

DEFEND WOMEN'S RIGHTS!

STATEMENT BY DIANE SARGE, SOCIALIST CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR OF HOUSTON, AND SAS SCOGGINS, SOCIALIST CANDIDATE FOR HOUSTON CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE, POSITION 2.

We bring greetings from our party to all of the women at this International Women's Year Conference who are interested in standing up to defend women's rights.

Our basic rights are under increased attack by government bodies and other anti-women forces.

- Eight State Legislatures have called for a Constitutional Convention to prohibit abortions.
- The Hyde Amendment has effectively cut off government funds for abortions, affecting 300,000 women annually. Most of these women are Blacks, Chicanas, or poor women.
- Coupled with attacks on abortion rights has been a drastic increase in the number of forced sterilizations.
- The U.S. Supreme Court has handed down a number of rulings recently attacking the legal foundations of paid maternity leaves and affirmative action programs.
- Government cutbacks in funds for social services have closed thousands of childcare centers, forcing working women back into the home, often onto welfare.
- The ERA, introduced into the U.S. Congress over 50 years ago, passed by that body in 1973 due to the massive pressure of the women's movement, is still not law. Along with attacks on abortion and paid maternity leaves, the right-wing has made the ERA a central point of attack and has mounted a massive, visible campaign to insure its defeat. At IWY conferences like this one in at least 2 other states, anti-women forces have succeeded in passing anti-ERA resolutions!

These attacks on the gains of the women's movement are not isolated. The same anti-ERA, anti-abortion forces are teaming up with those who oppose Black and Chicano rights, gay rights, and the very right of working people to unionize. This is no coincidence. As a result of the economic crisis, the government is carrying out a frontal attack on the rights of all working people. Feminists must seek out these forces as allies to defend our common rights.

Experience has shown that it has only been through organizing the supporters of women's rights of all political, ethnic and religious backgrounds in our own INDEPENDENT movement that women have won our rights. We marched, picketed, and spoke out to win the right to vote and legal abortion. Today, as the recent attacks have shown, we cannot sit back and rely on either of the two governing parties - the Democrats or the Republicans - to "give" us our long overdue rights.

What we need to do TODAY is begin building a massive, independent movement of women to put a halt to these attacks. Such a massive, visible movement could help win millions of people to support of women's rights. Following the defeat in Dade County, our gay sisters and brothers took to the streets in city after city across the U.S., mobilizing tens of thousands in defense of gay rights. We must do the same.

The most important thing on the agenda at this conference should be the development of a strategy for defending women's rights. As socialists, we pledge our party's support to help develop and carry out such a strategy.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, FILL OUT THE COUPON ON THE BACK.

