

A TENTATIVE PROPOSAL FOR A LIBERATION SCHOOL  
FOR WOMEN

Why a School?

In the United States education is not designed to give people an understanding of how the society in which they live and the world around them functions. Rather, it is geared to creating "useful" and "productive" citizens. That means that we are taught only the skills which we will need to carry out our jobs in society, and not the skills and understanding to have an overview of how the entire society operates.

People at the bottom of the economic and social hierarchy are kept virtually ignorant because their jobs, or roles, demand very little intellectual education. As we go up the hierarchy we see people getting a little more knowledge, but only what is necessary for their jobs and not enough to make them "dangerous", i.e. critical. Social workers are taught elemental psychology so they can "deal" with their clients, but not economics which would tell them why their clients are having the problems they have. Women who are destined to perform the jobs of housewife and mother are taught cooking and effective cleaning, but not how to repair the appliances in their homes, nor basic medical skills to diagnose their childrens' diseases.

From the way knowledge is withheld from the general population in this country, we see that it is one way to keep the people dependent and passive. Memorizing dates and battles gives us no understanding of historical forces; learning the "natural resources" of a Latin American country doesn't teach us who owns and controls these resources; memorizing mathematical formulas doesn't help us to develop logical minds. And at the same time that this is passed off as "education," we are told that the few people who do really understand how the world functions are the "experts." Only they know enough to make the important decisions. The general population is said to be too ignorant to have power; and American education has left most people too unsure to demand it.

Most women feel that they are incapable of understanding complex things. Education has not taught women the skills necessary to have a critical understanding of how our society operates. But education has taught most women one basic thing and that is that they are pretty much unable to develop these skills in the first place. The lack of knowledge that many women see in themselves reinforces their own sense of inferiority and is used to justify their oppression.

Women in the women's liberation movement must begin to take responsibility for educating ourselves and our sisters, and thereby challenge this aspect of our own and all women's oppression. It isn't enough anymore for us to talk about what is wrong in American society. We must begin to understand and explain to other women why it is oppressive and how it continues to function and maintain control over various aspects of the population. Through this understanding we can begin to develop a strategy for building a powerful movement and for reaching all kinds of women.

A liberation school for women in Chicago would begin to offer educational experiences for both new and already active women in the area. Classes on a wide variety of subjects including economics, media control, physics, medicine, the function of public education, etc. would challenge us intellectually and offer us the place to gain the knowledge that we don't yet have. Women with special training would be asked to share their skills with their sisters. A female studies program would offer us the opportunity to learn what we should know about our history and our own oppression. And introductory courses for new women would help to involve new women in our movement. All this educational work would be conducted in the context of building the women's liberation movement in classes taught by and composed of women.

#### Types of Classes - Political Education

These classes would be geared toward helping women to understand how things work; they would use material from reading resources, outside speakers and the experiences of women in the class. Examples of classes could be:

Capitalism: how capitalism works, what are inflations and depressions, what role does foreign investment play in American foreign policy and why, what economic role do women play in maintaining capitalism, how does it manipulate and channel people. The class could perhaps buy a stock, visit the stock exchange, attend stock holders' meetings, read financial publications, etc.

Physics: the class could pick perhaps 5 things that it wanted to learn how to operate, e.g. take recorder, movie projector, p.a. system, car, etc. and then would learn why each of these things work, what physical principles were involved, etc.

Fundamentals of medicine: what are the economics of the medical industry, how does insurance work, female physiology, basic first aid, elementary biology, what do drugs do to the body, etc.

Current events: could involve careful reading of a local paper, investigation into who owns the papers and the media, how news is controlled and slanted, general discussion of current happenings in the news, how they are reported and why. One purpose of the class would be to encourage women to read the newspapers.

Chicago political machine: investigation into how the machine works, how a political grouping can control the politics of an entire city, role of patronage in controlling politics.

Social movements: the class could pick 2 or 3 movements in the history of the U.S. to discuss, compare to the present, evaluate mistakes of, etc. e.g. underground railroad, abolitionists, temperance movement, IWW, etc.

Science: principles of modern science, how much is known and how much is pure speculation, how science is being used in the U.S. today, smashing scientific myths, what myths have been smashed and which still need to be smashed by the women's liberation movement.

Classes for New Women

There are many new women who want to get involved in women's liberation. It is difficult to figure out what they can participate in when they just get active, which will give them an idea of what women's liberation is and how the movement looks at problems. Up to now we have just been trying to pull these new women into rap groups which are just collections of individuals who are interested, but who do n't know each other, and who are at all kinds of different places personally and politically. A school could offer introductory courses for new women which would kind of give an overview of where the women's movement is at and what kind of thinking and writing has been going on. After a short class, women would have a better idea of what kind of rap group or action project they would like to work on.

Female Studies

At the college organizing committee, a perspective on organizing for female studies was suggested. It was that, instead of individual women's groups pressing for female studies programs on their individual campuses, the women's movement should offer a female studies program on a citywide basis and the campus groups could demand that they get college credit for these courses. Also the women's movement could demand financial support for this centralized program from the different colleges. This would assure that the women's movement would keep control of such programs, and that female studies would be available not only to women on campuses but also to women who are not in school.

The Liberation School could offer courses on various aspects of female studies: women's history, study of the family, female psychology, the feminist movements of the past, women in the third world, women in the media, daycare and the politics of daycare and how to organize to get it, etc.

How the School Could Work

The Liberation School would be a project of the Union. It would be located hopefully in a central Loop location that would be donated for evening use. Classes would begin as 6-week sessions. This would make a class relatively easy to teach for the person who convenes it, because it would only be a 6 week undertaking, and would prevent classes from dragging on and on beyond the point at which they were interesting. (classes could be extended if the participants wanted to extend them, of course.) A description of the school in pamphlet form could be printed up with a registration blank for people to send in if they want to take a class. A minimal fee of \$1 to \$5 would be asked for each class to help pay for babysitting if necessary, or for printed materials for the class. The teachers or "convenors" of each class would meet together to discuss and evaluate how their classes are going and to get criticism and suggestions.

Classes offered would depend on women available and willing to teach them. If too few women sign up for a class, it would be dropped. We could begin classes as soon as women volunteer to teach some of them and as soon as we get a place and publicity is sent out.

This is just a proposal and I would appreciate hearing what people think about it, if they are interested in teaching, etc. Please call Vivian Rothstein 327-1531.