must evolve out of changing relationships, as chauvinism is eliminated, and pressure for the immediate elimination of the family is less likely to destroy chauvinism than it is to destroy many people, many struggles and many possibilities for growth and change.

\* \* \* \* \*

The importance of understanding the economic basis of male chauvinism is strategic: because male chauvinism is so integral a part of capitalism, it can only really be eliminated when capitalism is destroyed. And the effort to replace capitalism with socialism can succeed only as male chauvinism - and the other divisive ideological underpinnings of capitalism - are defeated. For unity of men and women is essential to real socialism, a form of social organization based on and built by people sharing equally their wealth and responsibility.

Because the underpinnings of capitalism and chauvinism go very deep, the defeat of male chauvinism and the advent of socialism will take an unforeseeably long time. Even after a socialist revolution, it will be quite a while before all of the effects of these ideologies on our thoughts and actions become fully apparent. And the struggle against them goes on and on.

Of all the divisive ideologies, male chauvinism goes perhaps the deepest. Its added strength and tenacity is due to the childbearing capacity of women, which no longer provides a real material basis for male chauvinist sex roles, but which is a functional difference between the sexes that can be pointed to to justify male chauvinism. The other ideological underpinnings of capitalism have never had functional bases.

In the absence of a demonstrable functional basis - however unimportant - an ideology can be expected to grow weak in the face of evidence to contradict it and to show its harmfulness. Similar weakening is not impossible - but is much slower - for the ideology of male chauvinism. Furthermore, male chauvinism goes deeper simply because it involves sex, which intimately and ritualistically and often neurotically pervades our social and personal lives, and even our language.

What this all adds up to is that the struggle against male chauvinism will be at least as prolonged as it is essential, at least as difficult as it is promising. So long as we keep that in mind, it is a struggle that can be won... and during which we will all become stronger and freer.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. The differences in musculature between men and women quite possibly evolved sometime early in primate evolution, in part as adaptation to this quite reasonable division of labor.
2. See Juliet Mitchell, 'Women: The Longest Revolution', 'New Left Review', Dec. 1966, p. 28.
3. See Caroline Bird, 'Born Female', N.Y., 1968, p. 259.
4. For the lower estimate see Bird, op. cit., p. 227; for the higher, David Deitch's financial column in the Boston Globe, 17 Sept 69.
5. 'Income in 1967 of Persons in the United States', US Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 60, 30 June 69, p. 39.
6. See Joan Jordan, 'The Place of American Women: Exploitation of Women', 'Revolutionary Age', v. 1, no. 3, Seattle, 1968; reprinted by New England Free Press, 791 Tremont St., Boston, Mass. 02119, pp. 6-7.
7. One-third are clerical workers. See A. J. Jaffe & Joseph Froomkin, 'Technology and Jobs', N.Y., 1968, pp. 98-105.
8. See 'American Women', p. 45. The Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women & other publications of the Commission, Charles Scribner's Sons, N.Y., 1965.
9. Jaffe & Froomkin, op. cit., p. 105.
10. 'Underutilization of Women Workers', US Dept. of Labor, Woman's Bureau, 1967.
11. The composite figures are:

	Total full-time employed	Year-round full-time	40-49 weeks full-time	27-39 weeks full-time	14-26 weeks full-time	13 & fewer weeks full-time
Male mean	\$7334	\$8156	\$6281	\$4850	\$3225	\$1553
Female mean	3621	4539	3461	2613	1906	991
Difference	\$3713	\$3617	\$2820	\$2237	\$1319	\$ 562
Number of women with income	24,604,000	14,870,000	2,415,000	2,250,000	2,548,000	2,522,000
\$ Difference x Num- ber of women	\$91.2 bil.	\$53.8 bil.	\$6.8 bil.	\$5.0 bil.	\$3.4 bil.	\$1.4 bil.

Calculations based on eleven job categories - professional, clerical, service, etc. - but not broken down by duration of work, give a \$78,839,307,000 total. Based on Tables 10 & 4 of 'Income in 1967 of Persons in the United States', Series P-60, No. 60, Bureau of the Census, June 30, 1969. Corporate profits after taxes for 1967 were \$48.1 billion - 1969 Economic Report of the President, p. 308.

12. See 'Occupational Earnings and Wage Trends in Metropolitan Areas 1968-69', Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 1969. The Labor Department's Women's Bureau points out that the male-female wage differential is relatively small amongst clerical workers (we calculate a \$21.5 billion total difference). For more information on this point see 'Economic Indicators Relating to Equal Pay', issued annually, US Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau.

13. Manpower Report of the President, 1968, p. 232.

14. Bird, op. cit., pp. 237, 231.

15. Source: Based on US Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 60, 30 June 69, p. 35.

16. Bird, op. cit., p. 42.

17. Jordan, op. cit., p. 15.

18. See Jaffe & Froomkin, op. cit., pp. 98-105.

19. Who are the Working Mothers?, US Dept. of Labor, Wage and Labor Standards Administration, Women's Bureau, Leaflet 37, 1968.

20. Harold Wilensky, 'Women's Work', 'Industrial Relations', May 1968, p. 235; as reported in Marilyn Goldberg, 'New Light on the Exploitation of Women', 'Liberation', October 1969, p. 23.

21. See Christoffel, 'The Permanent Job Shortage', in the forthcoming 'Up Against the Capitalist System'.

22. Alva Myrdal & Viola Klein, 'Women's Two Roles', London, 1956, cited in Bird, op. cit., p. 231.

23. Report of the Committee on Private Employment to the President's Commission on the Status of Women, GPO, 1963, p. 42.

24. Manpower Report of the President, 1968, p. 232; Elizabeth Baker, 'Technology and Woman's Work', N.Y., 1964, p. 206.

25. Report of the Committee on Private Employment, op. cit., 1963, p. 48.

26. Underutilization of Women Workers, op. cit.

27. Special thanks is due Leslie Davidson for illuminating this point.

28. For a powerfully written account of people struggling against harmful myths and prejudices, see William Hinton's 'Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village', N.Y., Vintage, 1966, 613 pages. Hinton's account testifies to the ability of men and women to bring about positive change.

29. The Salt Of The Earth, a film about a New Mexican copper strike, dramatizes the role of miners' wives in fighting male chauvinism while supporting their husbands' struggles.

