Unity —for women's equality!

statement by the young communist league

The corporate-government attacks on equality

The Bush administration has stepped up its attack on the rights of women, the working class and minority communities. The five (in)justices on the Supreme Court (Renquist, Scalia, O'Connor, White and Kennedy) are the corporate, Reagan—(and now) Bush executioners, putting to death hard won gains: reproductive rights, affirmative action laws, civil liberties, and collective bargaining agreements.

Reproductive rights

A key issue in the struggle for women's equality is the right of choice. Being able to have basic control over one's life and one's body is a human right. The idea that women can be denied an abortion is a throwback to chattel slavery.

The attack on the right to choose has a special effect on young, poor, and working class women. Legislation stipulating women under 18 must get their parents' consent to have an abortion is discriminatory. Poor and working-class women are faced with the uncomforting words of George Bush—"just say no"—because the federal government won't fund abortions. Because of racism, this problem hits African American and other racially and nationally oppressed women hardest.

Big business and the ultra-right have flooded the "pro-life" organizations with big bucks. While the "Pro-lifers" claim they care about innocent babies being "murdered," they are strangely silent when it comes to lowering the obscenely high infant mortality rate or funding national child care programs. Why? Because it would go against the interests of their corporate masters. Under capitalism, health care is for profit, not people's needs.

If the forces of reaction are successful in rolling back history, they won't stop with the right to choice. Further dismantling of basic democratic and human rights will follow.

Women's equality

Full equality for women is tied to many issues in addition to reproductive rights. Women make 70% of men's wages. This wage gap is the bedrock on which sexist attitudes and policies are built. Women make up almost one-half the total workforce. Corporations make extra profits by paying women workers less for the same or comparable work. Equal pay for equal or comparable work will benefit not only women, but men too. Lower wages for women keep wages low overall, by keeping working people divided against themselves.

Other issues, like low-cost quality childcare, free pre-natal and total health care, housing and education are issues linked to full equality for women. Today the responsibility for childcare still falls heavily on the shoulders of women. Child care and medical care are essential so that women, young and old, can go to school, work and live a full life. The fight for legal, government-funded abortion is directly tied to the fight for nationally funded health care for all.

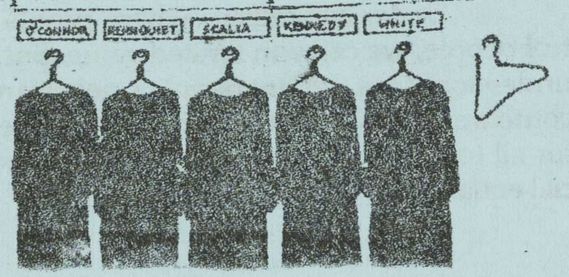
The fight against racism

The fight against racism, the struggle for African American equality and women's equality are historically intertwined. Frederick Douglass, the great African American leader, once said "When the true history of the anti-slavery cause shall be written, women will occupy a large space in its pages, for the cause of the slave has been peculiarly woman's cause." Abolitionists and suffragettes found common ground in the struggles of the 1800s. That common ground laid the basis for victory.

The same could be true today. The anti-people, pro-corporate Reagan and Bush administrations have fomented a racist and anti-women atmosphere. They have given official sanction to racist violence and promoted racist ideas. When the level of racist activity rises, the level of sexist and other bias-related activity rises too. Note the rise of racist attacks and rapes on college campuses. All racist, sexist and bias-related attacks threaten and weaken democracy for all.

United action a must!

Capitalism is a system which puts profits before people's needs. This is the reason behind the destruction ofaffirmative action programs—they cut into profits by requiring equality of pay for all people. It's the reason behind denying women equal pay for comparable worth. It is at the root of the current atmosphere of sexism in which the right to choose can be taken away, the Equal Rights Amendment can be stopped and rape, pornography and other violence against women have become so widespread. It's the reason behind legally allowing scabs to cross picketlines and keep stolen jobs.

This drive for profits is the source of the reactionary Supreme Court decisions and Bush administration policies. It's a powerful force.

There is a growing unity of action between movements today. On campuses, many coalitions have been built around issues like tuition increase, racist violence and rape. United action is the only force which will turn around the Supreme Court decisions and Bush policies. United action of labor, the African American, Puerto Rican, Mexican American, Asian American, American Indian, other nationally oppressed communities, women, youth, students, peace and environmental groups can beat the corporate-Bush power.