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# Are the Interests of Men and Women Identical?

## A Suggestion to the National Convention

### by Josephine C. Kaneko

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It is an oft repeated phrase among Socialist agitators that the interests of men and women of the working class are identical, and therefore there should be no methods of education or appeal instituted for one sex alone; but that all efforts of this kind should be directed from one point, whether it be newspaper, pamphlet, street corner, or platform, to all persons regardless of sex, creed, or color.

And on this theory our educational work has proceeded, in this country at least, for the past quarter of a century. That is, we think we have proceeded on this theory. But it does not take very careful thought on the matter to discover that we have not acted in accordance with our theory at all, but have worked always as a matter of expediency along the line of least resistance with the male portion of humanity. It has never been very likely that we could reach the workingman in his wife's kitchen or nursery, or her little parlor, and as it has seemed more expedient to work with him than with her, we have followed him to his lair — to the street corner, to the trade union hall, to the saloon. We have opened our locals in localities where he could be most easily reached, and have accommodated the environment to his tastes and needs. The little room at the rear of the saloon has not been so comfortable as his wife's parlor or sitting room, and sometimes no larger, but he has felt more at ease in it when congregating with other men, so the locals have in some instances been established in the rear rooms of saloons, and frequently in other dreary, comfortless halls which are always obnoxious to women.

We have said, half-heartedly, that women could come to our locals in these dreary places. But they haven't cared to come to any great extent, any more than the men would have cared to meet in women's

parlors. It has been plainly a discrimination in favor of one sex over another. But it has always seemed a matter of expediency.

As we have chosen our meeting places in the favor of men, we have also directed our speeches and our published matter to mankind. His wrongs and his needs have filled our mouths and our newspaper columns with the exceptional moment when we have given publicly to the oppression and needs of women. This, too, has seemed a matter of expediency; we have always had male audiences and readers, and naturally have made our principal appeal to them.

But all this belonged to the cruder days of our movement. To a time when we were willing to trim a little in the matter of principle in order to get a foothold, to force an entering wedge. It is a fair foundation upon which to build for the future.

It is time now, that we cease our appeal to men alone, and give some attention to womankind. It is not enough to say that "the interests of the workingman and woman are identical, therefore what we say to the workingman includes the woman also." It does not include her, so far as she is concerned, unless her part in the struggle for existence is pointed out. Unless her influence on racial and social development is clearly explained; unless we say at least one time in ten or twenty, that industry, which is the foundation of all modern progress, began with women.

Women are tired of being "included," tired of being taken for granted. They demand definite recognition, even as men have it. They know that their interests and men's interest have not been identical since the dawn of human history, and it will take something more than a mere statement of the fact to make them believe they can be identical under Socialism. They have got to be told, just as the workingman is told, with infinite patience and pains, that his interests and those of his employer are NOT identical under capitalism. She who was the first slave, the beast of burden, the bought and sold property of another, the forced mate of an unloved and unlovable companion, the enforced mother, the social underling, the non-citizen — she who has been exploited from the time that man first began to record his doings will not quickly believe us when we say, without further explanation, that her interests and those of her self-constituted superior are identical.

Fortunately for our propaganda and educational work among women we have illustrious teachers whose guidance we may safely follow. Engels knew that in his *Origin of the Family* lay the very foun-

dition stones of the Socialist philosophy. Bebel was not afraid of drawing sex lines when he wrote his *Woman*.<sup>1</sup> Marx and all others built upon Morgan's *Ancient Society* which is nothing, if not a history of woman in society.

It is still expedient to adapt our work somewhat to the needs and tastes of men. In order to teach them, it is none the less expedient to adapt it also to the needs and tastes of women that we may educate them. To work along the lines of least resistance is the quickest way to our goal, and the safest, perhaps, so long as we do not "trim" on the question of principle. The woman problem is one of the underlying principles of our movement. The question is, will we treat it as such, and do all we can to intelligently and speedily solve it or will we treat it to a "conspiracy of silence" and leave it to solve itself as an "included" part of a man's movement?

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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<sup>1</sup> August Bebel, *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* [1895].