

APPENDIX X

WASHINGTON WOMEN'S LIBERATION STATEMENT ON BIRTH CONTROL PILLS

The furor and confusion about the pill which has erupted during the last 2 months has made one thing very clear. Over the past 10 years women throughout the world have been taking a pill about which they knew little or nothing.

The idea for Women's Hearings on the Pill grew out of Senator Gaylord Nelson's hearings which were supposed to deal with the pill and informed consent, that is, whether or not doctors told women about the possible risks they were taking in choosing the pill as their form of contraception. Weeks before his hearings members of Women's Liberation tried to contact him to talk to him about the organization and content of these hearings. He was at that time, too busy to talk with us, as were his assistants who were doing the administrative and organizational work for the hearings.

During the first round of the Nelson hearings members of Women's Liberation rose up to question the way in which the hearings were being conducted as well as the issues that were being covered. In spite of the fact that it is women who are taking the pill and taking the risks, it was the legislators, the doctors and the drug company's representatives, all men of course, who were testifying and dissecting women as if they were no more important than the laboratory animals they work with every day.

As one of the doctors said: "In an age in which preventive medicine has high priority it is distressing to have women exploited as guinea pigs in order to establish the absolute certitude of the causal relationship of the pill to cancer and other complications. Though it must be admitted that women make superb guinea pigs—they don't cost anything, feed themselves, clean their own cages, pay for their own pills and remunerate the clinical observer."

The pill has been falsely projected as the only effective safe means of birth control and the answer to the control of the population explosion. We think these projections are misleading. The media, the drug industry and the medical profession has advanced the idea that the pill has lead to the sexual liberation of women. But is this really true? Families, they maintain, will be smaller, but the women's place is still in the home. And it is still women who carry the primary burden of contraception and the full responsibility for child rearing.

The pill has not significantly lowered the birth rate and it has not become the panacea for population control. The lowest birth rate in this country occurred in the 1930's, long before the advent of the pill, (implying the importance of social and economic factors). Most proponents of the pill, including the FDA's Advisory Committee, say that the benefits outweigh the risks, but the benefits they are talking about relate to the generalized social philosophy of population control and the risks are taken by us, specific individual women. The only countries that have succeeded in controlling their population growth are Japan and Bulgaria, and this through legalized abortion and not the pill.

If one takes the time to survey the literature in the field, one can see that most of the positive reports on the pill come from drug company sponsored studies, and those adverse reports, which people like Dr. Guttmacher are doing so much to discredit, come from researchers unconnected in any way with the drug companies.

It is not our mission to have all women on the pill discard it and change to another form of contraception. Our mission, if such it can be called, is to rise up, as women, and demand our human rights. We will no longer let doctors treat us as objects to be manipulated at will. Together we will ask for and demand explanations and humane treatment by our doctors and if they are too busy to give this to us we will insist that the medical profession must meet our needs. We will no longer tolerate intimidation by white coated gods, antiseptically directing our lives.