An Urgent Appeal

No one was surprised by Reagan's victory on November 6. Gone is that glimmer of hope for a little space for peoples' organizing efforts in their neighborhoods, workplaces and schools; gone the possibility of token arms negotiations, a slight chance for a peaceful settlement in Central America — at least for four years.

All are familiar with the Reagan agenda: we know that his policies will cause unnecessary suffering for millions at home while his administration will continue to use terror, torture and murder to control Central America, the Middle East, the Philippines and other Third World countries.

We in the left movement have a clear choice: either to sit back and observe the right wing consolidate its power, or to affirm our commitment and fight back with a renewed vigor and determination.

Because the Resist office is in contact with hundreds of grassroots groups across the country, we can see that people are indeed digging in and fighting back harder than ever. More importantly, the difficult and often painful task of building multi-issue coalitions is making progress. The Peace Movement and the Rainbow Coalition have been discussing at both the national and local levels how they can work together. The Rainbow and Anti-Reagan coalitions have brought together many constituencies — labor, disabled, elderly, gay/lesbian, peoples of color, progressives — that will continue to collaborate. There has been a small degree of success in raising the issue of the Middle East within the Peace Movement, taking into consideration the just demands of all people in the region.

Hundreds of solidarity groups have sprung up to support the people of Central America. Thousands of U.S. citizens have pledged to engage in nation-wide civil disobedience actions should there be an escalation of the U.S.-sponsored war in Central America. We urge all Resisters to participate in this particular organizing effort. The national office of the Emergency Response Network is American Friends Service Committee, 2160 Lake St., San Francisco, CA 94121 (415-752-7766).

Currently, the Resist office is receiving grant proposals from good movement groups from all over the country — groups we have been writing about in our newsletter for 16 years. These are the groups that have the potential to turn things around. They are also the groups who can turn to very few, if any, foundations other than Resist to obtain funds.

Since the Resist board meets every month and has contacts all over the country, we are able to respond quickly to these requests. In the past year Resist responded to several emergency situations: for example, paying the travel expenses for a translator of a special Indian dialect living in Ohio needed at a deportation hearing for a Guatemalan family in Florida. Needless to say, we are expecting an increase in the number of emergency proposals during the months ahead.

We are making a special appeal to you, the Resist contributors, to allow us to meet the many deserving grant proposals that we are receiving and will continue to receive. Because Resist has recently obtained tax-exempt status, any contribution that you make or have made since 4/22/84 (the filing date) is tax deductible. We ask you please to give as generously as possible. Life will be difficult in the years ahead, but we must dig in. There is no other choice.
THE PLEDGE OF RESISTANCE

If the United States invades, bombs, sends combat troops, or otherwise significantly escalates its intervention in Nicaragua or El Salvador, I pledge to join with others to engage in acts of nonviolent direct action at U.S. federal facilities, including U.S. federal buildings, military installations, congressional offices, offices of the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department, and other appropriate places. I pledge to engage in nonviolent civil disobedience in order to prevent or halt the death and destruction which such military action would cause for the people of Central America.

Name (Print) _______________________ 
Signature _________________________ 
Address __________________________ 
City/State ___________________ Zip ___ 
Tel. __________________________ Do you need nonviolence training? __
Name of affinity group ____________________ 

THE PLEDGE OF WITNESS AND SUPPORT

If the United States invades, bombs, sends combat troops, or otherwise significantly escalates its intervention in Nicaragua or El Salvador, I pledge to join others in protesting that military action by nonviolently vigiling at U.S. federal facilities and other appropriate places. I also pledge to support those who engage in acts of nonviolent civil disobedience in order to prevent or halt further death and destruction in Central America.

Name (Print) _______________________ 
Signature _________________________ 
Address __________________________ 
City/State ___________________ Zip ___ 
Tel. __________________________ Do you need nonviolence training? __
Name of affinity group ____________________ 

Please mail this pledge to:

EMERGENCY RESPONSE NETWORK
American Friends Service Committee,
2160 Lake Street, San Francisco, CA 94121 (415) 752-7766
Re-evaluating Feminist Economics

"Feminization of poverty" ignores key issues

PAMELA SPARR

The gender gap has been a hot issue in the 1984 presidential campaign. The news that women hold different political values than men has made headlines across the nation. Less widely debated is the economic gender gap, which has widened significantly over the past two decades.

Today, many more women than men are living below the poverty line (defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as $9862 per year for a family of four). According to the most recent statistics available, in 1982, women constituted an estimated 61% of adults (people 15 years and older) who were living in poverty. Nearly one-half of all poor families were headed by single women.

Since 1978, when sociologist Diana Pearce first labeled this trend, the "feminization of poverty" has attracted growing public attention. Articles by feminists Barbara Ehrenreich, Karin Stallard, Holly Sklar, and others argue that the feminization of poverty deepened dramatically in the 1970s, when an increasing proportion of the poor came to be women, and more women became poor.

In an extensive 1981 report on the subject, the National Advisory Council on Economic Opportunity (NCEO) issued a dire and frequently quoted prediction: "All other things being equal, if the proportion of the poor in female-headed families were to continue to increase as it did from 1967 to 1978, the poverty population would be composed solely of women and their children before the year 2000."

The issue has spurred a surge of academic research, popular articles, speeches, and organizing efforts focused on downward mobility for women. Women representing many shades of the political spectrum — from leftists to mainstream grassroots activists — have come to the same conclusion: Poverty is a crucial issue around which women should be mobilized.

While poverty is an urgent organizing issue for women, the reasoning used to arrive at this conclusion can be misleading. Widespread recognition of the feminization of poverty may be a recent occurrence, but widespread poverty among women is not. By ignoring the historical picture and asserting that increased poverty among women is a recent phenomenon, proponents of the feminization of poverty theory minimize the enduring plight of millions of working-class women in the U.S., particularly women of color. Such analysis understate or ignore the significance of class and race as longstanding causes of poverty among women.

A danger of this narrow view is that prescriptions may be offered to tackle only part of the problem, rather than the long-term causes of poverty among women. Moreover, important allies in the struggle for change — such as the third world community and working class white males — may be overlooked or antagonized.

Marriage And Motherhood

Why are women and their children a large and growing proportion of the poor? Most discussions of the feminization of poverty are based on the assumption that women and men are poor for different reasons.

According to Ehrenreich and Stallard, one reason for women's poverty is the segregated nature of the labor market. They wrote in a 1982 article in Ms., "The extreme occupational segregation of women in our society makes for a crucial difference between women's and men's poverty. For men, poverty is often a consequence of unemployment, and is curable by getting a job. But for women concentrated in the low-wage stratum of the workforce, a job may not be a solution to poverty."

However, women faced limited opportunities for employment and earnings long before the 1960s and 1970s. At least since the industrial revolution, women have been in a more precarious economic state than men, confronting obstacles such as job segregation, lack of paid employment opportunities, wage differentials, and the lack of protection by unions.

Marital and maternity status are also

Continued on Page Four
Continued from Page Three

**PERCENTAGE OF POOR PERSONS IN FAMILIES HEADED BY WOMEN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Poor Whites</th>
<th>Poor Blacks</th>
<th>Poor Latinos</th>
<th>TOTAL POOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This does not include single women without dependents.
Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Reports

commonly cited as major causes of the feminization of poverty. The NCEO report, for example, suggests that “women, especially minority women, may be poor for some of the same reasons as men, but few men become poor because of divorce, sex-role socialization, sexism, or of course, pregnancy.” Recognizing that sexism and motherhood are longstanding features of U.S. society, Ehrenreich and Stallard and others wisely narrow their focus. They point to increasing divorce rates and single-parent births as the major social changes contributing to the feminization of poverty. “For many women ... poverty begins with single parenthood — becoming single or becoming a parent, whichever comes first.” Observing that the number of poor persons living in female-headed families has increased, they link that increase to the explosive growth in the proportion of households headed by women. The implication is that as more women head households alone, they will find themselves and their dependents in poverty.

Certainly, these two social changes seem to have contributed to the proportion of poor persons in female-headed households. But there are serious flaws in the argument put forth by Ehrenreich and Stallard. First of all, the proportion of poor persons in households headed by women grew most rapidly in the 1960s, although it continued to increase at a slower rate in the 1970s (see table).

Moreover, divorce is not a cause of women’s poverty per se. The economic disadvantages women face do not derive from their marital status. At the root of women’s economic oppression are the more profound underlying problems of racism, sexism, and the capitalist economy. Marriage may lift a woman out of poverty, but it does not fundamentally alter the economic disadvantages she faces.

Finally, the argument that “poverty is just a divorce away” implies that such a threat somehow equalizes the vast majority of women. Yet this argument understates the substantial class differences that persist among women. A significant number of women — most of whom are white — are economically comfortable in their own right. The most recent Commerce Department statistics estimate that nearly one million women have an annual income of $35,000 or more. Another six million women earn between $20,000 and $35,000. Together, the number of these women roughly matches the 7.5 million women who, as heads of households, are poor.

**POVERTY RATES OF PERSONS 15 YEARS AND OLDER, 1982**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race And Sex</th>
<th>Black Female</th>
<th>Black Male</th>
<th>White Female</th>
<th>White Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Female</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Reports

**Race And Sex**

Because this discussion of poverty is cast along male-female lines, it ignores the importance of racism in shaping economic status. For example, race is a crucial factor in explaining third world women’s poverty. Although women have a higher incidence of poverty than men within each race, this generalization does not hold across races (see table). Black men, for example, face higher poverty rates than white women.

Hypothetically, if a black woman could change her race, she would have a better statistical chance of escaping poverty than if she were to change her gender.

Marriage improves the tenuous economic position of women of color far less than that of white women. Black married couples, for example, are more than twice as likely to be poor today than white couples.

The biases contained in the official poverty data may also underestimate the extent of poverty among men and persons of color. According to the Census Bureau, the undercounting of the poor that is inherent in the collection process primarily affects men and third world people. Undocumented workers trying to avoid deportation tend to be missed by surveyors. Individuals who are incarcerated — a disproportionately large number of whom are poor males and people of color — are also excluded from census surveys.

**Structural Factors**

Because some commentators focus almost exclusively on the trend toward the feminization of poverty, they end up minimizing the extent of men’s poverty in the U.S. Some interpret the NCEO’s prediction to mean that, within a generation, poverty among men will be eradicated.

But although the proportion of poor male adults declined during the 1960s, men continue to make up a major, and currently stable, component of the poverty population. The apparent decline in the proportion of the poor who are male must be placed in its historical context.

Since 1959, when the U.S. Census Bureau began to publish poverty stat-
women have been recorded as 50% of the poor or more. During the affluent 1960s, the government launched the War on Poverty to reduce the number of poor people. In retrospect, it appears that white males were the main beneficiaries of those programs, since their numbers declined sharply during that time. The number of poor white women and their dependents, meanwhile, remained fairly constant, and the number of third world women and their dependents in poverty rose. Consequently, the overall proportion of the poor who were women grew. By 1970, women made up 62% of poor adults.

That proportion has remained relatively constant ever since. During the 1970s, with the deepening of the economic crisis, the absolute numbers of both poor adult women and men increased. And between 1980 and 1982, comparable numbers of men and women fell below the poverty line.

What does all this mean? In addition to considering social factors like rising divorce rates and more single-parent births, feminists who are concerned with poverty should also consider the structural characteristics of the U.S. economy, which affect both women and men. For example, the number of people who are poor, and the composition of the poverty population, may be different in long periods of growth compared to periods of crisis. In times when the economy experiences a long boom, as happened during World War II and the postwar period in the U.S., men's experience of poverty may be more cyclical than women's—a short-term consequence of unemployment. But in periods like the current economic crisis, this pattern may change.

Evidence from recent years supports this view. As deindustrialization has proceeded, men's jobs have been the first to feel the impact. Men dominated the high-wage, unionized jobs in basic manufacturing that have been reduced by plant closings and relocation of production facilities overseas, union busting, and automation. For the first time in history, men's unemployment rates have risen above those of women.

Women, on the other hand, were shielded in the first phase of the crisis, and only felt the crunch after the heavy industrial production workers did, if at all. While some women have also lost manufacturing jobs in the electronics and apparel industries, the majority of women work in less cyclically sensitive sectors, like retailing, fast foods, or clerical work. And in some areas where women are concentrated, such as banking, financial services, health, and communications, the number of jobs has actually grown.

The feminization of poverty argument does recognize that capitalism has meant the loss of jobs for both men and women and the erosion of the middle class. But it does not explain how the current economic crisis—primarily the loss of men's jobs—fits into the picture. By stressing what is uniquely female, proponents of that argument may leave a mistaken impression that sexism is the fundamental problem. They fail to examine thoroughly the nature of the capitalist economy, which requires and maintains an impoverished class of people.

The NCEO's remedies, for example, emphasize eliminating sexism: "To alleviate women's poverty, social welfare policy must focus on two crucial areas: First, the services, particularly quality day care, that are essential for wage-earning mothers; and second, the structures and practices that bar women from jobs now held by men with similar education, skills, and experience in the labor force." If sexism were eliminated, there would still be poor women. The only difference is that women would stand the same chance as men of being poor.

In educating and organizing women around bread-and-butter issues, feminists are forcing some sorely needed public attention to women's economic plight. They also are raising the consciousness of many women about the importance of economic struggles. A more comprehensive analysis of poverty can only strengthen women's role in the fight against economic oppression.

Rachel Burger/CPF

Pamela Sparr is a co-founder of the New York Women's Economic Literacy Project. This article was printed with permission from Dollars and Sense, published by the Economic Affairs Bureau, Inc. 38 Union Square, Room 14, Somerville, MA 02143.
The Selling of the Presidents


John Demeter

Now that the latest quadrennial exercise in American electoralism is history, I thought it would be an interesting time to sort through the number of recent small press publications that float through the mail in search of a review from my equally small publication RADICAL AMERICA. One particular cloth-bound title with a bright red cover caught my attention. Given the subject of the study — slogans in American political campaigns — and its appearance at the tail end of the latest reincarnation of verbis non factis (that’s Latin for “words not deeds”), it turned out to be an enlightening, if not sadly amusing, reminder of what people of this country endure every four years. Coming also as it does in the Orwellian title-year of 1984, this little book serves to prove that Doublespeak and Newspeak originated long before the noted English author put pen to paper.

The authors of Verbis Non Factis are long-time political activists who, as they state in their introduction, “long ago discarded any belief in the truth or accuracy of political slogans.” Blake and Newman continued, however, an interest in the slogans as aspects of social history and political behavior. Though most of the slogans in their book originated in American presidential campaigns, they’ve also added a few that emerged during this country’s next most important political activity — wars. World Wars I and II, the Mexican and Spanish-American, Korean and Vietnam Wars are among those represented in their selection. To their credit, the authors also researched the slogans and campaign themes of parties beyond the Democrats and Republicans — including the groupings of the left and right, from the Progressive and Know-Nothings to George Wallace’s American Independent Party and such left of center electoral regulars as the Communist and Socialist Worker’s Party.

Justice, Right, Truth, Wealth, the Nation and the People’s Choice persist and continue to crop up campaign after campaign. William Howard Taft’s weight, Martin Van Buren’s taste in French food and wine, James Blaine’s and Grover Cleveland’s illegitimate children all found their way into slogans of the time. That the level of humor that intrudes into the slogans is most often unconscious, with the majority representing bland, almost meaningless repetitions of abstract qualities belies the verity that these exercises change leaders but rarely change policies. Thus, as the authors state, “whenever an elected president is running for re-election, the slogan ‘four more years’ seems almost inevitable (F. Roosevelt, Nixon, Cleveland, Taft, and Carter, among them). Of course, given the lack of originality in the Reagan linguistics camp, and the recourse to either sports jargon or “wimp-baiting” of his opponent, “four more years” could be seen as an improvement. Among the more substantive debates raised during the 1984

“We stand at Armageddon, we battle for the Lord.”
civilize and Christianize the Filipinos.'

Some other interesting selections:
"Preparedness — not for war, but for
defense." (Wilson, 1916); "Down with
the Imperialist War against Nicaragua!" (Foster, Worker's-
Communist-Party, 1928); "End the

When Walter Mondale clinched the
1984 Democratic presidential nomina-
tion with a take-off of a fast food TV
slogan, "Where's the beef?," he may
have been signaling a shift in campaign
linguistics — most of which lately has
tended to rely on TV and radio and
film constructs produced by high-
priced advertising agencies. With an
opponent who cut his teeth on that indus-
try — former B-movie actor
Ronald Reagan, the master of the well-
scripted approach, the era of political
slogans may be waning.

"Smile, Smile, Smile."
William Howard Taft,
Republican Party, 1908.

What a shame it would be to miss the
likes of 1940 Republican Wendell
Wilkie's "I roll my own" in reply to a
question of who authored his speeches.
Or, Herbert Hoover's "The Worst is
Past" in 1932 (in the same campaign
that chronicled "prosperity is just
around the corner"). Al Smith's 1928
slogan "Everybody ought to be rich!"
and Abe Lincoln's 1864 electoral direc-
tive to "Vote as you shot," unavailable
on video, would pale next to the slick
media of today's presentations. Mondale
did make an attempt to merge the
two traditions in a November 4th
speech to Midwestern farmers, by
reraising the 1892 People's Party quip,
"Raise less corn and more hell!"
But, after all, this is 1984, when con-
flicted progressives and leftists have
taken to wearing "Vote Mondale — At
least you'll live to regret it!" buttons.
It might be time to encourage stickers
with "Don't vote — it only encourages
them!" or "The trouble with electoral
jokes is that most of them get elected"
instead. With the majority of
registered voters not voting, it's "time
the voice of the people be (not)
heard!"

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**GRANTS**

**Alliance to Counter Militarism, 372 West 10th Avenue, Eugene, OR 97401**

The Alliance to Counter Militarism is a coalition of organizations and individuals in the Eugene community committed to opposing militarism in U.S. society, educational institutions and the economy through non-violent means. They intend to educate and focus public awareness on the increasing encroachment of militarism into our educational system, the brutal nature of our current economic domination and military intervention in Third World nations, the discriminatory nature of our current economically poverty draft, the dehumanization of young men and women within the military and how militarism drains our economic system. Their specific objectives are: to stimulate and focus public concern over registration and the draft; to keep the public updated on legislative activity concerning registration and the draft and the constantly changing regulations of the Selective Service System; to provide draft, conscientious objector and pre-enlistment counseling to youth and parents and counselor training to the community; to provide workshops for the community; to set registration and the draft in the context of current U.S. foreign policy; to counter the growing military influence in our educational institutions, offering counter-recruitment programs; to network with other anti-intervention and anti-nuclear groups. Currently the Alliance is engaged in a high school outreach project. In the past they have made high school contacts through individual sympathetic teachers. With two new progressive members elected to the school board, they are now ready to go before the board this fall and request a district wide policy of equal access and they are requesting that their brochures and literature be made available to students in counselor's offices, that counselors refer interested students to the group for draft and pre-enlistment counseling, and that they have the same access to students in the school that military recruiters have. They have already established a pilot program at one of the high schools. Resist's grant of $500 went towards the cost of printing office supplies, video tapes and postage for the high school outreach project.

**Massachusetts Contingency Plan for Central America, c/o Mobilization for Survival, 727 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, MA 02139**

On November 2, 1983, in the aftermath of the Grenada invasion, representatives of the Christian Peace Movement, including Witness for Peace and *Soujourners*, met at the Kirkridge Retreat Center in Northeastern Pennsylvania for study, prayer, and political discussion. A decision was made at that meeting to organize a "contingency plan" in the event of a U.S. invasion of Central America. Through this effort, the group hoped to either prevent a U.S. invasion or to make military action so politically costly, it would have to be halted. In Boston, as in dozens of other cities across the U.S., committees of local activists and church people have been formed to work out a non-violent response to an invasion of Nicaragua or an escalation of the war in El Salvador. Such a response would include massive civil disobedience at local congressional offices, federal and military facilities and other appropriate places. It would also include legal protest and dialogue with government employees, the press, and passersby at predesignated federal and military facilities. In Boston, initial contacts have been made with various movement groups and local churches. A "Pledge of Resistance" is being circulated in Massachusetts to be used as an organizing tool and as a way of collecting a list of people who will be contacted in case of an emergency situation in Central America so that an immediate response can be organized. When a certain number of names have been collected (probably 1,000), a press conference will be held to make the plan public. Recently in San Francisco, 600 people pledged publicly to respond with civil disobedience to an invasion or escalation of the war. An emergency grant from Resist paid the postage costs of an initial mailing.

**Lesbians and Gays Against Intervention in Latin America, San Francisco, CA 415-558-8337**

LAGAI was formed by the membership of the Lesbian/Gay Task Force of the El Salvador Initiative Campaign in San Francisco. The initiative called for an end to all military aid to El Salvador. After the victory of the initiative, and the effectiveness of their work within their community, LAGAI saw the necessity to continue to work as "out" lesbians and gays in opposition to the role of the U.S. government and corporations in Latin America and the Caribbean. As residents of the U.S. they wanted to support the movements for freedom and self-determination in Latin America, and as lesbian and gay activists they wanted to link their struggle for human rights to the rest of the world. LAGAI's points of focus are the following: stopping U.S. intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean; creating lesbian and gay visibility in the solidarity movement; working with progressive Caribbean and Latin American groups; establishing international solidarity among lesbians and gay men; fighting racism in the lesbian and gay communities; educating within the lesbian and gay communities about non-intervention politics. LAGAI, in conjunction with the Nicaraguan government through representatives in the U.S., and individual lesbian and gay Nicaraguans, is organizing the first gay and lesbian brigade to Nicaragua. The brigade will include approximately 50-60 people, with a stated commitment to have 50% representation by people of color and at least 50% women. There is a commitment to have disabled and older lesbians and gays participate. The brigade will work for one month on a work project, the focus of which is currently being decided by the Nicaraguans. In addition to the completion of a project, they also hope to engage in a dialogue with government representatives, various worker and cultural organizations, women's groups, and other international solidarity works concerning the connections between struggles for self-determination and issues of sexual liberation. A principle of brigade participation is support for the Sandinistas and respect for Nicaraguan culture, as well as an understanding of the primacy of the immediate struggle to end U.S. aggression in the region. Resist's grant of $400 paid for initial printing, mailing and telephone costs for the Brigade.