

## Leading the CWLU into Outreach

This paper is a definition of outreach work. It starts with an overall section about what outreach is, and then talks about specific programs and how they can do better outreach, or start doing any at all.

Looking at the Union, we see that there is a lot of work being done, many stable programs have been built, and a number of those programs are getting a lot of media publicity. But in spite of these things, many programs aren't growing very fast.

Liberation School isn't getting many class proposals, DARE is just beginning to respond to women who call with job problems and Womankinds stay stacked in the office for months, unsold. The Rape Line gets lots of calls from the media (which is great), but gets few calls on the line. Connecting Link has had small turnouts at its educationals, and the same familiar faces turn out at most direction action confrontations.

The Union has a great potential to grow, but we have to stop relying on the women our haphazard publicity reaches and women who "happen" to pick up Womankind in a bookstore to be the base of our programs. Our programs speak to many of the specific needs in women's lives, and we have to take our programs out; we have to talk to women who have never heard of a women's liberation union about their lives and women's liberation. We should sell Womankinds in laundromats, parks, bowling alleys on women's league night, anywhere women hang out. We should go to high school and talk to groups of high school girls standing around about getting hassled on the streets and about the Rape Line, and leaflet late night shifts at plants with rape leaflets. We should do concentrated publicity in the specific neighborhoods that we want to reach. To become a vital, growing organization, we have to do much more outreach; we have to constantly bring new women into women's liberation.

### *Why We Believe in Outreach*

Outreach means getting to know a lot of people; it means bring women's consciousness and politics into the everyday lives of people.

Outreach is going to their house to meet with their group of friends rather than inviting them to a meeting at your house or at the office.

Outreach is building a woman's union presence with as many women as possible in as many of the neighborhoods of Chicago as possible.

It is the whole process of meeting women, talking to them about their lives, about women's liberation, and offering them programs – to use and to work on. It is how we initially mobilize and educate masses of women to begin to take control of their lives, to see their personal problems as political, and to use the tools of service, education and direct action to make their lives better.

Outreach isn't something you decide to do as one program, but must be the basis of most of our work. The whole CWLU should be built to serve the needs of outreach, or to directly do outreach.

We can't continue to rely on the people's names on index cards who have called the office in the last two years and peripheral at-large members, as Connecting Link has, to make the Union grow. We can't rely on mailings to move women to come to their first women's liberation meeting, and we can't center most of our resources in one place on Belmont Ave., as we have done.

This is a very lazy style of working; it is very random and sets few concrete goals. We need to set priorities on who we want to organize, and do outreach in those neighborhoods. We should work with women whose needs are strong and concrete and who will move on the issues affecting their lives.

### *How Union Programs can do Better Outreach*

1. Pregnancy Testing. We see three crucial issues within pregnancy testing. The first is publicity – how and where it is done is real important. Pregnancy testing should be listed in every *Womankind*. The little 8x5 signs the office has should be put up all over so you don't have to already know about Woman's Union to know where to get a pregnancy test.

The second important thing is talking to people who come in for tests, both about their lives and about the CWLU. The way the Pregnancy Testing room is set up, with all the health literature is really good. There should be more things to sit on, and some literature about the CWLU in there, too.

Another issue confronting Pregnancy Testing is expansion. There are two ways Pregnancy Testing can expand: by beginning to offer many simple test (like for V.D. and nutritional analysis), or to offer pregnancy testing at several different places around the city. There are advantages and disadvantages to both. The central issue is do we want to offer a necessary service that we can make available to a real large number of women. Let's say we set up pregnancy testing "as a beginning" on the Northwest side. A beginning of what? A women's health center or as the beginning of a neighborhood women's organization? We want to argue for looking at it as the beginnings of a neighborhood women's organization (we are arguing for that perspective, not against building people's clinics). We have this perspective because we want to see the CWLU be an organization of many little CWLU's in neighborhoods that can support women through service and education, and that can struggle against institutions that control women.

2. Legal Clinic Legal Clinic serves as outreach in much the same way as Pregnancy Testing does. One way we see that Legal Clinic could do better outreach is through *Womankind*. It would be really wonderful if Legal Clinic would turn in articles about specific cases that were won through Legal Clinic referrals. Those kinds of stories really make *Womankind* a better outreach paper.
3. Liberation School Liberation School has to keep a balance between its outreach function and its role in internal education (study groups, speaker's bureau educational). That in itself is a whole discussion.

Another point Liberation School has to remember is that there are many classes that can be outreach, but are not necessarily. Some examples are:

Women in Judaism, offered in Albany Park with neighborhood publicity makes that course a whole different thing than offered in Lincoln Park.

Prepared Childbirth at the Maternity Center instead of Lakeview would do two things – (1) build a women’s liberation presence with black and brown women, and (2) fill a heavy demand for prepared childbirth classes with women who could only take them for low prices at a place like the Maternity Center, and the Maternity Center hasn’t had the resources to offer them.

Women and Their Bodies at the Fritz Clinic would serve neighborhood Lakeview women, and Self-Defense classes out in the neighborhoods.

4. Graphics It would be very helpful to outreach if Graphics branched out to art that was more accessible to people than “living room” posters. Some ideas are: (1) outside murals, maybe of some of the posters, such as “Women are not Chicks”, or the Health care one, (2) finding surfaces where people stand and read to silk-screen the Man-Woman-Person poster, and (3) artsy graffiti in the girl’s johns in the Parks around the city.
5. CWLRBAND It is important for the band to set priorities for who it wants to play for. It is more important for the band to answer questions like these (1) Which is more important? Playing at places where the women’s movement is weak and just developing or playing at places with a real strong women’s movement? (2) if it’s a school, is it a small, private school, or a state university or city college? (3) How should the band related to local organizing efforts? How important are Chicago area engagements?

The second task for the Band in terms of outreach is figuring out raps that are appropriate for different audiences. The raps for an audience which is really into women’s liberation are very different than the raps for a situation where there is a small core of women’s liberation at a school or in a neighborhood which has organized people to come to the dance, many of whom maybe having their firsts contact with women’s liberation.

The band also could make more of an effort to sell literature at its out-of-town gigs.

6. Connecting Link The Connecting Link has had a real hard time, with little aid from the CWLU, deciding what its central tasks are, and how to integrate women into the Union. Their work has concentrated on involving women who have called the office in the last two years, and peripheral at-large members. They have had two successful open houses, and two educationals.

We feel these past contacts have only a certain potential, which has been filled by the open houses, and that a central task, which hasn’t been a priority of the Connecting Link, is to do basic outreach work to meet new women and to “connect” these women with the programmatic work of the Union. The two obstacles to doing this have been (1) the Connecting Link’s disagreement with seeing outreach work a priority, and (2) workgroups are not doing outreach work which would (a) reach women who would use the Connecting Link, or be interested in it educationals, or (b) which would work (like neighborhood publicity, leafleting) that women the C.L. reaches could work on.

We see the three central tasks of the Connecting Link being:

- (1) bringing women the Union already has contacts with into the Union
- (2) playing a leadership role in showing workgroups the necessity of doing outreach work and creating ways for women to get involved in their work, and

- (3) doing general Union outreach work to build the Union's presence in the city, like selling Womankinds on the el stops, putting up publicity for the Rape Line, Pregnancy Testing, DARE, etc. in neighborhoods and on el lines; this work would be coordinated by Union member and involve new women.

7. High School/Junior College Outreach This year HSJC outreach decided to concentrate 90% of its resources at four schools (Wright, Southwest, Oakton and Moraine). That is a lot of concentration. HSJC outreach has to work out what the correct balance between that kind of work and less intense work like selling papers at a lot of different places and doing speaking engagements at many schools is. There is a value in both and the positives and negatives of each have to be weighed continually.
8. Rape Line In order for us to explain who we think the Rape Line could do better outreach, we have to lay out our politics around the issue of Rape.

Rape is an important issues for the women's movement because it directly confronts one of the basic controls this society puts on women. Having to be afraid of being outside at night cuts down drastically on the mobility and freedom a person has. In this way, rape is a powerful social control on women (such as the lack of daycare is). Secondly, rape is the heaviest example of the sick sexual standards of American society. The fact that we have a society that produces people with the ability to use sex with brutality is a pretty heavy condemnation of the society. The way rape is treated by institutions of our society (the courts, the police, hospitals, media) shows the sexism of the society.

We believe rape will be stopped by the people stopping rape. This may seem like a very simple self-evident statement, but when you think about it is a very heavy statement, and one that we don't always remember when planning out strategy. What does it mean?

- It means we rely on the people, rather than those powerful institution, for most of our support,
- It means doing a lot of education with people as to what kind of rapes .are committed, who rapes and why we all, men and women, must stop rape,
- It probably means whatever kind of rape project we have being heavily community based. We say this because it seems logical that if we believe rape will be stopped by the people stopping rape then it probably makes sense for us to concentrate all our efforts on specific neighborhood, mobilize a large percentage of that community, and really build rape as a community issue.
- It means not relying on convictions as the solution to rape. This doesn't mean there isn't any value in convictions. The reason you don't rely on convictions is because convictions mean that some authority is the one saying rape is wrong, instead of relying on the community to stop rape once the education is done that shows rape is wrong.

What does this mean programmatically?

- It means putting STOP RAPE posters up all over Rogers Park, in park district field houses, El stops, around the high schools, in laundromats, around factories with late shifts, in bowling alley bathrooms - where women are.
- it means door-to-door outreach talking about rape in the community, and the Rape Crisis Line,
- It means doing educationals on rape at places like the Park District fieldhouses.

9. Abortion Task Force The Abortion Task Force's central task should be to confront hospitals and clinics on their abortion practices. That means their central task is direct action. Direct Action can incorporate outreach, but direct action is not outreach. We'll outline an example in which direct action would be outreach. (This example is to illustrate a point, and should not be taken as a suggestion. We understand that abortion is a touchy issue in Catholic neighborhoods, and that in many ways our hands are tied).

The Abortion Task Force would pick a target, let's say a hospital. There are many in Chicago which are likely, in terms of their bad abortion practices. Some have strong community ties (like Masonic, Northwest Community Hosp., MacNeal Memorial Hospital in Berwyn) and some don't (like Wesley and Passavant). Focusing on community hospitals would mean that the community would be mobilized. This is the outreach aspect of direct action. An action which is dependent on calling the CWLU membership list has no outreach value. (Public exposure through the media helps to build a CWLU presence, but it does not make the CWLU touch the lives of anyone).

One thing the Abortion Task Force should do is investigation into the abortion practices of neighborhood hospitals (even if investigation showed there were no abortions being done, that would be a service). Also, there are abortion agencies opening in some neighborhoods, and we should have data on them.

10. DARE Since few women are able to work in the communities they live in, DARE's outreach work can't often be community based. We'll talk instead about how to outreach in DARE's direction action work and DARE's service and education work.

Last summer and fall when DARE was building a direction action campaign against City Hall, they frequently leafleted City Hall and two other city buildings, talking to interested women employees, and pasted hand-drawn posters in women's johns in these buildings. This is important, and should be done much more regularly, at city building, in the civic center, and around the loop, to build DARE's presence for the janitress campaign. This kind of propaganda work (leafleting, rapping with women in bathrooms during coffee breaks, selling Womankinds) should be done extensively at any workplace where there's important inside organizing or where there's a direct action campaign being built.

Job discrimination, as we've seen through the questionnaires we've done and the calls DARE's gotten, is an issue that women move on pretty easily. A woman (or a man) who's hesitant to support women's liberation, will almost certainly support "equal pay and equal work for women". Based on this, DARE has a large city-wide constituency that it could get in touch with if they were known for giving reliable job discrimination advice. DARE is just beginning an "information-service" program in cooperation with Legal Clinic, in which we will call back and talk to all women, at least briefly, who call to the office with a job problem. We'll refer maybe most of them straight to Legal Clinic, but if we get a sense that their job situation is a good potential organizing situation or if they're interested in our work, we'll encourage them to work with us. This will give extensive contacts city-wide, and a sense of where there is movement around job problems.

We should do as extensive an amount of publicity as we can handle about our information-service program with bumper stickers and wall stickers, around workplaces where we're doing work, or want to do work.

We should also create groups for women to participate in that don't want to have full participation in DARE's Sunday night meetings. We could have bi-monthly meetings for the women who call into the office, to rap about their job problems, and get full legal information about their situations. Beyond these meetings, for women who are more interested and want to agitate in their job situation, we could offer organizing skills classes, like our Self Defense at the Workplace class, which gave women labor organizing skills.

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