

Theme V: Organisation and Forms of Action

Under this theme 14 papers were discussed in 6 Workshop sessions. Most of the papers provided first-hand accounts of collective action by women, often in the most desperate economic, social and physical conditions. One of the starkest contrasts of the Conference was the difference between these self-determining practices of women and programmes for women. An important result of this was that the general tone in which specific issues were discussed was very much more positive than is often the case. Much less was heard about the difficulties of organising women than the very constructive and creative ways in which women do organise themselves. The following were the main areas of discussion:

- the barriers to consciousness and conscientisation;
- techniques and methodology developed to enable women to communicate with each other about their experiences and to facilitate the interpretation of these experiences;
- the relation between women's political action and other forms of political action;
- the absence in class organisations of a commitment to women's issues and the reasons why women's demands are never a central part of their political platform;
- appropriate forms of organisation for women, and, in particular, the recurring problem of the advantages and disadvantages of separatism;
- the possibility of united action for women across class divides in Third World nations;
- the theoretical bases to the forms and sites of action within specific situations for women;
- the potentiality and actuality of the cooption of women's issues, organisations and action, to serve other ends;
- the role of research in relation to action, from the point of view of both Third World and First World researchers.