

OPINION *and* COMMENTARY

Readers' *thoughts*

Feminists overlook the big picture

Thanks for the refreshingly candid and courageous editorial by Cynthia Scott, "Stop harassing Green Party supporters," [MWP Nov. 8-21]. In it, Felicity Hill is utterly right when she says the women's movement must hold presidential candidate Al Gore accountable after granting him such solid electoral support on economic and other issues, not just reproductive rights. Indeed, it's hard to understand how he and President Bill Clinton have won such unqualified feminist backing when they have done so much harm to poor and working women, especially through welfare repeal.

As Frances Fox Piven, Barbara Ehrenreich, the American Friends Service Committee, Milwaukee's Welfare Warriors and others have shown, this highly touted reform—while surely reducing the welfare roles—has converted untold thousands of former recipients into a vast pool of cheap, available female labor. Many women have been forced out of college or vocational school. In West Virginia, 80 percent of former welfare recipients annually make \$10,000 or less, almost half of whom try to exist on incomes below \$5,000. Food shelf and shelter use rises, one in five children nationwide remains in poverty (42 percent of black kids!) some 45 million citizens have no health insurance, and about one third of the work force earns an unlivable wage. Yet Gore never mentioned poor people or poverty in his three

debates, and he proposed only a laughably inadequate \$1 increase in the minimum wage.

Low pay. Hugely insufficient affordable housing. Lousy health care. Poor-bashing by police, governments, and media. The savage inequalities of wealth-based school funding. Legalized restraints on union organizing that keep women and minority workers from protecting themselves and improving their lives. These are the realities that directly and powerfully impact multitudes of women and children, but that most mainstream politicians and feminists don't address.

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