

Male workers who don't understand what's going on will blame the *women* who work these jobs, completely ignoring the fact that *anyone* would take a better job if he or she had the chance and completely forgetting that it's not the women's fault but the company's for violating established seniority procedures.

Eventually, we're sure, the women here will see through the company's tactics of using them to stir the workers up against each other. Eventually, too, we hope they will take the special demands they have—such as childcare, maternity pay, and adequate women's lavatories, locker rooms and medical facilities—to the union. Then they will see just how little the union or the company are actually willing to do for them *or any of us*.

Most important, only when *men* realize that management, and not women, is the real problem, will any of us begin to control our lives around this hellhole.

1.C.4.

Women's Brigade of the Weather Underground

From "Message from Sisters Who Bombed HEW for International Women's Day" (1974)

Written at a time of transition in the Weather Underground Organization, this statement is from the final action conducted by the women's unit of the group, targeting the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). This action protested both the inadequacy of and the social control enacted through the department's welfare and reproductive health programs. The statement reflects a convergence between the politics of antiracist feminism and revolutionary armed struggle.

This action is for all women who

- *wait* in lines for too few food stamps and brave food distribution lines because our families have to eat.
- *worry* thru degrading forms and humiliating rules and regulations.
- *are kept* out of paying jobs because there are no childcare programs.
- *struggle* to raise our children while we're called "pigs at the trough" and "lazy parasites" by reactionary male politicians.
- *send* our children to schools where illiteracy is taught.
- *fight* to get health care in emergency rooms and county hospitals where our bodies are used for experiments and as practice for doctors.
- *go mad*, go crazy, locked up in prisons and mental institutions.
- *live* in projects.
- *are patronized*, cast away and ignored because we are old.
- *resist!*

And [this action is] especially for Minnie and Mary Alice Relf, blackwomen-children, from Montgomery, Alabama, sterilized by HEW at the ages of fourteen and twelve.

HEW is the Nixon program of counterinsurgency against us.

It shares many things in common with AID [US Agency for International Development]-type programs in Vietnam and Latin America. HEW keeps us below subsistence—not enough food, not health care but health-care-delivery systems, not decent jobs but endless cycles of dependency and anguish.

HEW directly affects the lives of millions of women and their families. HEW decides who eats how much. HEW is the modern faceless tyrant: it is the overseer, the boss, the landlord, the judge, the official rapist. HEW blames women for poverty and then penalizes them. It is a *degrading, violent, and aggressive system of control over women.*

We attack the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare for International Women's Day, March 8, in solidarity with the rising resistance of women.

HEW Is an Enemy of Women

Hunger is violence. The American Empire creates poverty. Then the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) claims to relate to hunger. Its slogan is "People Serving People." In fact, its programs amount to government-enforced malnutrition. Federal food programs offer a half-full, half-empty plate. HEW runs these programs in a patronizing way that tries to create the myth that women are failures—lazy, immoral, and stupid. It is a double standard and a double bind. It is their justification for keeping women as domestic slaves, under the control of men and marriage, poor and without power. . . .

Women are not to blame for the fact that 45 percent of all city families headed by women live in poverty. By government definition, that means they are improperly nourished. In the last year, food costs alone have risen 20 percent. One-third of the world's people go to bed hungry at night. The fat cats are getting fatter.

Food is not a privilege. Food is money to Them. Food is life to Us.

Sterilization is violence. Last year, HEW financed between one hundred and two hundred thousand sterilizations through Medicaid and special family planning clinics. At the same time, US agencies in the Third World have made sterilization and forced birth control programs a requirement for receiving foreign aid money. This is all part of a ruling class plan to prevent the births of more Black, Brown, Yellow, Red and poor babies.

The same men who are responsible for US policy in Vietnam and Africa say that overpopulation creates social unrest and revolution. People are not the problem. Injustice creates revolution. So does the vast inequity of social wealth—the existence of a tiny class of rich men and the great class of poor people. So does the lack of power over our lives and the future of our children.

Women want decent birth control. Women want the choice to control our own reproduction. Instead, Third World women are used as guinea pigs for test-

ing and experimenting. Instead, we all get coils and pills and sterilizations under threat of losing our few crumbs of welfare. Instead, our bodies are made barren because of official medical neglect. This kind of coercion, for economic and racist reasons, constitutes forced sterilization. It is a direct form of genocide against the future, through the bodies of women.

Women and HEW. The size and power of HEW is a measure of the amount of poverty and exploitation in America, not of government generosity. HEW has 250 separate programs and a budget of \$80 billion a year. It is the largest domestic arm of the federal government, comparable in size and function only to the Defense Department.

It is a classic institution of male supremacy, built on the oppression of women, children, and old people. It is typical of the male monopoly of power. . . .

The brunt of HEW policies falls on women. Of the fifteen million people on welfare, two-thirds are the women and children of AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children]. Being on welfare is like having a sexist tyrant for an old man. You can't divorce him, but he can cut you off; you give up control of your bodies and most of your dignity as a condition of aid; he controls your money and your privacy. If you are Black or poor or old or a woman-headed household, you are directly affected by HEW programs.

In certain ways, HEW is to poor women like the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) is to all Native American people. It claims to be the giver of life's necessities. But under the guise of providing social services, it functions to control and contain us, after they've ripped us off. It serves as a safety valve against crisis and revolt.

Under imperialism, reforms are turned into weapons against us, especially against Black and Third World women. Demands which were fought for every inch of the way—such as public schools, birth control, social security, trade unions—become their opposite when they remain in the control of the ruling class. HEW is really the Department of Illness, Ignorance, and Wretchedness.

In the United States, women bear the major responsibility for the health, education, and care of families and friends. This is women's work, unpaid at that. Survival questions are treated as personal problems. We're supposed to have it together, but we're deprived of power in any fundamental social institutions. The state sets women against women, forces us into desperate competition, isolates us from sisters in the Third World.

In spite of this situation, women persevere and triumph, struggle and unite, revolt and learn to fight. Our hidden herstory includes great struggles for bread, for schools, for healing, for power—against exploitation, repression, domination and against racism.

We need to remove our struggles from the private sphere where they are fought as individual battles and make them collective—as the tasks of our sex, our class, our people. International sisterhood. The roots of our oppression are connected. We have common enemies. They include specific institutions like HEW, which are fundamentally antagonistic to the emancipation of masses of women.



Figure 1.4. Jacquie Ursula Caldwell and Judy Quinlan, “The Women of the World Are Serving Notice!” (1974). Image courtesy of Silvia Federici.

Women’s liberation is a matter of survival. We need food, decent medical care, good schools, and community-run day care. For this, we need revolution.



Four years ago today, our comrades Diana Oughton, Ted Gold, and Terry Robbins died fighting for these same struggles. They are a constant inspiration.

1.C.5.

Coretta Scott King

From Statement to House Subcommittee on Equal Opportunity and Full Employment (1975)

Coretta Scott King was a committed activist, and in the 1970s, she was especially active in the drive for full employment. She gave the statement reproduced here to Congress to advocate for a full employment policy, the Humphrey-Hawkins bill. Corporate and business interests fought hard to limit this policy and to suppress support for it. Although the bill was signed into law in 1978, it has not secured sufficient support to guarantee funding or enforcement. King’s statement expresses the original visions behind the full employment goal.