
THE AMERICAN WOMAN

BY ELLA REEVE BLOOR

THE celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Communist Party brings to our minds many memories of the women of our country, that oppressed social group of our population whose interests have always been championed so staunchly by our Party. The women who are working so bravely and with such self-sacrifice in our movement today are fitting heirs of those hosts of American mothers who have helped to build and improve our country, to achieve our democratic heritage.

WOMEN OF COLONIAL AMERICA

The pioneer mothers, so heroic in their rebellion against the tyranny and oppression of their own lands, sailed away on unknown and uncharted seas in small boats, to find safety and freedom in the new world. Many romantic stories are written by historians about the voyage of the *Mayflower*, and the eighteen wives who accompanied their husbands to the new wilderness which later became the beginnings of the United States.

But the merchant companies that organized these expeditions showed no more regard for the native Indian inhabitants of America than they had shown for the rights of their own workers or womenfolk. Their actions made foes of the Indians, who might be called the only one-hundred-percent Americans. The Indians resented

the coming of the "pale-face" to their hunting grounds. They fought the settlers by destroying their log houses, and in some cases by wiping out entire families. Later on, the British government, to prevent Westward migration, incited the Indians deliberately against its own American subjects. Some of the brave pioneer mothers had to escape with their children through woods and valleys to establish homes all over again.

Hannah Dunstan's defense of her week-old baby, during her flight from the Indians through the forest after her husband and her other children had been killed, is commemorated by a statue near Concord.

The shameful subjugation of women that prevailed throughout the world at the time of the settlement of America is revealed by the manner in which the first women were brought to the Virginia colony. They were brought in a special boat and sold at auction for tobacco as wives to unknown men—virtually as slaves.

Our thoughts about the mothers and daughters of America would be incomplete without mention of one or two outstanding Indian women. All of us were told in childhood the story of the young Indian princess, Pocahontas, daughter of the great chief Powhatan, who, while only a girl, saved the life of John Smith by throwing herself upon his head just as

it was about to be severed from his body. Her record is that of a real rebel, as we read of her being imprisoned in Jamestown, in 1613. About this time, she married an Englishman named John Rolfe, who took her proudly to England. They had one son and together they founded the large family of descendants of Pocahontas in Virginia. One of these families was that of Edith Bolling, who married Woodrow Wilson when he was President of the United States.

Long years after the period of the Indian princess and the Pilgrim mothers, we find Indian women who availed themselves of the government schools and who in a number of instances became brilliant writers. An Indian woman of the Sioux tribe of North Dakota, Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Donnin) contributed many articles to the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harpers* and *Everybody's Magazine*, and compiled books dealing with the true character of the lives of the Indian women from childhood to old age. Her touching stories are obviously of her own life as a "Warrior's Daughter." She speaks of her own internal struggles after she had been to the schools of the "Paleface" and had lost faith in the Great Spirit. In her *American Indian Stories* she calls upon the women of America in a stirring passage:

"History tells us it was from the English and the Spanish that our government inherited its legal victims, the 'American Indians,' whom to this day we hold as wards, and not as citizens of their own freedom-loving land. . . . Now the time is at hand when the American Indian shall have his day in court through the help of the women of America. . . .

"Wardship is no substitute for *American citizenship*, therefore we seek his enfranchisement."

As the years passed, the pioneer women grew into proud home-owners, many of them subject to a rigid Puritan regime under which even expressions of affection were regarded as sinful. Their heroic heritage led them to stand beside their men in the period of rebellion against the tyranny of the rulers of England. In that acute crisis in American life which led to the Revolution, the women became real leaders. Three hundred women in Boston, as early as 1770, refused to use any tea shipped from England and helped to unload the famous cargo of tea into Boston Harbor. We feel proud that some of these women were our direct ancestors.

Outstanding revolutionary women wrote and agitated in behalf of the struggle for liberty. During the boycott against British goods, crowds of women at times laid rough hands on the Tories who were selling such goods. There are stories from that exciting period of how Tories were tarred and feathered and ridden on rails by crowds of incensed women.

Some of the women fought at the side of their men all through the Revolutionary War. One distinguished woman, Deborah Sampson, from Plymouth, Massachusetts, fought all through the Revolution disguised in a man's uniform.

Martha, wife of George Washington, encouraged him throughout the darkest years of the war. John Adams' wife, Abigail, in reply to a letter from her husband informing her of the preparations for declaring independence, wrote:

"This intelligence will make a plain path for you although a dangerous one. I could not join today with the petitions of our worthy pastor for reconciliation between our

no longer parent State—but Tyrant State—and these colonies. Let us separate. They are unworthy to be our brethren. Let us renounce them, and instead of supplication as formerly for their 'peace and happiness,' let us beseech the Almighty to blast their councils and bring to naught all their devices."

The New York Tribune, during Independence Day celebrations in 1875, commented on this letter:

"Here was a Declaration of Independence preceding by seven months that which has become so famous, and it was signed by a woman."

It was a woman, Betsy Ross, who designed the flag of our country.

The American mothers of the Revolution we shall always remember as bearing the standards and ideals of their forefathers from other lands. The brave colonial mothers forged for the generations of daughters of America an ancestry of democracy. This heritage bore a rich harvest in the years after the Revolution.

WOMEN IN THE CAUSE OF ABOLITION

While the colonies had secured their independence from British oppression, they had a slavery of a kind very hard to overcome on their own shores. While the struggle of the people obtained a Bill of Rights, the rights of citizenship were not extended to women and to the Indians. And the Negroes, who had been taken in slavery, stolen from Africa, brought to this country in slave-ships, and then bought and sold as chattels, of course had no vote.

Prior to and during the Civil War days, great tasks were performed by our mothers, who were stirred by the issue of slavery. It was a woman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, aroused the na-

tion and the world in behalf of the enslaved Negro population.

Throughout Pennsylvania and other areas, Quaker women gave aid to the slaves in flight to the North. Most of the older leaders of the woman suffrage movement had been active in the anti-slavery crusades—reformers like Frances Willard, whose statue now stands in the Hall of Fame in the United States capital; the orator Mary Livermore, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Among the Negro people emerged heroines such as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, who devoted their lives to the cause of their people and who afterwards helped *all* women in the early days of the women's suffrage movement. Harriet Tubman was known to the slaves as the "Moses of her People." Risking her life, she made repeated trips into the depths of the slave territory and assisted some three hundred slaves to find freedom beyond the Mason-Dixon line.

Side by side with the cause of freedom for the slaves went the struggle for citizenship for women. It took courage in those days even to speak out against black slavery or to advance a proposal that women should have equal rights. Often imprisonment followed meetings held against black slavery or for women's suffrage.

That women were bound to the cause of the Negro people by common ties of oppression was shown by the development of the women's suffrage movement side by side with the movement for granting the right to vote for Negroes in the days following the Civil War. The Reconstruction legislatures in the South, composed of Negroes and poor whites,

granted civil liberties to Negroes and carried out other progressive acts, such as the foundation of a public school system. These liberties and rights came to an end with the forcible termination of the Reconstruction period.

The Reconstruction legislatures were also aware of the needs of women, as is shown by the fact that legislative measures in their interest were passed by these bodies. For example, the inheritance laws were modified so as not to be unjust to women as in the past, and divorce laws were passed as some measure of protection to wives. These facts should serve to answer those who slander the Negro people by alleging that freedom for Negroes is a menace to Southern white womanhood. It was when Negroes sat in the highest legislative bodies of the South that these reforms in the interest of Southern white womanhood, as well as Negro womanhood, were passed.

The first Negro ever to be nominated for the Vice Presidency of the United States was the great abolitionist, Frederick Douglass. The famous woman's rights leader, Victoria Woodhull, was the Presidential candidate on the same ticket, that of the League for Equal Rights, in 1872.

It was the revolutionary peak following the Civil War, which freed and enfranchised the slaves and extended American democracy to the highest point ever achieved, that gave rise both to the first national trade union movement and to the movement for woman suffrage. Just as the most advanced women were conscious of their common ties with the Negro people, so were many of them conscious of their ties with labor, as evi-

denced by the membership of American women in the First International and by the fact that Frances Willard, some years before her death, joined the Knights of Labor. Labor, in its turn, was conscious of the need of supporting many of the demands of progressive women, as shown by resolutions which its organizations passed.

CHAMPIONS OF WOMAN'S RIGHTS

Lucy Stone was perhaps the most outstanding champion of woman's rights. She was born in 1818, the eighth of nine children. Her mother, when told the baby was a girl, said, "Oh dear, I'm sorry it is a girl; a woman's life is so hard." She had milked eight cows the night before the child was born. Lucy Stone's daughter, Alice Stone Blackwell, still active in the progressive movement, and now living in Boston, states in a remarkable biography of her mother:

"No one could foresee that the little girl just born was destined to make life less hard for all the generations of little girls that were to follow."

Those who devoted their lives to the cause of woman's rights form a long honor role of women—Frances Willard, Mary Livermore, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Carrie Chapman Catt, and others.

Well do I remember going to jail in Washington after demonstrations in front of the United States Capitol during Inauguration Week for President Wilson. The day after the inauguration, large crowds of women formed an organized and impressive parade. Thousands of noted women came from all over the country to protest against their continued slavery. The marshal of the day was a young woman who seemed like a flame of

inspiration to all of us, both young and old—Inez Mulholland. She rode a magnificent horse up and down the line of march to protect the women from the crowd that crushed upon us. The Chief of Police refused protection and we were at the mercy of the mob, inspired by reaction, which insulted and beat us. Our only defense was the women marshals on horseback beside Inez. We saw women, some of them wives of Congressmen, keeping the mobsters at bay with their riding whips. It was a remarkable sight—American women united to seek political freedom.

Many years of struggle have also been spent in the effort to obtain equal rights for women to enter the professions and to secure equal pay for equal work. This is a task which has still not been won in its entirety.

It was this movement which inspired the formation of such organizations as the League of Business and Professional Women. Although a conservative organization, which unfortunately is championing the so-called "Equal Rights" Amendment that would destroy special legislative protection for women in industry, it has often been active in opposing discriminatory actions against women in business and professional life.

Those few women leaders of the early movement for woman suffrage who still live continue their activity in the cause of woman's rights. Carrie Chapman Catt, at eighty, is awake to the dangers for the working women today lurking in such bills before Congress as the "Equal Rights" Amendment to the Constitution, which, under the guise of granting "equal" rights, would abolish all special legislative protection to women.

Many of the daughters of those pioneers of woman's rights are also active today. Alice Stone Blackwell, now eighty-two, is a worthy daughter of her distinguished mother. Her father, Henry Blackwell, and his sisters were earnest advocates of the movement to secure higher education for women. Their championship of this cause opened the way for women in the medical professions. Alice Stone Blackwell, together with Ellen Hayes, professor of astronomy at Wellesley College, were among the first members and active workers in the International Labor Defense; and when Sacco and Vanzetti were executed, Ellen Hayes walked on the picket line around the State House until she was arrested. The morning after the execution, one hundred and sixty men and women were held for trial and fined. Seven men and women would not pay the fine and their trial came to court the following winter. Among them were Edna St. Vincent Millay, Ellen Hayes, William Patterson, Katherine Huntington and myself. We were finally freed by a jury trial. Many other women helped in the historic fight for the two labor martyrs, as they have likewise for Mooney, Billings, MacNamara, Matthew Schmidt, the Scottsboro boys, Angelo Herndon and many others.

It is only natural that among the progressive forces of today we find the direct descendants of the women pioneers for the enfranchisement of their sex, for the liberation of the Negro people, and for the defense of all persecuted champions of liberty.

WOMEN LABOR STALWARTS

The period immediately after the Civil War and Lincoln's death, so full

of changing industrial and political conditions, saw the development of the use of woman and child labor in the factories. This awakened many women in the United States to the need of industrial organization for women. The textile unions, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union, etc., came into existence after many bitter struggles. The women workers and wives of the workers should be remembered for their militancy throughout our labor history.

The copper miners of Calumet, Houghton, and Hancock, Michigan, will never forget the beautiful Socialist woman leader of the great Calumet copper strike of 1913, facing the soldiers fearlessly, always carrying a huge American flag at the head of the picket line. She was the daughter of a miner and a heroic daughter of America. Her name was Annie Clemence. Those of us who lived and worked with these militant strike leaders remember the heroism of the mothers, wives and daughters of the great Western Federation of Miners who helped to carry on that copper strike for many months. We remember their patient, persistent marching—their resistance to those of their priests who went from house to house pleading with them to send their husbands back to work. All this heroism was unheralded and unsung. Not least among the great gifts these workers have bestowed upon America are their children—men like former Congressman John Bernard, born and raised in the iron and copper country.

Mother Mary Jones, who fought so valiantly for many years in the long, bitter struggles of the miners, is remembered with love and honor by the

men and women in the labor movement today. Side by side with her in our memories stand Fannie Sellens, martyr of the steel strike of 1919, brutally murdered; and the youngest and loveliest of all the heroines of labor, the woman who led the Gastonia strike in 1929, always singing songs of victory, shot down by hired thugs as she sang—Ella May Wiggins.

The miners and the labor and war prisoners still remember with love and respect their lawyer and champion, Caroline Lowe, who died only recently in Pittsburg, Kansas. During the days of the World War, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and I were active with her in the leadership of the workers' defense movement. In those days, Kate Richards O'Hare spent a year in the Missouri State Prison for her convictions. There were many effective women orators for the Socialist Party at that time, such as Anna Maley who was the first candidate for governor on the Socialist ticket, running in the State of Washington. Bertha Maley of New York was the Secretary of the Rand School, and was under fire during the entire war period. In the I.W.W., there was Dr. Marie Equi, who spent a year in prison. Louise Olivier wrote a pungent pamphlet against conscription and was sent to a federal prison, the state prison of Colorado being used for that purpose. During my prison visits, I tried to see her and Comrade Flora from Texas, who is still active in the peace movement; but they were held incommunicado.

We do not forget those who have gone from life—Margaret Prevy of Akron, the loyal fighting friend of Debs and the labor movement; Rose Pastor Stokes, our beautiful comrade who died for the cause; Ida Crouch

Hazlett, a staunch sympathizer of our Party; and many, many more.

During all this time many other women outside the labor movement were working among girls in industry, the professions and business—such women as the famous Jane Addams, founder of Hull House in Chicago. Thousands of women followed her example in settlement houses throughout the country, and in other organizations, such as the Y.W.C.A.

Among the women of today who are outstanding in their devotion to the democratic aspirations of our people, there is the wife of our President, Eleanor Roosevelt. By her speeches and writings and by her championship of progressive movements of great significance for the cause of democracy and peace, she is exerting a notable influence upon the American people as a whole. Of especial importance has been her devotion to the needs of youth and her concern for the Negro people, dramatically evidenced by her stand in regard to the recent discrimination against Marian Anderson by the D.A.R. and by her participation in the American Youth Congress.

Our Party inherits the traditions of all the struggles for women's rights throughout our history. Among our members are to be found women who first came into the progressive movement during some of these great battles of the past. They symbolize the fact that the Communist Party is working to eradicate the very roots of the special oppression to which woman is subjected under capitalism. The finest type of progressive womanhood, working with devotion for the rights of labor, woman, the Negro people, for all mankind, is to be found today within our Party.

However, not nearly enough women

have come to us from the older political and industrial movements. Their children? To a far greater degree. But not the army of youth that we should have, and *will* have when our young people are really taught to understand the dangers we face today, the need for the broadest movement to stop the advance of fascism, and their responsibility to the people to help build such a movement for democracy.

My own life has led me all the way from work in the early movement for woman suffrage to work in the Communist Party from the time of its formation until the present. It is a joy during all this time to have known so many glorious women, all working for a better **society**.

The building of the democratic front in our country draws upon the energies of ever-growing numbers of American women. In the vast new labor movement of our country, the working class women are emerging as a strong force in the women's progressive movements. The twentieth anniversary of our Party should be an occasion for us Communist women to intensify our work of uniting the vast majority of women for the great cause of democracy and peace.

We have before us the great achievements of the women of the Soviet Union, where, for the first time in history, womanhood has been completely liberated from all the shackles of the past and where we see fully that the highest development of democracy involves the complete abolition of all forms of the subjugation of woman. This realization, brought to the millions of American women, will inspire them to greater activities for the preservation and extension of the democratic rights in our own country today.

FORERUNNERS

(To Commemorate the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the First International
and the Twentieth Anniversary of the Communist Party of the
United States of America.)

BY V. J. JEROME

IN 1881 Uriah S. Stephens, founder of the Knights of Labor, stated in answer to a question:

"In the course of my travels through Europe some thirty years ago, I made the acquaintance of a certain London tailor by the name of Eccarius. Later on, when I organized the Clothing Cutters' Union of Philadelphia, I received from time to time from the same tailor quantities of agitation pamphlets, among them this *Manifesto*. I had never read the pamphlet before, but I found it contained pretty much everything I had thought out myself, and I used it largely in the preparation of the Declaration of Principles of the Order." *

Stephens' allusions were to Johann Georg Eccarius, for many years a co-worker with Marx and Engels, and for a time Secretary of the General Council of the First International; and to the *Communist Manifesto*.

This obscure statement holds cap­suled an important truth of history—the great principle of proletarian internationalism, the indigenous character of Marxism in the labor movement of every country. We see in this the attunement of Communist thought, worked out into a science on European soil, to conditions in the

United States, and American labor's natural responsiveness, on the basis of its own class experiences, to the Marxian teachings. The class struggle, and the historic role of the proletariat in it, had only to be pointed out to be recognized—here as there. Marxism is no more alien to the United States because of the historically conditioned German origin of its founders, or the Russian origin of Lenin and Stalin, than is the American Declaration of Independence because of the British origin of John Locke and the French origin of the Encyclopedists.

Today every Munich-man and Fifth-Columnist within our gates cries "foreign Bolshevism," "Moscow gold." These demagogues would have the American people forget the long history and rich traditions of Marxian thought and work on American soil, and what our country has gained from the international relations of the American working class parties and trade union organizations, since the middle of the past century. On the twentieth anniversary of our Party's founding let us demonstrate the role of Communism, in our land and internationally, as the native leader and unifier everywhere of all peoples in their titanic

* Morris Hillquit, *History of Socialism in the United States*, p. 291.