

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
February 6, 1978

TO ORGANIZERS AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION DIRECTORS

NOW Philadelphia Fact-Finding Committee

Dear Comrades,

The simultaneous resignations of eight officers of the Philadelphia chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) touched off a vicious media campaign there. The December 23 Militant reported on the widespread coverage and the media attacks on Clare Fraenzl and other party members. Subsequent Militant articles, January 27 and February 10, explain the threat of a stepped-up witch-hunt of NOW members who belong to the SWP, spotlighting events in the controversy that indicate a deliberate attempt to purge SWP members from Philadelphia NOW. These events included the intensive Philadelphia media campaign around the false charge of "an attempted SWP takeover"; the fact that voting rights were given to the breakaway Philadelphia chapter at the January Pennsylvania state board meeting even though this chapter is supposedly not chartered; and, especially, NOW national president Eleanor Smeal's conspicuous refusal to reaffirm nonexclusion in NOW when she attended the Philadelphia chapter elections at the height of the public red-baiting attacks, December 19.

Fact-Finding Committee

On December 2 the NOW National Board appointed a fact-finding committee, charged with investigating the causes of the split in Philadelphia NOW. This is an ominous move. These committees have historically been used in NOW to arbitrarily carry out any unilateral action the national leadership desires. There are no guidelines for its operation. It is not obligated to hold any open meetings. Reports are considered confidential to the national president, who decides how or if the report will be presented to the national board, communicated to the members of the chapter under investigation, or how it will be used.

This national fact-finding committee comes on top of a series of red-baiting attacks in chapters around the country this fall such as Denver (see Militant, September 30, 1977), Salt Lake, New Orleans, Texas, and others. In most cases these attacks were instigated or spurred on by state, regional, or national leaders of NOW. Taken together, they paint a picture of a concerted attack against us which only seems to be occurring in an isolated way.

The Philadelphia dispute undoubtedly represents the next stage in the offensive.

Philadelphia NOW's Response

From the beginning of the public campaign in Philadelphia,

the chapter responded reasonably well. Their interim steering committee issued a press release calling on those who had resigned to rejoin the chapter and praising Clare Fraenzl for her role in meeting the crisis. After new chapter officers were elected, a strong statement on nonexclusion was passed at the January 9 meeting.

Currently, members in Philadelphia NOW are circulating a petition asking the National Board to publicly affirm NOW's nonexclusionary character. The signatures will be presented at the next NOW National Board meeting, February 25-26. This is also the meeting where the fact-finding committee is expected to make its report. A successful petition drive with signatures of many NOW leaders and activists will have an important impact on the way the national NOW leadership handles the committee's report.

All of the documents mentioned above were distributed at the NOW Middle Atlantic Regional Council meeting, held in Charles Town, West Virginia, January 28-29. They were also submitted along with an article and clippings from the Philadelphia papers to the editors of the Defending Women's Rights Newsletter. The editors are distributing these materials. Copies are enclosed in this mailing.

National Impact

The "problem" in Philadelphia is already being discussed beyond that city, in the same way that we have heard rumors circulating about "the SWP's role in NOW" over the last year. The Philadelphia members who have initially signed the Appeal to the Board are campaigning to counter the rumors, get out the facts, and organize a response to the red-baiting attacks. They plan to send copies of the appeal and petition to all state presidents and chapter presidents in Pennsylvania.

Our Response

We need to take this discussion into NOW chapters across the country, explaining why nonexclusion is vital in building the women's movement. Why the participation of all women, regardless of political affiliation, is a precondition for developing an effective strategy to win the ERA, abortion rights, overturn Bakke, and fight for other women's rights.

We also need to explain the role that the anti-SWP motion, passed in Detroit, has played in laying the basis for the attacks on NOW such as occurred in Philadelphia. The motion threatens the membership of every NOW member who has a viewpoint on any issue different from the national leadership's, and it must be reversed. We have to demand that the national leadership repudiate the red-baiting utilized by the resigning Philadelphia officers to publicly attack NOW.

Petition Campaign

The petition being circulated by the Philadelphia NOW mem-

bers and Defending Women's Rights Newsletter gives us an opportunity to talk with and involve those NOW members who understand the importance of establishing democracy in NOW and want to actively support that position. The petition and other materials can be easily duplicated and distributed so that every supporter can participate in collecting signatures. The key will be talking to NOW members individually and discussing the meaning of the Philadelphia events. There must be an organized response from NOW members to the issue of nonexclusion, which is at the center of the events in Philadelphia.

The next NOW National Board meeting will be held in Washington, D.C., February 25-26. The developments at that meeting will determine what action should be taken next. But that meeting date also makes it urgent to start talking with NOW members and collecting signatures on the petitions right away.

Our National Office should be kept informed of any progress. Copies of the signed petitions should be sent to Clare Fraenzl, 4606 Baltimore, Philadelphia, Pa. 19143 by February 21. Copies should also be kept for local records.

Comradely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Willie Mae Reid".

Willie Mae Reid
Women's Liberation Work
Director

DEFENDING WOMEN'S RIGHTS NEWSLETTER

— Post Office Box 597 — Cooper Station — New York, New York 10003 —

February 1, 1978

Dear Supporter,

Attached are source materials sent to us by Clare Fraenzl, one of the editors, for an article that will be published in the next issue of the newsletter on the controversy in the Philadelphia chapter of the National Organization for Women. The items include a petition for nonexclusion in NOW and an appeal to the NOW National Board, which will meet February 25-26.

Since the board meeting is very close to our publication date, we felt that it was important to distribute these documents in advance to supporters in key cities. Hopefully, this will give you an opportunity to participate in helping to collect signatures.

In solidarity,

Marcia Gallo

Ms. Marcia Gallo
Co-Editor

AN APPEAL TO THE BOARD

The Philadelphia Chapter awaits investigations by two fact-finding committees set up by the state and national boards. These committees are investigating the events surrounding the resignations of the eight former officers of the chapter who have formed a new chapter and have applied for a charter.

The eight ex-officers touched off a three week public campaign in Philadelphia when they announced their wholesale October 18 resignations in the media on December 2. Articles in three major dailies, TV and radio interviews attacked the integrity of the chapter with quotes by the former officers claiming an "SWP takeover."

The media portrayed the Philadelphia chapter as weak, divided, and hopelessly split, spotlighting the only officer left after the resignations, Clare Fraenzl, who is also a member of the Socialist Workers Party. Fraenzl and other members in the chapter, some who are also members of the SWP, were accused in the articles of creating intolerable levels of frustration because they wanted to discuss what strategy to carry out around activities--a strategy of large public actions or a strategy of lobbying only.

The Philadelphia dispute raises these important questions: What kind of organization are we trying to build? Will NOW, as the largest national feminist organization, continue to grow if all women are not welcome to participate? Will Black and Latino women, campus women, miners' wives, who have different experiences in struggles, be encouraged to join and help build NOW if they can't express their points of view, without fear of being labeled, attacked and excluded? Can we really be an effective organization in the fight against the government led attacks on women's rights if there is no room in NOW for an open, democratic discussion on the different points of view? How will NOW be able to organize the large, independent women's movement needed to win the ERA, abortion rights, affirmative action, and other women's rights if some women are excluded from participation because of their political affiliation?

The answer to these questions are key to the future of NOW and the women's movement.

The threat of exclusion of NOW members in the SWP must be eliminated on the basis of the lessons we learned when lesbian feminists were under attack in NOW.

The Philadelphia chapter passed a motion on January 9 rejecting the idea that NOW members in the SWP be excluded from participating in NOW.

--over--

We, members of the Philadelphia Chapter, appeal to this board to reaffirm democracy in NOW by publicly stating that NOW is open to all women regardless of political affiliation, just as NOW is open to all women regardless of race, ethnic origin, religious belief, income, and sexual orientation.

We also appeal to this board to reaffirm the openness of our organization by publicly stating that all NOW chapters are non-exclusionary chapters.

Signed,

Irene Osborne
Secretary, Phila. NOW

Jean Hassan
State Board Rep., Phila. NOW

Ellen Wooters
Secretary for Programs, Phila. NOW

Donna Suevo
Phila. NOW

Clare Fraenzl
Phila., NOW

Rhonda Rutherford
Philadelphia NOW

Betty LeCompte
Phila., NOW

Naomi Berman
Phila. NOW
Co Editor, Phila. Newsletter

Sharyn King
Phila., NOW

Rashida Abdul-Ahad
Phila. NOW

Eileen Gersh
Phila. NOW

PETITION FOR NON-EXCLUSION IN NOW

The public dispute in Philadelphia revolves around whether feminists who are members of the Socialist Workers Party can be members of NOW. This raises quite sharply the issue of non-exclusion in the organization.

We, the undersigned, support an open, democratic National Organization for Women that welcomes all feminists, including feminists who are members of the SWP, to participate. We appeal to the National Board to publicly state that NOW is open to all feminists regardless of political affiliation, just as NOW is open to all feminists regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, age, economic status, marital status, parenthood, affectional preference or lifestyle.

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NOW Shuts in Phila.; 8 Top Officers Quit

By MARCI SHATZMAN
Of The Bulletin Staff

The Philadelphia chapter of the National Organization for Women is in disarray following resignations of eight of its nine executive committee members and the closing of its office.

The eight, led by Nada Chandler, the chapter president, quit the board last month. They charged that the Socialist Workers Party was attempting to take over the feminist group and chart a more radical course.

This was denied by the sole remaining executive committee member, Clare Fraenzl. Ms. Fraenzl, herself a member of the Socialist Workers Party, said she would ask those who resigned to reconsider.

However, the eight said they plan to form a new chapter in Philadelphia and have applied to NOW's national headquarters for a charter.

It was learned that Ellie Smeal, NOW's national president, has approved the appointment of an interim steering committee to govern Philadelphia's chapter until a new executive committee can be elected. The election is scheduled for Dec. 19.

Proposed Bylaws

Kay Whitlock, who resigned as executive vice president of the local chapter on Oct. 21, said the dispute came to a head on Oct. 18 when proposed new bylaws, presented by the executive committee, were rejected at a general membership meeting. One key element of the proposed bylaws would have blocked any outside organization from gaining control of the group, according to Miss Whitlock.

"The roots of the conflict began about a 1½ years ago when Socialist Workers Party members began to move into the chapter in ever increasing numbers," Ms. Whitlock said yesterday.

"At almost every meeting there were hideously long debates over mass action," she said. "SWP never wanted to get involved in traditional politics like lobbying. They said it was selling out to the system."

The lengthy political debates drove members from the meetings, Ms. Whitlock said, and the membership dropped from about 400 to 200. She said the SWP members who, she claimed, disrupted the meetings numbered more than a dozen, but they could never get adequate discussion going because they kept running through their line on mass action.

Marjorie McCann, who quit her post as newsletter chairwoman on Oct. 21, agreed with Ms. Whitlock's assessment.

"We found ourselves spending five-sixths of a meeting on political debate instead of feminism," she said. "The level of frustration generated was the primary reason many of us resigned."

Bid Denied

Ms. Fraenzl denied that a takeover of the NOW chapter was attempted. She said the dispute was over methods of operation.

"Certainly there has been a lot of disagreement on what should be done and how it should be done," Ms. Fraenzl said. "But it's not only SWP people who are involved in the whole question."

A former president of the local chapter, Karen Knudsen, was named to head the interim committee. She said yesterday that the group is in serious financial trouble and must devote itself to fund raising once the new executive committee takes office.

The group's office at 319 S. 12th st. closed Nov. 12 when there was no money to pay the rent, Ms. Knudsen said. She said the chapter is about \$600 in debt.

The feminists have problems here

By Elizabeth Duff
Inquirer Staff Writer

Two weeks ago I received a news release which illustrated to me how depressingly far Philadelphia feminists are lagging behind their sisters elsewhere in the nation.

Seven officers in the National Organization for Women (NOW) chapter here had resigned, it said, after an apparent conflict with Socialist Worker Party (SWP) members.

The chapter was in chaos. Its office was closed, mail had not been picked up at the Post Office and dues had not been forwarded properly to the state and national offices. The chapter, which had been losing membership for the last 18 months, was placed in virtual receivership until Dec. 19 elections, its affairs directed by a steering committee of respected feminists approved by the national office.

National NOW, in the meantime, was sending a three-person fact-finding mission to Philadelphia to investigate what happened.

All of this news came in sharp contrast to recent developments among feminists nationally.

National membership in NOW had shot up from 3,000 four years ago to 75,000 today. It grows by literally thousands each month. While membership has been dwindling in Philadelphia, it's practically doubled state-

wide. In Pittsburgh alone there are 18 separate NOW chapters.

And the national office has transformed itself from a loose conglomerate of volunteers to a professional lobby organization capable of absorbing these women and translating their needs into political pressure.

All of this became apparent at the International Women's Year conference in Houston last month, where national NOW dominated events.

So what is wrong with Philadelphia?

I spoke to some of the officers who left, and they said that SWP members have been showing up at NOW meetings for the last 18 months, introducing trivial points then debating them endlessly, hampering chapter business and literally, boring members right out of the movement. They finally left to form another, separate chapter out of sheer frustration, they said.

All of this sounded very familiar. Seven years ago, when I joined the Northwestern University chapter of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union as a student member, every single meeting was spent discussing the SWP (or "Trots," as we called them. It's short for Trotskyite.)

At that point, the "Trots" were intent upon taking over as many independent organizations as they could and weld them into one Socialist movement for revolution.

The revolution, they figured, would take care of everything from civil rights to women's rights.

Feminists, on the other hand, couldn't have cared less about Socialist revolution. The radicals held the "Trots" in contempt anyway as unthinking relics of a Nineteen-Thirties ideology. The more conventional wanted immediate changes in the status of women. To them equal pay for equal work would not await a Socialist revolution.

But the heart of the conflict was this: feminists felt that an independent women's movement was vital. The "Trots" did not.

Now, the "Trots" may not have been the only reason for Philadelphia NOW's troubles. Some have suggested that the chapter suffered from ineffective, if not downright incompetent leadership as well.

But there can be no doubt that the "Trots" did come to meetings, did dominate debate and eventually, whether through poor leadership or something else, were allowed to virtually destroy the chapter.

And that should not happen in 1977. No group that purports to represent mainstream women should be vulnerable to a takeover by an organization as far beyond the pale of mainline American thought as the Socialists.

If the International Women's Year conference in Houston did nothing else, it brought into sharp focus the

priorities mainstream American women have—the Equal Rights Amendment, equal pay and freedom to control their bodies.

These are feminist concerns, fighting the SWP is not. Nothing could be less relevant.

And we no longer can afford these ideological irrelevancies. Many in Washington are predicting that a constitutional amendment prohibiting abortion will pass in the next session of Congress.

In March, 1979, time runs out on the Equal Rights Amendment. And the pay gap between men and women is not lessening but, in fact, is growing.

Women need a strong, coherent group to take these concerns to legislators. In Philadelphia, the need is especially urgent.

There are those who see this squabble ending well. The danger of an SWP takeover brought inactive members back into the fray, they say, and may actually generate new members. There can be no doubt that the SWP failed to take over the chapter—if that is, in fact, what they had in mind. The steering committee consists of women whose credentials are beyond reproach.

But there is bitterness and lingering recrimination. And feminists can not afford to fight among themselves—not now, not anymore and certainly not over Socialists.

The future of NOW

Can Phila. chapter overcome leadership split?

By Sue Chastain
Inquirer Staff Writer

Eleanor Smeal, president of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in Washington, had been hearing rumors for weeks that there were problems in the feminist group's Philadelphia chapter.

"I had heard about disagreements between some individuals, but I never thought that much about it," said the Pittsburgh homemaker who headed Pennsylvania NOW from 1972 to 1975.

Not until the night of Oct. 18, anyway, when a stormy debate over whether to vote on new by-laws abruptly triggered the resignation of seven of the local group's nine-member executive board. (An eighth member later resigned for related reasons.)

As a result, the Philadelphia chapter has split, seemingly irreparably, into two groups. The division either has seriously weakened an already ailing organization or has shocked it back to health, depending on whom you ask.

One thing is certain: the results of the dispute put Philadelphia in a unique position nationally.

"I've been in NOW for seven years, and I've never heard of so many officers resigning from a chapter at the same time," said Ms. Smeal.

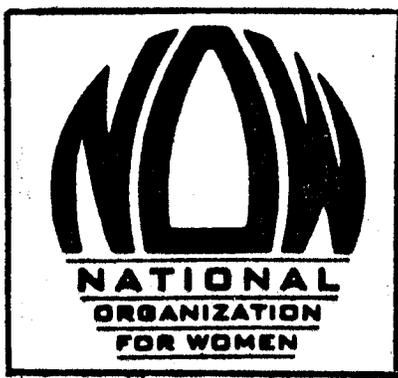
And the backdrop against which the drama took place — including accusations of an attempted takeover by Socialist Workers Party (SWP) members, and countercharges of inept leadership and financial mismanagement — was deemed serious enough for Ms. Smeal to name a three-woman fact-finding committee to investigate.

"We are very committed to having a strong effort in Philadelphia," she said. "We want to solve this immediately and get on with it."

A lot of tension

Though the mass resignations came as a surprise to many, they actually followed months of tension within the chapter, NOW members say.

Those who resigned have formed a new chapter, Philadelphia East. They say they were fed up with the increasing involvement of SWP members in the chapter, particu-



Nada Chandler
... style allowed debate

larly their tendency to monopolize debate and their unwillingness to participate in many chapter activities, such as fund-raising.

"The SWP contributed greatly to the level of frustration in trying to get anything done," said Marjorie McCann, who quit her post as newsletter editor Oct. 21.

Though only seven of the more than 200 persons on the membership

rolls were SWP members, the seven were acknowledged to be among the handful of members who were most active.

And former chapter president Nada Chandler, one of the women who left in October, conceded that her style in chairing meetings allowed them considerable freedom to debate.

"I happen to be the kind of chair who allows discussion to continue as long as anybody in the body is willing to discuss," she said.

Calls it 'ridiculous'

Clare Fraenzl, the sole remaining executive committee member and an SWP member, termed "ridiculous" the accusation that party members had been attempting a takeover of the feminist group.

"The membership as a whole simply does not buy it," said Ms. Fraenzl, a NOW member for two

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years. "I think the fact that only seven out of more than 200 members resigned indicates the number of people who felt that way."

Ms. Fraenzl said she sees no incompatibility between the goals of NOW and the party, and no problem belonging to both.

"NOW has always been open to a wide variety of ideas," she said. "And feminism and defending women's rights has always been very important to us in the Socialist Workers Party."

Some of the remaining chapter members say the cries of "Red takeover" were nothing more than a smokescreen to cover up "do-nothing" leadership that was alienating more and more members.

"At the time the resignations occurred, the chapter had serious problems," said the chapter's acting chairperson, Karen Knudsen, in a recent press release. "There were outstanding bills and the financial records were not in good order. The newsletter had not been mailed regularly, membership lists were not kept up to date, program meetings had been dropped, phone calls went unanswered, mail was not picked up and member participation was at an all-time low."

Some NOW members say these were the developments that had precipitated a membership drop from 400 to 200 in two years, at a time when NOW memberships across the country were reaching all-time highs.

Job pressures

Nada Chandler says the criticisms are exaggerated, but concedes that the increasing pressures of her job as a systems analyst and the growing pressures of the chapter presidency itself had left her "overworked and frustrated."

"Take a simple thing like answering the messages on the telephone answering device," she said. "There were weeks when, if I didn't do it, it wouldn't get done. You just can't do everything all by yourself."

It's a phenomenon not unique to Philadelphia or any other big city chapter of a volunteer organization, according to Ms. Smeal, who became NOW's national president in 1975.

"Large city chapters have extra strains—they're expected to be all things to all people all of the time," she said. "They're really too big to be run by volunteers, but not large enough for staff. The volunteers just become exhausted."

Whatever the reasons for the decline in membership—dissatisfaction with the SWP or with the chapter's leadership—the chapter was slowly shrinking.



Clare Fraenzl says there was no socialist takeover attempt

And that's one reason the interim steering committee, which has tried to hold the chapter together since the resignations, has been urging the officers who left to reconsider their "hasty and ill-considered decision," in the words of Ms. Knudsen.

'No vacuum here'

"I don't really think there's room for two chapters in center city Philadelphia," said Ernesta Ballard, the Philadelphia chapter's original convenor and a member of the interim steering committee. "You should start a chapter where there's a vacuum, and there's no vacuum here."

Last night, the Philadelphia chapter was to hold elections of 13 new officers, under the scrutiny of both a state and a national officer.

As of yesterday afternoon, it didn't seem likely, that the dissenters would show up.

"I am now committed to a leadership role in the East Philadelphia

chapter," said Ms. McCann, now serving as its president. "I think two chapters can do very well in Philadelphia, and rejoining the other chapter would mean abandoning the effort to form a new chapter."

The Philadelphia East chapter has 12 members at the moment and requested official chapter status from the national board last week.

Some women on both sides of the dispute say the split may well strengthen the local organization by attracting back into active membership women who had been members in name only.

"Sometimes you need a crisis to get people stirred up again," said Ernesta Ballard, who after three years of inactive membership returned to the chapter when asked to attend the resignations. "A lot of people who haven't even been active before have said they're coming to help. I think the whole thing will ultimately strengthen us."

Now N.O.W.

To the Editor:

As one who has recently resumed an active role in the Philadelphia Chapter of N.O.W., I must take issue with Elizabeth Duff's Dec. 18 column. By echoing the resigned 1977 officers who blamed their troubles on Socialist Workers Party participation, she has missed the real problem.

Like many others I stayed away from meeting in recent years out of frustration having nothing to do with SWP. If SWP members dominated the debate of late, as Duff says, they did so because older members had long since departed. The 1977 officers, though able feminists, never understood the kind of leadership needed to encourage and use member participation. They relied too much on decisions made in a closed circle, on tedious agendas, parliamentary maneuvers and tortured legalisms. This is a style that stultifies discussion on the real issues of feminism.

It is a little frightening to read Duff's insistence that "Feminists cannot afford to fight among themselves." The truth is that we can't afford not to. Feminism is not a dogma but a living social movement. The findings of IWY haven't ended the need for creative thinking, which needs and uses differences in perspective and ideology. Current attacks on women's rights, from within the government and without, make accurate analysis more rather than less important.

Duff is mistaken in thinking that members who fell away were "bored right out of the movement." N.O.W. is an important organization but it isn't synonymous with the women's movement. When we weren't active in the chapter, we simply did our feminist work through other organizations. Make no mistake about it. We've been here all along.

Our December 19 meeting drew about 100 people, many of them old members returning. We elected a full slate of 1978 officers,

Letters should be brief and written on one side of the paper. The writer must sign his name for publication, and give his address and a telephone number through which the letters can be verified, although neither street addresses nor telephone numbers will be published. The Inquirer reserves the right to condense.

welcomed a dozen new members, and resumed activities. We weren't nervous about a minority within. The atmosphere was one of quiet celebration, of homecoming, of old friends glad to be back.

— IRENE OSBORNE
Secretary,
Philadelphia Chapter
National Organization
for Women

Philadelphia.

A new challenge for NOW

To the Editor:

The role of the Socialist Workers Party in building and participating in the women's liberation movement has been given significant coverage in the media recently. Unfortunately, the information presented has taken the form of a red-baiting campaign charging the SWP with attempting to "take over" the Philadelphia chapter of the National Organization for Women.

The most blatant example of these attacks was a column by Elizabeth Duff which appeared in the Dec. 18 Inquirer.

Her charges that the SWP is intent upon "taking over" as many independent organizations as possible and welding them into one socialist movement for revolution, and that the SWP was allowed to virtually destroy the Philadelphia chapter of NOW are both utterly false.

Duff's slanders extend the charges of a small group of women who recently split from Philadelphia NOW. These splitters would like to see socialist feminists excluded from participation in the women's movement.

They justified leaving Philadelphia NOW with a smokescreen of anti-SWP rhetoric, just after the huge gathering of feminists in Houston for the International Women's Year conference had expressed a profound desire in the women's movement for unity in the fight for our rights.

A unanimously adopted statement by the NOW interim steering committee characterized the splitting action as "a divisive move that will give aid and comfort to the enemies of ERA, abortion rights and the liberation of women."

Duff claims that the SWP op-

poses the idea of an "independent women's movement." The opposite is true. SWP members have participated in building the women's movement since its inception, advocating a strategy of independent protest action by the masses of women to win our rights. SWP members advocate a movement by, for and of women.

The women of the SWP are feminists, part of the women's movement and activists in the fight for abortion rights, passage of the ERA, defense of affirmative action programs and support for gay rights.

Many feminists, in their experiences in fighting for the rights of women, come to see the capitalist system as the source of their oppression and become convinced in the need for fundamental change in all social relations. Many of these feminists join the SWP to help build both the women's movement and the socialist movement.

What is at stake in the Philadelphia chapter of NOW is not, and never has been, the danger of an "SWP take-over." The real question has been the debate over differing viewpoints between feminists over what strategy can best achieve the liberation of women.

This debate is of a national character, within NOW, and the whole women's movement in general. A significant number of women in NOW across the country reject a strategy of reliance on the Democratic Party and the government, of campaigning for and lobbying with our so-called "friends" in government as the way forward for the women's movement.

Many NOW leaders favor closer

and closer cooperation with the politicians, stress lobbying and letter writing, and tell women not to "rock the boat."

The socialist feminists of the SWP, and numerous other women, favor a policy of organizing a powerful, visible, massive movement of women and our allies that can translate the spirit of the Houston gathering into a united campaign of action to defend our rights.

This difference of strategy was at the heart of the discussion in NOW.

Duff's article ends by implicitly calling for the removal of socialists from NOW. This attitude, whether by self-proclaimed friends of feminism or NOW leaders, represents an ominous threat to democracy in the women's movement and the imposition of a gag rule on the kind of discussion that is the life of our movement.

A women's movement open to all, a democratic NOW, is essential to advance our goals. Any threats to such a women's movement directly attack the independence of our movement.

The challenge before Philadelphia NOW is to resist such pressures. As an open, non-exclusive chapter, welcoming all women, including socialist feminists, Philadelphia NOW can effectively answer those, who by indulging in name-calling instead of discussing and organizing, serve the foes of women's liberation.

CLAIRE FRAENZL
Philadelphia.

(Claire Fraenzl is a member of the Socialist Workers Party and the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Organization for Women.)

The following motion was passed in the Philadelphia Chapter on January 9, 1978:

WHEREAS, women of the Socialist Workers Party who have participated in Philadelphia NOW have been the subject of an irresponsible red-baiting attack by former officers of the Chapter and by the media, and

WHEREAS, such red-baiting divides the feminist movement and weakens its ability to unite in the struggle for women's rights,

BE IT RESOLVED, that Philadelphia NOW reaffirm its position that all women and men, regardless of their political affiliation, are welcome in NOW, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Philadelphia NOW repudiates the attempt of the resigning officers to red-bait the Socialist Workers Party out of this Chapter by reaffirming the right of members of the Socialist Workers Party to fully participate in the Chapter.

Also attached is the notification mailed to the Chapter members by the Interim Steering Committee. The following note was attached to the statement.

December 8, 1977

Dear NOW Member:

Enclosed is a copy of the Press Release issued by the Interim Steering Committee on December 5, 1977. A meeting for Chapter members will be held MONDAY, December 19th, at the YWCA, 2027 Chestnut St., Room 201, at 7:00 p.m. A National NOW officer and a Pennsylvania NOW officer will be present. Elections of new officers will be held during the latter part of the agenda. Candidates can be nominated from the floor. The Nominations Committee Chair is Ellen Rosenau (242-5809).

Take a more active part in strengthening NOW and feminism in Philadelphia. Be sure to come.

Toward equality,

Karen Knudsen, Chair
Interim Steering Committee

December 4, 1977

NOW Chairperson asks unity

In a call for unity, Karen Knudsen, acting chairperson of the Philadelphia chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), today invited former chapter officers who left in a series of resignations in October to rejoin Philadelphia NOW.

"NOW provides the means for feminists to join together to achieve equal rights and the eradication of sexism," Knudsen said. "We invite Nada Chandler, Kay Whitlock and others who left this fall to drop their quarrel and rejoin us. Whatever the reason for their disaffection, we urge them to put the unity of the movement ahead of petty disagreements. NOW has always brought together women and men from many walks of life, varying opinions, and a wide range of ages. We are not troubled by differences in political orientation. We are united in feminism."

Knudsen's statement followed a weekend in which Nada Chandler, former Philadelphia NOW president, and Kay Whitlock, former vice-president, made public comment about their resignations which were submitted in October, along with five other Philadelphia NOW officers. In their comments, the former officers said they would form a new chapter of NOW in Philadelphia. Soon after their resignations, Philadelphia NOW members elected an interim steering committee, which Knudsen heads to guide the chapter until regular elections are held December 19.

"We find it astonishing to read Ms. Chandler's interpretation that Philadelphia NOW has been threatened by a Socialist Workers Party takeover," Knudsen said. "There are some SWP members who are active in the chapter but they have never been more than a small minority of the membership. Nevertheless, if Chandler has this concern for reasons not clear to us, I am sure the election of temporary officers will assure her."

Knudsen pointed out that the eight-member steering committee elected November 1 includes a founding member of the chapter, three former presidents, two former vice-presidents, and three leaders of Teachers NOW. The interim steering committee members are, in addition to Knudsen, Barbara Mitchell, secretary; Vera Demchenko, treasurer; and steering committee members Ernesta Ballard, Lillian Ciarrochi, Jean Ferson, Irene Osborne, and Betsy Parziale. "All of these women are well-known as committed feminists and not one of them is a member of the Socialist Workers Party," Knudsen said.

The additional member of the steering committee is Claire Fraenzl, vice-president for liaison with other groups, the only 1977 officer who did not resign and the only member of the steering committee who is an SWP member. "Ms. Fraenzl chaired the meetings until interim officers were elected," Knudsen said, "and did so with unfailing skill and fairness."

"At the time the resignations occurred, the chapter had serious problems," Knudsen continued. "There were outstanding bills and the financial records were not in good order. The newsletter had not been mailed regularly, membership lists were not up to date, program meetings had been dropped, phone calls went unanswered, mail was not picked up and member participation was at an all-time low. Some membership dues had been paid, but not sent to Pennsylvania NOW as required; these included the dues of Nada Chandler and Kay Whitlock, who were thus holding office illegally."

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"Fund-raising events to meet chapter expenses had ceased and borrowings had been made from designated funds to meet ongoing chapter expenses. Before resigning the former officers had voted to close the office. In the several months preceding the resignations Chandler had attended meetings only sketchily. Even other officers had difficulty contacting her. We had the impression no one had provided the administrative leadership necessary to the organization," Knudsen said.

Knudsen announced elections for 1978 officers to be held Monday, December 19 at 7 p.m. at the YWCA, 2027 Chestnut Street. "We've gotten the affairs of the chapter in order again," she said, "and we'll make a full report to members that evening. We had an accountant do an audit of the financial records. We have sent almost \$3,000 to National NOW for the ERA effort, money raised by Philadelphia feminists in an ERA Walkathon sponsored by National NOW in August. We have moved NOW records and property to a safe place for temporary storage. We passed the hat to put out a newsletter to announce the elections and have done planning for that election."

Knudsen announced that the interim steering committee had received nominations for all executive offices and that nominations would also be received from the floor at the December 19 election.

"The resignations of the officers is a divisive move that will give aid and comfort to enemies of ERA, abortion rights and the liberation of women," Knudsen said. "We have a continuing chapter of over 200 members in good standing with Pennsylvania NOW and the national organization. We invite every feminist to join us. We will welcome back those who made a hasty and ill-considered decision to resign."

In a related development, the National Board of NOW, meeting in San Francisco December 3, approved the appointment of a three-member committee to investigate the situation in Philadelphia NOW and to make recommendations to the National Board about whether any additional chapter charters should be granted to the former Philadelphia NOW officers.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Karen Knudsen - IV 2-0830 (after 5 p.m.)
Ernesta Ballard - WA 2-4801
Lillian Ciarrochi - 521-5000, ext. 422 CE 6-5787
Betsy Parziale - VI 9-4665
Claire Fraenzl - 387-7576 387-2451
Barbara Mitchell - VI 4-8118 (after 3 p.m.)
Vera Demchenko - VI 4-8118 (after 3 p.m.)