Duplication of effort is the stated objection; the real explanations, perhaps, go deeper. Often when these women, with their bottled-up needs for expression, are let loose on an organization, they show an almost breathtaking eagerness for activity. Again, this kind of super-charged enthusiasm is threatening to men who have enough problems as it is.

These women, normally shy, even tongue-tied, in mixed meetings, very often lose all speech inhibitions in women’s groups. On such occasions, they may even be more outspoken than their mates.

Also, because their approach to the labor union is less immediate, practical, job-centered than their husbands', they appear to be interested in a broader range of subjects. The underdeveloped nations, for example, are objects of real concern to the union wife — a product perhaps of her generous supply of “pity and sympathy for the unfortunate.”

The final and most dangerous pitfall for the union wives’ organizations is that, under pressure, these groups may become involved in local union elections. The result: headaches for the local and a misdirection of purpose for the wives.

None of these excuses are sufficient to justify the union’s failure to mobilize the support and the enormous political potential of the union wife. The middle-class wife, through her frantic club activity, is an indispensable political support for her husband. Politically and otherwise, the workingman’s wife is a cipher — a lonely, frightened, unhappy, frustrated cipher — and will remain so until the union, or some other group, decides that her potentials are worth exploiting.

On the political front, the Women’s Activities Department of the AFL-CIO seems to be making some forward movement. On the research front, perhaps now that the market sociologists have begun to dig into the workingman’s wife, other more disinterested scholars will continue the search.

---

FINISHING SCHOOL for PICKETS

by Howard Zinn

Atlanta, Ga.

ONE QUIET afternoon some weeks ago, with the dogwood on the Spelman College campus newly bloomed and the grass close-cropped and fragrant, an attractive, tawny-skinned girl crossed the lawn to her dormitory to put a notice on the bulletin board. It read: Young Ladies Who Can Picket Please Sign Below.

The notice revealed, in its own quaint language, that within the dramatic revolt of Negro college students in the South today another phenomenon has been developing. This is the upsurge of the young, educated Negro woman against the generations-old advice of her elders: be nice, be well-man-nered and ladylike, don’t speak loudly, and don’t get into trouble. On the campus of the nation’s leading college for Negro young women — pious, sedate, encrusted with the traditions of gentility and modern social consciousness happened to develop also, they were, to an alarming extent, by-products.

This is changing. It would be an exaggeration to say: “You can always tell a Spelman girl — she’s under arrest.” But the statement has a measure of truth. Spelman girls have participated strongly in all of the major actions undertaken by students of the Atlanta University Center in recent months. They have also added a few touches of their own and made white Atlanta, long proud that its nice Negro college girls were staying “in their place,” take startled notice. A few weeks ago a Spelman student, riding downtown on the bus, took a seat up front. (This is still a daring maneuver, for in spite of a court decision desegregating the buses, most Negroes stay in the rear.) The bus driver muttered something unpleasant, and a white woman sitting near-

HOWARD ZINN, author of La-Guardia in Congress (Cornell U. Press), which was a winner of the Beveridge Award of the American Historical Association in 1958, is chairman of the Department of History and Social Science at Spelman College.

August 6, 1960
by waved her hand and said, "Oh, she's prob'ly goin' downtown to start another one o' them demonstrations."

The reputedly sweet and gentle Spelman girls were causing trouble even before the recent wave of sit-ins cracked the wall of legalism in the structure of desegregation strategy. Three years ago, they aroused the somnolent Georgia Legislature into near-panic by attempting to sit in the white section of the gallery. They were finally shunted into the colored area, but returned for the next legislative session. This time they refused to sit segregated and remained on their feet, in a pioneering show of non-violent resistance, until ordered out of the chamber.

THE MASSIVE, twelve-foot stone wall, barbed-wire fence and magnolia trees that encircle the Spelman campus have always formed a kind of chastity belt around the student body, not only confining young women to a semi-monastic life in order to uphold the ruling matriarchs' conception of Christian morality, but "protecting" the students from contact with the cruel outside world of segregation. Inside the domain of the Atlanta University Center, with its interracial faculty, occasional white students and frequent white visitors, there flourished a microcosm of the future, where racial barriers did not exist and one could almost forget this was the deep South. But this insulation, while protecting the University Center's island of integration, also kept the city of Atlanta for many years from feeling the barbed resentment of Negro students against segregation. Spelman girls, more sheltered than women at the other colleges, were among the first to leave the island and to begin causing little flurries of alarm in the segregated world outside.

Even before bus segregation in the city was declared illegal, some Spelman girls rode up front and withstood the glares and threats of fellow passengers and the abuse of the bus driver. Once, a white man pulled a knife from his pocket and waved it at a Spelman sophomore sitting opposite him in a front seat. She continued to sit there until she came to her stop, and then got off. Spelman students, along with others, showed up in the main Atlanta library in sufficient numbers last year to worry the city administration into a decision to admit Negroes there. The girls spent hours between classes at the county courthouse, urging Negroes to register for voting. They made a survey of the Atlanta airport in connection with a suit to desegregate the airport restaurant, and a Spelman student took the witness stand at the trial to help win the case.

Such activities may bring bewilderment to the conservative matriarchy which has played a dominant role in the college's history, but they are nothing short of infuriating to the officialdom of the State of Georgia, ensconced inside the gold-domed Capitol just a few minutes' drive from the Negro colleges of the Atlanta University Center. Georgia's bespectacled but still near-sighted Governor Vandiver, who resembles a pleasant and studious junior executive until he begins to speak, began his current burst of hysteria when student leaders at the six Negro colleges put their heads together and produced a remarkable document which was placed as a full-page ad in the Atlanta newspapers on March 9 (and reprinted by The Nation on April 2). The document, entitled "An Appeal for Human Rights," catalogued Negro grievances with irritating specificity and promised to "use every legal and non-violent means at our disposal" to end segregation. Vandiver's reaction was immediate: the appeal was "anti-American" and "obviously not written by students." Furthermore, the Governor said: "It did not sound like it was prepared in any Georgia school or college; nor, in fact, did it read like it was written in this country." Actually, a Spelman student had written the first rough draft, and student leaders from the other five colleges collaborated in preparing the finished product.

ON THE sixth day after publication of the appeal, at 11:30 on a Tuesday morning, several hundred students from the Atlanta University Center staged one of the South's most carefully planned and efficiently executed sit-in demonstrations at ten different eating places, including restaurants in the State Capitol, the county courthouse and City Hall. Among the demonstrators were several carloads of Spelman students, riding into town that morning without the knowledge of deans or presidents or faculty, to participate in the sit-ins, tangle with the police and end up in prison.

Of the seventy-seven students arrested, fourteen were Spelmanites; and all but one of the fourteen were girls from the deep South, from places like Bennettsville, South Carolina; Bainbridge, Georgia; Ocala, Florida — the Faulknerian small towns of traditional Negro subservience.

The Atlanta Constitution and the Journal noted the remarkable discipline and orderliness of the demonstration. Perhaps their training came in handy; in prison, Spelman girls were perfect ladies. A Spelman honor student sat behind bars quietly reading C. S. Lewis' The Screwtape Letters, while flashbulbs popped around her.

The State of Georgia, however, reacted with a special vindictiveness. To the seventy-seven sit-inners, the Fulton County prosecutor has added the names of the six students who wrote and signed "An Appeal for Human Rights." All eighty-three are facing triple charges of breaching the peace, intimidating restaur-
Like many Negro campuses in the South, Spelman is losing its provincial air. This spring, the first white students came — five girls from Midwestern colleges who are the advance guard of a long-term exchange program. In the past few months there has been a sudden burgeoning of contact, both intellectual and social, with students from the half-dozen white colleges in Atlanta. Liberal Southern whites have joined the faculties of Spelman and Morehouse colleges. This growing interracial contact is helping to break down the mixture of awe-suspicion-hostility with which deep-South Negroes generally regard whites. And for Spelman, unexpressed but obvious pressure to adopt the manners and courtesies of white middle-class society breaks down as Spelman girls get a close look at how whites really behave.

THE NEW Spelman girl is having an effect on faculty and administrators. Many who were distressed and critical when they first learned their sweet young things were sitting behind bars, later joined in the applause of the Negro community and the nation at large. Spelman's President Albert Manley, who inherited the traditions of conservatism and moderation when he took the helm seven years ago, has responded with cautious but increasing encouragement to the boldness of his young women. At the college commencement exercises this year, Manley startled the audience by departing from the printed program and the parade of parrading platiudes with a vigorous statement of congratulations to the senior class for breaking the "docile generation" label with its sit-ins, demonstrations and picketing.

Four years ago, a girl in my Western Civilization course spoke candidly and bitterly about her situation and that of her classmates. "When I was little," she said, "my mother told me: remember, you've got two strikes against you — you're colored, and you're a woman; one more strike and you're out — so be careful." The student continued: "That's the trouble with all these Spelman girls. They're careful. They hardly utter a peep. They do everything right, and obey the rules, and they'll be fine ladies some day. But I don't want to be that kind of a lady. I'm leaving at the end of the semester and going back up North."

I don't know where that student is today. She would have graduated with this class on Commencement Day, with students who marched and picketed and sat-in and were arrested, and will soon come up for trial. I wish she had stayed to see.

LETTERS

(Continued from inside front cover)

anti-segregationists," perhaps and sees those who joined more recently when the struggle was less unpopular as the "normal" ones, he is indeed being far more revealing of his own attitudes than the events he tries to interpret.

Finally, his report on the activities around the tragic Chessman case is simply false. For months before most students were even aware of Chessman, thousands of people "over thirty-five" not only understood what was at stake, but took action. . . . Far from being a movement started by students, it was one which was brought to them, and which they joined with heartening determination in the latter days of the unsuccessful campaign. To deny this fact in order to prove what cannot possibly be proved, namely, his theory of spontaneity, is to do inestimable disservice to the principles Mr. Rexroth proclaims his own.

In your introduction to his article, you describe Mr. Rexroth as "...one of the earliest 'senior' supporters of the Beat movement ... [who] has since become, in certain respects, one of its sternest critics." Could it be that now, with the fast-receding sound of the Beat, Mr. Rexroth is attempting to transfer his "senior support," or father-image, from Beantnik to Youthnik?

With a reservation of course: the movement must be "spontaneous." As a theory of history it may be challenged, but does it not have an even greater virtue? Isn't it "safe?" One can't be accused of any kind of association, since spontaneity is related to nothing — except, of course, the poetic spirit. Ah, safety at last for all — even for "senior supporters."

Lester Cole

Los Angeles, Calif.