Radical Feminism
edited by Anne Koedt • Ellen Levine • Anita Rapone

An anthology of radical feminist writings from the current women’s movement. Forty-five articles ranging from the personal to the theoretical and drawn largely from the feminist annual NOTES.
Congress to Unite Women:
Report from the New York City Meeting
of November 21, 22, 23, 1969

The following notes are a collection of the resolutions brought to
the general meeting on Sunday, November 23, from the various
workshops held on Saturday, November 22, 1969. The notes are as
complete as the editing group could make them. We hope we have
not left anything out. They are preceded by the preamble to the
news release issued to the press on Monday, November 24, and fol-
lowed by a discussion of the continuing structure of the Congress.

The Congress to Unite Women is committed to the liberation of
all women now. We know that only with power can we end the
oppression of women. Together, in a united Congress, we will fight
for what is good for women.

The Congress is a historic event in the unfinished revolution for
women's liberation. Over 500 women from the eastern United
States, from cities and campuses, from New York, Pittsburgh, Syra-
cuse, Cornell University, Worcester, Boston, Baltimore, Princeton,
Bryn Mawr, Clark University, Buffalo, Penn State University, Rut-
gers, and elsewhere, met in New York this weekend [21–23 Novem-
ber 1969] to set up a Congress to Unite Women.

The results of each of the 12 workshops that met on Saturday,
November 22, are covered in the following order:

A Workshop title and original descriptive paragraph distributed
to all Congress participants.

B Conclusions of each workshop (both sessions were available),
and an indication of whether these conclusions were adopted,
tabled, or rejected as Congress resolutions by the plenary session
on Sunday, November 23.

A shorter version appeared in Notes From the Second Year.
Text of the news release statement on each topic, issued at the Congress news conference Monday, November 24. These statements should not be taken as summaries of the Congress stand where fuller statements from the workshops exist. [The reports of some workshops were not available, and some topics were not covered in the news release; these omissions are indicated where they apply.]

I Early Childhood: Care & Education

A More and better child care facilities are an absolutely urgent need, to make the liberation of women real. It is imperative we activate present laws in this area or find further possibilities for political action, immediately, for the benefit of: working mothers, non-working mothers, fathers, the changing family structure, equal partnership between men and women regardless of income, the growing needs of today’s children, who live in a complex, pluralistic society. Do you agree or disagree?

B [Morning workshop:] We demand:

1 Free public nurseries and child-care centers for the working mothers and mothers who attend high school and college, mothers who are painters and writers, unmarried mothers, and unmarried mothers who are living with a man.
2 Planned parenthood centers available to any man or woman.
3 Legal abortions done in free and well-staffed clinics.
4 Summer camps for all children.
5 Reorganization of home industry by application of mass production methods.
6 Equal economic, social, and intellectual opportunities.
7 Fathers and mothers on four-hour days or shortened work weeks so that the fathers may regain their lost role and growth experiences with the children, as suggested by Ashley Montagu.
8 Payment of wages to mothers for the bearing and raising of children.

This last demand would give social recognition to women for the bearing and raising of children and remuneration for their labor as being just as important as any other form of labor. It would recognize the bearing of children as a part of the socially necessary labor in the production and reproduction of life. It would help to eliminate ‘commodity’ relations between people and establish relations based on personality and emotional needs instead. It would make
strong self-confident men and women not suffering from the sicknesses and neuroses of exploitative relations. Men and women could consider each other as equal human beings with unequal development of potentialities—as persons instead of things. Middle class women should not exploit other women and make them do their dirty housework.

[Afternoon workshop:] The afternoon report stressed the fact that although women must have alternatives, the whole matter was so complex that further study and discussion were needed.

ADOPTED.

C We demand nationwide free 24-hour-a-day child care centers for all children from infancy to early adolescence regardless of their parents’ income or marital status, with child-care practices decided by those using the centers. To encourage the breakdown of sex-role stereotypes, these centers must be staffed equally by women and men. Their wages should be equal to those of public-school teachers. Until these free child-care centers are established, we demand immediate national and state legislation for deduction of childcare expenses from income before taxes.

II Education (with stress on secondary & higher)

A To open the door to true equality for women today, we must equalize higher education opportunities across the board, in: aptitude evaluation; college entrance requirements; “women’s studies”—substituting facts for mystiques and myths; course planning; study and vocational counseling; graduate school qualifications; loans and fellowships; professional training quotas; double-standard social regulations on campus; female role models; faculty nepotism rules; “continuing education” for women returning to work. Do you agree or disagree?

B 1 We will re-examine the entire structure of education.
   2 Changes in curricula and materials:
      We will urge changes in hygiene course curricula.
      We will list good history texts and also list what areas not covered in existing texts need to be covered, and give these lists to schools. We will also press for history books to explain that oppression, not incapability, is the reason why women have not contributed
as substantially as men to history to date, and we will seek to show how the writing of history is biased in favor of the things men have traditionally done.

We will write a literary anthology for high-school use. Alix Shulman has volunteered to help with this project. A college anthology is being done by Ann Scott. We hope to develop films and slides for high-school and college use.

3 Education about the problems of women:

Through publicity we will seek to convince people that discrimination does exist in education. We will cite the proportionately smaller number of degrees being granted to women and other such statistics to prove our point.

We will attempt to provide role models for high-school girls by visiting classes and assemblies as professional or otherwise accomplished women who do not fit the stereotypes, and by talking about our work.

We will try to get to counselors of high-school and college students through the American Personnel and Guidance Association and urge the restructuring of teachers' education courses, especially psychology. A manual is available through Joy Osofsky at Cornell, done by Carolyn Bratt, on teaching courses on women.

4 Tactics to initiate Women's Studies:

This would be a program we would seek to develop at least on the college level, and perhaps later on the high-school level. The courses would probably be interdisciplinary and coed.

We will contact all our Congress people in universities to start teach-ins, first developing a tactics sheet for them to use, and ask them to concentrate initially on psychology and sociology departments.

We will provide them with a list of available and qualified teachers so that if administrators say no one can teach women's studies, they will be prepared to refute the argument. We will not, however, try to force our listed people on any school.

We will compile materials and set up curricula to serve as samples so that our people trying to start women's studies programs will have materials to show educators and concrete proposals for how courses might be run. A curriculum has been done by Joy Osofsky at Cornell, and bibliographies are also available from several sources, including Joy.
We will contact by letter all women's groups and individuals on campuses to form a national coalition for the promotion of women's studies. Such a national group could also deal with related women's problems in education, such as equal parietal rules.

5 Other activities:

We will set up a clearing-house to provide materials, such as bibliographies and syllabi, which will be constantly updated through a newsletter. KNOW, Inc., 502 Bevington Road, Pittsburgh 15221, is already working on this project. The materials should be sent not only to libraries but to interested radical groups and to us.

We will create a speakers' bureau. People who have experience in speaking will be available to train others if they want help, and anybody willing will be encouraged to submit any speeches she has written to a pool so other people can use the same speeches.

We will survey attitude changes due to workshops and courses on women and publish the results.

We will publish and publicize new research or reinterpretations of older research, and widely advertise the news of any colleges establishing a program of women's studies.

C In the field of education we are against the tracking system. We believe high-school and college guidance counseling must not restrict individuals to sex-determined roles. Home Economics, shop, and other vocational courses must be made available to all without regard to sex. History texts and anthologies of literature must be changed to represent fairly and correctly the achievements of women. Workshops on women's problems should be conducted for parents, teachers, and teachers-in-training, and included in adult and continuing education courses. Women, regardless of marital status or pregnancy, must be guaranteed the right to attend school.

We demand a women's studies section in all public libraries and school and university libraries.

We encourage the academic community to restructure language to reflect a society in which women have equal status with men.

Educational institutions must no longer be exempt from Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

We demand elimination of nepotism rules from colleges and universities.
We demand that all educational institutions set up day-care centers for all students, faculties, and staff.

Women's studies programs should be established in all colleges and universities.

III Employment

A Damaging inequality hits the working woman in: salaries, legal rights and restrictions, sexist typecasting, unwritten laws of behavior, authority, access to information, amount of work expected, time structuring, status, getting credit, value to employer and prospective employers, use of capabilities, growth potential, the ceiling on her aspirations. Do you agree or disagree?

B [No workshop report was submitted.]

C On the subject of employment, we demand that working hours be made flexible for both men and women.

We demand legal steps to open trade schools and unions to women.

We support ACLU Women's Rights Project, and intend to create dossiers analyzing individual companies and the per-cent of women hired in each job category.

Part-time employment must be made available for women who want it.

IV Family Structure

A Central to family structure is the institution of marriage. We will examine how women are forced into marriage and how this institution constitutes legal slavery, as well as the myth that marriage and family structures benefit women. Also to be discussed will be the economic function of the family unit and its importance in maintaining male supremacy.

B [No workshop report was submitted.]

C [The news release did not cover this topic.]

V The "Feminine Image"

A Our stereotyped image—most blatantly seen in the presentations of the mass media, academic fields, etc.—is in fact in every-
body's head. Women did not create this set of stereotypes. Who produces and reinforces this image? Why? Who benefits? From our awareness that it is not to our advantage to perpetuate this "Feminine Image" we see the need to work together to create a new and fully-human concept of Woman.

B  [Morning workshop:] We have a 3-fold problem:
   1  communication among ourselves;
   2  the manner in which the media portray women;
   3  the manner in which the media portray feminists.
We will:
   a. establish a coalition newsletter with Media Women coordinat-
      ing it, with no censorship;
   b. as long as we do not have editing rights the media can and do
      make fools of us. We should cooperate with women reporters only,
      and on our own terms;
   c. A committee will be formed out of those people who left their
      names at the Media Women desk for the newsletter. The newsletter
      will carry information on boycotts, etc.

   [Afternoon workshop:]
   1  Hold demonstrations covered by TV and the press, featuring
      humorous parodies of ads, plays, etc., which are derogatory to
      women.
   2  Boycott Mattel Toys and flood the company and their adver-
      tising agency with protests, especially at the Christmas season.
   3  Once a month, or however often the coalition newsletter
      comes out, choose an ad which is especially offensive to women.
      The address of the agency and company will be given in the news-
      letter, and the whole Congress, the individual member organiza-
      tions, and individual persons will all be urged to send telegrams
      and letters or call the agency and company responsible for the ad.
   4  Stickers saying "This ad is an insult to women" will be
      printed up and given to members to paste on ads at their own dis-
     cretion.

C  We protest the derogatory image of women presented by the
media. This Congress deplores the misrepresentation of the move-
ment for women's liberation to the women of America.
VI  How Women Are Divided: Class, Racial, Sexual, and Religious Differences

A  If sisterhood between women were a fact, it would not be necessary to hold this conference. This workshop will explore the specific ways we are divided, with the hope that understanding this may help us to find out how we can work together and who and what is responsible for the division.

B  [Morning workshop:] We will work with all women recognizing that the uniqueness of our revolution transcends economic, racial, generational, and political differences, and that these differences must be transcended in action, the common interest of our liberation, self-determination, and development of our political movement.

TABLED. We support all women in their struggle for liberation, regardless of their sexual experiences, whether they be heterosexual, homosexual, celibate, married or single, mothers or not, because we recognize that women know best what situation they can best handle now in this male supremacist society; and because we feel that at this time in history there is no individual solution that in some way does not oppress another woman, this will only come about when there is not a male supremacist society.

TABLED.

C  All women are oppressed as women and can unite on that basis; however, we acknowledge that there are differences among women, male-created—of economic and social privilege, race, education, etc.—and that these differences are real, not in our heads. Such divisions must be eliminated. They can only be eliminated by hard work and concrete action, not by rhetoric.

ADOPTED.

VII  Love and Sex

A  Tracing briefly the history of the concept of love, and the institution of heterosexual sex down through the ages—especially in western society; relationship between love in sex and love in religion; theories of sex and how they are used to degrade and exploit women; the semantics of love in sex; the concept of love as a reaction to, and defense against, oppression; female fantasies and media
reinforcement of male fantasies; would women’s liberation lead to the end of sex or to better sex?

B  [No workshop report was submitted.]

C  [The news release did not cover this topic.]

VIII  The Nature and Function of a Feminist Group

A  Why we need a group (the superiority of collective to individual action; the “consciousness” and “stability” of a group versus the “spontaneity” of a purely mass movement); structure—the ways in which a group organizes to insure a maximum of efficiency, to create power for itself, and to develop skills and abilities in each of its members. The ways in which individual responsibility and self-discipline are encouraged and utilized by the group. Equality and the lot system in a leaderless group. Resistance to the idea of a group.

B  [Morning workshop:] We are united here because each of us as a woman is oppressed within this society. Regardless of political, economic, social, cultural, religious, or age differences we share and agree upon basic issues of women’s oppression where action must be taken. Therefore we propose:

1  Formation of a loose national women’s coalition which will not subvert the objectives of individual organizations and groups but will provide communication and cooperation on issues where we must unite for strength and action. We propose establishing at least four regional offices which will collect and disseminate information and help coordinate collective action on single issues.

2  We propose that all resolutions that come out of this Congress be mimeographed and mailed to every participant.

[Afternoon workshop:] We support the statement of the morning group and re-emphasize the need for unity among the groups working for women’s liberation and present the following proposals:

1  That the Congress to Unite Women hereby pledges that any attempt to take action against women for feminist activities will cause an appropriate response.

2  Because we support the morning statement we feel each area coalition should have as the first order of business the development of a system for collecting, using, and accounting for money.
3 The coordinating group in each area should organize all those interested in such fund-raising activities as designing and making things to sell, e.g., buttons, banners, posters, etc.

4 We believe it would be desirable to have a single symbol which would stand for our national coalition.

5 The national coalition should set up a permanent non-partisan unit which would have materials and information readily available for distribution on such topics as:
   a. how to organize neighborhood groups,
   b. literature and films covering all aspects of women’s liberation as seen by each group,
   c. speakers’ bureau on a regional basis.

6 We suggest that each area organize educational and/or organizational meetings with the purposes of:
   a. publicity to inform people—most importantly, women—of the concepts and means of women’s liberation,
   b. education,
   c. exploring the problems of the area, making themselves and their existence known.

C [The news release did not cover this topic.]

IX Political Power

A The movement of women’s liberation requires re-examination of all institutions, both political and those not now considered political, in terms of how they keep women politically powerless. The concept of individual liberation is an illusion. The goals of the women’s liberation movement can only be achieved by means of a united political struggle.

B [No workshop report was submitted.]

C The Congress to Unite Women announces the formation of a women’s political power bloc to fight for women’s liberation. We now expand the definition of political to include women’s “personal” lives, meaning both the structure of government in the present society and new alternatives on which women unite. While we demand representation on all such bodies in proportion to our numbers (presently 51%), we see this as only a means to an even larger end—the total liberation of women by every avenue available.
312  Congress to Unite Women

1 We will work against people in politically powerful positions who have demonstrated that they oppose our interest.
2 We are determined to get priority in political attention for our issues, particularly child care, abortion, civil rights, and the Equal Rights Amendment.

X  Reproduction and Its Control

A This group will discuss: the freedom to choose whether to bear children as a woman's basic human right, and as a prerequisite to the exercise of the other freedoms she may win; elimination of all laws and practices that compel women to bear children against their will (professional practices, public and private attitudes, and legal barriers limiting access to contraception and abortion); research in extra-uterine gestation.

B [Morning and afternoon workshops' joint report:]
The Congress to Unite Women, recognizing the basic human right to decide whether to have a child, and believing that it is a prerequisite to the exercise of the other freedoms women will win, opposes all attitudes, practices, and laws that would compel ANY woman to bear a child against her will. Specifically:

1 We support the phrase "birth control" and use it to mean both contraception (including voluntary sterilization) and abortion. We reject the phrases "family planning" and "planned parenthood" because of the strong social stereotypes they convey.
2 We demand the TOTAL removal NOW of all restrictions on free access to contraception and abortion.

a. We condemn all so-called abortion "reform" bills—such as that sponsored by Albert Blumenthal in the New York State Assembly. Such restrictive bills are condescending and paternalistic, and reinforce the myth of woman's inability to make decisions about her life and her body.

b. We also oppose abortion bills that call themselves "repeal" but in fact include unnecessary statutory requirements such as that abortions be available only in hospitals, or only from licensed doctors. Such proposals insure that the decision will be left to the doctor, rather than to the woman, despite technological advances that will soon make these restrictions obsolete. Women should be guaranteed their affirmative
civil right to abortion performed by any person qualified to
do so, including themselves when appropriate techniques
are developed.
c. The Congress to Unite Women OPPOSES the 1970 Cook-
Leichter abortion bill in New York State, because it adds
statutory requirements that abortion MUST be performed
by physicians. This hampers the development of new birth-
control technologies, and—like the anti-abortion bill of
1828—binds both women and medicine to the techniques
and attitudes of the past.

3 a. We demand legislation requiring that general hospitals re-
ceiving any public funding—which comes from the taxes
of women—offer to everyone a choice among all safe and
effective methods of birth control, as defined in part 1.
b. We demand legislation requiring the establishment of a
network of local public clinics to offer these birth-control
services at no charge, and requiring that the availability of
these services be widely and continuously publicized.
c. We demand that these services be offered by all college
health services.
d. We demand that Blue Cross, Blue Shield, and all other
medical insurance plans be required to provide coverage to
all policyholders regardless of marital status, for all preg-
nancy-related medical care—including contraception, ster-
ilization, and abortion—desired by the policyholder.

4 We demand that medical and paramedical personnel be
fully trained in the techniques necessary to provide these birth-
control services.

5 a. We demand greatly expanded research NOW to develop
new, safe, and effective methods of abortion, and of contra-
ception for both sexes, as well as methods of extra-uterine
gestation.
b. We demand greatly expanded access to existing contracep-
tive devices for both sexes, through such outlets as grocery
stores and vending machines.

6 While we support voluntary birth control, we oppose con-
traception, sterilization, or abortion imposed under force or coer-
cion—which is often used against women as a punishment.

7 We strongly support ALL possible efforts, whether through
the courts, the legislatures, or DIRECT ACTION, to rid this coun-
try of all anti-contraception and anti-abortion laws NOW.

8 We support all referral services that supply women with abortion “first aid,” and urge women to set up many more such services as acts of sisterly aid and civil disobedience.

9 We support the teaching of sex education to people of all ages, and demand that this sex education include instruction in all aspects of birth control and EXCLUDE instruction in so-called “sex roles.”

ALL ACCEPTED.

Resolved that a protest be made against the setup of the Congress to Unite Women that automatically excluded men because of sex. REJECTED.

Resolved that the next Congress invite ALL PEOPLE who have an interest in women’s liberation. REJECTED.

Resolved that the Congress support Bill Baird’s effort in behalf of women’s right to birth control information and devices regardless of marital status, and condemn his prison sentence for violating the Massachusetts state anti-contraception law. REJECTED. [This failed after a short discussion in which objections were raised on the grounds that other men had also contributed time and energy helping women and it was unfair to single out one particular man.]

C The Congress to Unite Women recognizes women’s basic human right to decide whether to have children and opposes in the courts, the legislatures, and in direct action all attitudes, practices, and laws that would compel any woman to bear a child against her will. We not only demand the TOTAL repeal NOW of all laws restricting access to contraception, sterilization, and abortion and the free public provision of such birth-control services in all hospitals and clinics; but concomitantly we insist that appropriate safeguards be developed so that women are not coerced or in any way pressured into birth control [sic], sterilization, or abortion.

XI The Sex-Role System

A Despite technological advances, humanity has made no progress in interpersonal relationships. This workshop will explore the alternatives to the traditional female and male sex roles, and how to cope with the hostilities that one encounters when one dares to have
an identity independent of those sex roles. We will attempt to re-
define male and female roles—or, better yet, eliminate them alto-
gether.

B  [No workshop report was submitted.]

C  1 We must proceed on the assumption that there are NO bio-
    logical bases for any sex-role differentiation beyond the basic re-
    productive functions. If we are truly free we will soon find out what
    differences there are, if any.
    2 Children should be given HUMAN models to emulate, not
    just MALE and FEMALE models.
    3 We must each have the courage to fight to live out our own
    beliefs in undifferentiated sex roles.

XII  Women and the Law

A  Review of the bases of the Supreme Court decisions—as late as
    1961—that women are not “persons” in the legal sense, with dis-
    cussion of what legislative measures are necessary to accomplish
    equal protection of the law, civil rights, and affirmative action pro-
    grams on behalf of women. Please bring ideas.

B  We resolve to direct attention to two issues now:
    1 Civil Rights Act of 1964: includes sex in only Title VII
        (which covers employment). There is no provision for penalty
        against discrimination or for enforcement of the act. There is no
        money available for suits, which must be instituted at the expense
        of the plaintiff.
    2 Equal Rights Amendment is essential. While the 14th Amend-
        ment guarantees equal protection under the law for all persons who
        are citizens, the Supreme Court has refused to rule on the issue of
        whether women are persons.

        A mass demonstration in Washington to implement this was sug-
        gested and TABLED.

        Suggestions for action: write congressman and senator every
        week; demonstrate. Demonstrate against Emanuel Celler, who said
        the equal rights amendment will only go through “over my dead
        body.”
Amend each title of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to include references to sex: public accommodations, public facilities, public education, federally-assisted programs, and community-relation services.

Enforcement: add a section specifically providing for private rights of action or a section giving the EEOC a specific time in which to act after which time it should recognize private actions. Develop a special EEOC resource for women's rights. Get specific senators etc. to support this movement.

C [The text of the news release is identical to 1 & 2 above.]

Plans to Set Up a Continuing Structure for the Congress, considered at the plenary session on Sunday, November 23, 1969

1 Continuing newsletter (Media Women volunteers)
2 Structure to decide how to put into action what happened here
3 Press conference: to announce this meeting to the public and announce women's unity

Motion made and seconded to have every group nominate one woman to form coalition group. ACCEPTED.

Motion to read report of the workshop discussing the Nature and Function of a Feminist Group. ACCEPTED. [See report 8.]

Discussion as to what women should be included in on-going committee: all women's groups, including such as the DAR; all liberation groups; just women represented at the Congress. The argument was between those who felt the most pressing need was for a tight effective organization for political action and those who wanted to broaden the base of the movement. Motion to direct the on-going committee to expand itself to include all other women's groups (amended to read liberation groups) as this became appropriate. ACCEPTED.

(It was previously moved and seconded that non-affiliated women elect four representatives to committee; REJECTED.)

Moved and seconded that each group present elect a representative to the committee to carry on work of the Congress as set forth in the report on the Nature and Function of a Feminist Group. ACCEPTED. Recess for this selection followed.

The following is a list—as complete as could be put together—of
the groups that participated in the planning of the first meeting of the Congress to Unite Women:

Albany State Women’s Liberation Front
Buffalo NOW
Columbia Women’s Liberation
Daughters of Bilitis
Downtown Women’s Liberation
   (New York City)
Female Liberation (Boston)
HIP Women (NYC)
Long Island NOW
Lower East Side Women (NYC)
Lower East Side Women’s Liberation (NYC)
Media Women (NYC)
National NOW
New Democratic Coalition Women’s Rights Group (NY)
New York NOW

New Yorkers for Abortion Law Repeal
Pittsburgh NOW
Princeton NOW
Radical Feminism (NYC)
Redstockings
Socialist Workers Party (NY)
Stanton-Anthony Brigade
   (NYC)
Student Homophile League
WITCH Resurrectus
Women Lawyers—Boston
Women’s Liberation Club, Bronx
   High School of Science
Women’s Liberation 55 (NYC)
Worcester NOW
Young Socialist Alliance