

# New Ways of Keeping Women Out of Paid Labor

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I began this paper to find out what the current situation of women in the paid labor force was. At the outset of the investigation I knew women were discriminated against in the paid labor force but I figured there must be *some* good reasons why. I don't exactly mean good reasons, because I feel that probably all the reasons have their basis somehow or other in unfairness, but just that maybe at this moment in history it could be said that women in general are not on a competitive par with men in the paid labor force. But then again what does women in general mean? I've always felt on a competitive par with the men I've worked with—as a matter of fact, if I could be sure none of my bosses would ever read this, I would say there were times I felt on more than just a competitive par.

I tend to feel on the defensive when confronted with those stories of so-and-so's sister-in-law who makes so much more money than her husband, or the woman supervisor on the job who's in charge of 'all those men', or the promotion of a woman executive to yet another higher level—the exceptions which disprove the rule. Of course afterwards I always say to myself why shouldn't they—but periodically that exception ploy does catch me up. I understand that it's supposed to calm my basic feelings of any wrongdoings, and at the same time stop me from talking about it since the opposite can be demonstrated, but it's the intimidating aspect I trip up on—maybe it is me, I think, maybe I'm not trying hard enough.

Basically I identify with my strong Aunt Hilda who owned her own business and periodically lectured, "You can achieve any damn thing in this world you want, if only you want it badly enough." Also I like to hear things like, "If they won't let you in because you're female, simply buy the damned place," said by Jane Trahey, advertising executive, who subsequently did just that. Of course, I don't have that kind of money—and while I love Aunt Hilda's spirit I haven't exactly found that what she said was true. As a matter of fact it's against most of my experience and yet I keep feeling a pull in this direction. Sometimes by starting off with the basic assumption that of course women have to try harder, I concoct some theory or other about how most women try averagely (taking into consideration of course their other burdens and responsibilities) and then some

women try harder, and that's why some women make it and most don't. Of course I never know which category to put myself in and it becomes very tedious trying to decide the outer limits of what I mean by "trying harder."

All this is in the way of showing why I'm the perfect candidate to research this topic since I obviously haven't got an idea or feeling on this issue which is clear and not immediately contradicted by another idea or feeling. And so I started looking for the reasons why.

## FALSE IMPRESSIONS FROM THE MEDIA

I recognize confusion as a tactic and an effective way of paralyzing the opposition. I myself was confused. The information I had taken in from the usual media and newspaper sources was a mass of unresolved contradictions.

One of the most common ploys used by the media is to state the problem as if it had long ago been solved, making it look like more is changing for working women than really is. An article in the *New York Times* starts off, "Midtown Manhattan, already accustomed to women traffic officers. . . ." Since when has Midtown Manhattan been already accustomed to women traffic officers? I frequent that area often and I've seen two or three women traffic officers at the most, and only recently. This article incidentally is titled "Midtown Mounted Police Get First Woman Rider." It turns out this woman rider is a member of the mounted auxiliary police force—a volunteer group which is not paid for its services.

If there is a legitimate story about a woman or women reaching executive levels at jobs they get paid for, the papers blow it all out of proportion and make it seem like we're taking over the industry. Headline: "In the Paperback Field, It's Getting to Be a Woman's World"—the article is about three women, three women in the whole paperback publishing industry, who have recently achieved executive stature.

The newspapers are flooded with plea articles in search of talented women. Headlines: "U.S. Want Ad: Talented Women" with cries from prospective employers who ". . . have been tearing their hair; they just can't find the qualified women." I would have real trouble understanding why they were having such difficulty unless, of course, they weren't really looking, which is what a number of women heads of management search agencies are reporting. There are loopholes. I've noticed that the wording in these plea articles is consistent. They never say we're looking for a qualified woman such and such; they say, for example: "A



New York management consultant firm has been looking for women in the \$30,000 to \$40,000 salary range." Now looking for qualified women management consultants is one thing; looking for women in the \$30,000 to \$40,000 salary range is quite another. How many women in the world are in the \$30,000 to \$40,000 salary range! There is a concept of a ceiling price on women's financial worth. From Caroline Bird's book, *Born Female*: "An executive recruiter reports that the managers of a manufacturer in New Jersey saved money by hiring a woman to serve as their chief financial officer at \$9,000 a year. When she left, they had to pay \$20,000 to get a man to do her job. When he left, they went back to a woman at \$9,000 and they then replaced her with a man at \$18,000. According to the recruiter, all four employees were good at the job." Of course, the Midge Deeters will say, why didn't the women insist on \$20,000 also? But it seems pretty clear that companies feel that if you have to pay those prices you damn well better get a man.

I began to notice an approach of concentrating on what women supposedly didn't have to "make it" in the paid labor force which successfully avoids both the question of whether in fact having it makes any difference for women, and more importantly the fact that a good many women do have it. For instance I came across articles in *my* research like "Employment and Career Status of Women Psychologists" by Helen S. Astin, in which she examined the career status of employed academic women psychologists and found that even when women hold doctorates, or receive their degrees from top-rated departments, or publish as much as men, they are still paid lower salaries than the men and receive less recognition in the form of high rank and tenure (*American Psychologist*, 5/72). Yet the flavor of a good many newspaper articles about this topic of discrimination focuses on *our* supposedly new-found motivation. Headlines: "Women With New Consciousness Strive to Advance" is an article focusing on our breakthroughs in consciousness as if that were the chief obstacle barring our advance in the paid labor force. Were the women psychologists with all their credentials not striving to advance?

So while on the one hand the media is pushing the unavailability of qualified women, on the other it floods us with tales of women "firsts," just to show us how much progress we've made. Of course they never report whether there are any seconds or thirds, nor how many of these "firsts" are a matter of regaining ground lost in the past, but it looks good and probably scares men anyway. Eleanor Simpson, the *Times* reports, is the first and only woman police commissioner in the State and you know what—she doesn't get paid a cent! "I don't get a penny," she said, "but I do get a shield and a chance to meet a lot of nice people." What male police commissioner doesn't get paid?

Every era of agitation from women brings with it some temporary strides in the labor force. We suddenly start hearing about all the 'women firsts' who are allowed in previously all-male fields. Some women are allowed in previously exclusively male occupations, for one reason or another, and some make great contributions in their new fields. Then the pressure dies down, not many seconds follow the firsts, the women, and more importantly their

contributions, are forgotten. When the next era of agitation arrives we start off again as novices, without a history, without even a trace of our former contributions. This keeps people from knowing what women have actually done—again and again, and have already proved themselves able to do.

For instance we got our "first" woman airline pilot recently (*New York Times*, 6/10/73), even though sixty-six women were earning their living as aviators in 1930. But you see they mean she is the "first" woman airline pilot with a "major American passenger carrier," and no longer either. She got laid off six months later. How long will it be before we have our next "first" woman airline pilot?

And in 1974 we got our "first" two women miners, Anita Cherry and Diana Baldwin. But *The History of Woman Suffrage* says 7,000 women were engaged in mining interests in the 19th century. An article in the *Southern Patriot* (December, 1972) said, "That women can perform the tasks of a coal miner is without question. Since the beginnings of the use of coal in the Middle Ages until this century women have labored beside men in European coal mines (see Emile Zola's *Germinal* and Marx's *Das Capital* for detailed statistics). There are women alive today in West Virginia who worked in small 'family' mines during the lean years of the '50's and '60's. The argument is often advanced that technology now makes it possible for women to work in the mines but this ignores the fact that for centuries women have known how to handle the pick, shovel, and shot of the mines."

The *Times* (May 15, 1974) ran an article entitled, "Coal Miners Started the Strike—Then Their Women Took Over," which describes the aggressive, militant actions of the coal miners' wives in protecting their striking husbands' jobs against scabs. The *Times* says, "Although women on a labor picket line are nothing new, this is believed to be the first time in coal union history that women are so actively involved in a strike." But this is nonsense. It was Mary "Mother" Jones, a labor organizer for the Knights of Labor, who in the 1900's spent 50 years in the middle of the violent mine strikes of the era. During one strike she told the men to stay home and mind the children while she led a brigade of their mop-carrying wives to chase the scabs out of the mines. Here is a quote about coal miners' wives in Illinois in 1933 taken from a pamphlet entitled *What Have Women Done?* put together by the San Francisco Women's History Group: "Beaten with police clubs, gassed, shot down by militia, arrested, jailed, back on the picket line and jailed again, women workers have fought to the finish against gun thugs, company guards, coal and iron police, Ku Klux Klan gangsters, National Guardsmen—and all the other brutal representatives of organized capital." And the *Times* thinks this is another "first" for women.

The media phenomenon makes it look like more is happening—is changing for women—than really is. Even Herbert Stein, head of the Council of Economic Advisors had to admit this. "Given . . . rising work participation and a half dozen years of agitation [read Women's Liberation activities]," said Stein, "one might have guessed there would have been significant progress in employment for women outside the traditional female occupations. But on the



whole, there appears to have been very little change." (July, 1973)

Yet there is an onslaught of news coverage of women 'firsts' outside the traditionally female occupations—the first woman in the City's Housing Authority Police Department, the first N.Y. woman boxing judge, the first woman police officer to get assigned mounted patrol, the first women miners. While I'm sure the initial intent of such a thorough coverage is to impress upon us the recent flurry of activities and advancements surrounding women workers, it more accurately serves the purpose of enumerating for us all the jobs we've previously been restricted from.

**THINGS ARE GETTING WORSE, NOT BETTER**

From all these reports it's easy to get the false impression that steady progress is being made by women in the

labor market. I thought things were changing, what with the Women's Liberation Movement and its involvement with these very issues in the past few years. Certainly women's consciousness about working has changed enormously, women's participation in the work force continues to rise, (presently there are 35 million women working) and there has been an increase in the numbers of women attending professional schools. But when I looked at the statistics of the actual job situation for women—their low pay with respect to men and the all-pervasive job segregation—things hadn't really changed, not for the better anyway.

Since 1955 women's pay as a percentage of men's has been on the decline (figure 1). In 1955 women made 63.9% of men's salary; in 1972 women made 57.9% of men's salary, a decrease of 6%. This means we were actually closer to receiving equal pay 18 years ago than we are now, despite all the highly publicized equal pay and back pay cases.

Now some are arguing that this decline in women's wages relative to men can be explained by the tremendous increase in female employment during the sixties. The theory states that since the supply of women in the labor force increases, the demand for women in certain occupations decreases, thereby depressing their wages. Another version states that the large recent increase in female employment has resulted in large numbers of new inexperienced female workers, thereby lowering the wage scale for women as a whole compared to men. But such theories don't hold up, if you look at women's labor force participation pictured in figure 2. There was just as tremendous an increase in female employment during the fifties, yet women's salaries relative to men's hit an all time high in 1955.

Nearly 2/3 of all adults over the age of 16 living in poverty, in fact, are women. One out of every three families headed by a woman lives in poverty as compared with one out of every 14 families headed by a man. The poverty situation for women heads of households has been worsening also. In 1959, 28 out of every 100 families with children in poverty were headed by a woman. In 1969, the proportion had risen to 37 out of every 100 and today it's more than 40 out of 100.<sup>1</sup> But if half of all full-time working women are earning less than \$5,903 a year, any woman trying to raise a family on that salary alone would be in poverty.

Women workers were slightly more segregated in 1969 (68.4%) than they were in 1900 (66.9%) according to a 1969 study by Dr. Edward Gross\*, a Seattle sociologist. Further he found job segregation by sex more severe than racial segregation on the job. Dr. Gross said that men's occupations were getting tougher for women to enter, not easier. "Roughly speaking," he asserted, "men have become more hardnosed about letting women into their occupations from the professions on down, while women have become more permissive about including men."

For the most part the position of women workers in the

**MEDIAN EARNINGS OF FULL-TIME YEAR ROUND WOMEN WORKERS (as a % of men's)**

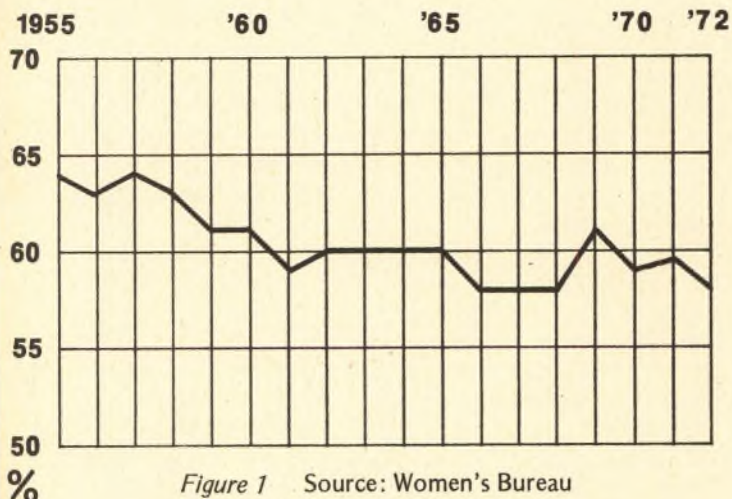


Figure 1 Source: Women's Bureau

**WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE (as a % of all workers)**

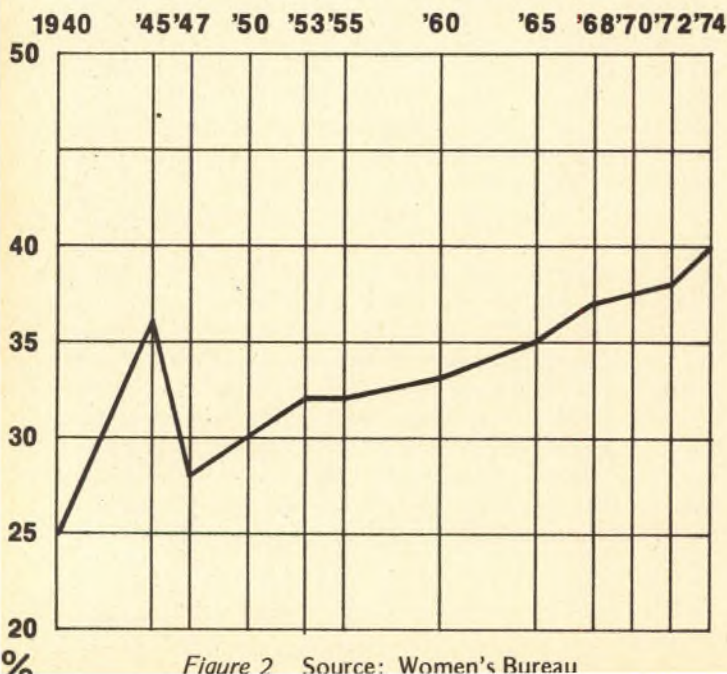


Figure 2 Source: Women's Bureau

<sup>1</sup> From the National Organization for Women on the Budget Control Act of 1973, Mary Vogel, 5/7/73.

\*Indicators of Trends in the Status of American Women, Abbott L. Ferris (ed.), Russell Sage Foundation, p. 115



segregated labor force has remained stationary; the only movement evidenced has been a circular one—men's jobs becoming women's and vice-versa—returning women quickly back to their all-female job compositions. The claim/accusation that women are invading men's jobs is false and there may even be a danger that the flow is going in the opposite direction. It may be men who are riding the wave created by women's militant efforts at breaking down sex barriers on the job, into new and expanding job opportunities and invading women's fields. In 1972, it was reported that the biggest break-throughs for men are coming in the telephone and airline industries, two major employers of women. The telephone company said anyone who picked up a telephone five years ago and dialed operator had one chance out of 100,000 of hearing a male voice. Today the chances are one out of 20. As an article in the *Times* about the increase of male operators (June 3, 1974) put it ". . . in this era of women's liberation . . . close to 7,000 American males have become telephone operators." And with the exception of Lou Scotto, a male operator who felt compelled to leave the job because as he put it, "I feel I'm less of a person because I have a woman's job," most of the male operators seemed content with their new jobs.

The *Times* article continues: "Last year AT&T and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reached an agreement over job discrimination whereby the company committed itself to hiring men to fill at least 10% of all new jobs as operators" but it makes no mention of what commitments were made to women. It cites the percentage increase of men into the formerly female job of operator but doesn't cite the percentage change for women into craft and management jobs, jobs formerly restricted exclusively to men. A widely published phone company ad in 1972 leaves the impression that the phone company is going full steam ahead in changing its policies for women. It shows new phone installers like Alana Mac Farlane perched naturally up on a telephone pole. But a closer look at ad's caption tells a different story. "She's *one* of our first women telephone installers. . . . We also have *several hundred* male operators (emphasis mine). And a policy that there are no all-male or all-female jobs at the phone company." Is letting one woman into a previously all-male field and several hundred men into a previously all-female field supposed to indicate progress? But more recently things are looking a little better there. In a 1975 information leaflet put out by the New York Telephone Company they state that there are "now more than 235 women in craft and management jobs" in Upstate New York and "over 200 Upstate males in such formerly 'female' jobs as operator" which is a little better evening up of the score.

Eastern Airlines said it received more than 9,000 applications from men since it began running unisex ads in March. (Such ads were fought for and won by women.) Before then, they had about 150 stewards, the male counterpart of stewardess; now they have 320 stewards.

The situation of men moving into women's jobs without a mutual counter flow would be bad enough in a period of economic stability, but at a time when the economy is worsening, women's unemployment rates rising steadily, and jobs for everyone getting tighter, therefore jobs for

women getting especially tight, such a trend is disastrous. Yet such a trend does seem evident. Besides the airlines and the telephone company, men are moving into nursing, secretarial work, teaching and library work, while maintaining their monopoly on traditionally male occupations. The *Handbook on Women Workers*, a U.S. Government publication put out by the Women's Bureau, says there has been a concerted and fairly successful effort to attract more men into teaching jobs in junior high and high school. As a result, men were more than half of all secondary school teachers in 1960, after being in the minority in 1950. In the schools men now hold 98.7% of the superintendentcies, 99.5% of the district principalships, 98.9% of the secondary school principalships and 81.2% of the elementary school principalships. State officials do not "foresee any immediate reversal of this pattern, which began building in the fifties and which is said to be perpetuated today by local boards of education," who, when surveyed, said they preferred men (*New York Times*, 4/15/75).

City University started a program in 1970 to prepare policemen and firemen who are approaching retirement on a pension to become professional nurses. Women, although they passed the qualifying criteria, are still waiting to be admitted to the Fire Department. The New York State Police force, which has been all-male since 1917, has recently accepted four women.

There is a lot of talk and news coverage these days about the large numbers of women moving into the police force and also the field of medicine. "Moving into" however is not quite accurate since women have been in both these fields since the 1800's, and large numbers is a relative term. It should be pointed out also that the reasons for the movement of men into all-female fields and women into all-male fields differ greatly. Men have not been restricted from all-female fields; whatever social taboos stood in their way have been greatly reduced by the activities of women's liberation. Women however have been restricted from all-male jobs: in the police force by quotas, height and weight requirements and the assumption that women were not equipped for certain jobs; in medical schools by admission quotas which restricted the number of female applicants. Special efforts, we are told, are being made to attract men to such all-female fields as teaching and nursing. The only efforts being made in the other direction however are the removal of blatantly discriminatory criteria, under legal threat, such as the police force's previous policy of giving separate entrance examinations which gave preferential treatment to male applicants.

The current Depression has undermined what little progress was being made. As New York City police officers have been laid off, the old built-in discriminatory hiring practises resulted in women being the first to go. In 1975, four hundred of them were laid off—more than 60% of their total number. "Just when women police officers were getting off the ground, we were cut down, wiped out," says Dina Acha, a laid-off officer. It's not that the women officers are opposed to a seniority policy *per se* that they've decided to file suit in Federal District Court. But they are "opposed to a seniority that has a past pattern of discrimination frozen into it." They were laid off according to the



SEGREGATION RISES—% OF WOMEN IN KEY FIELDS

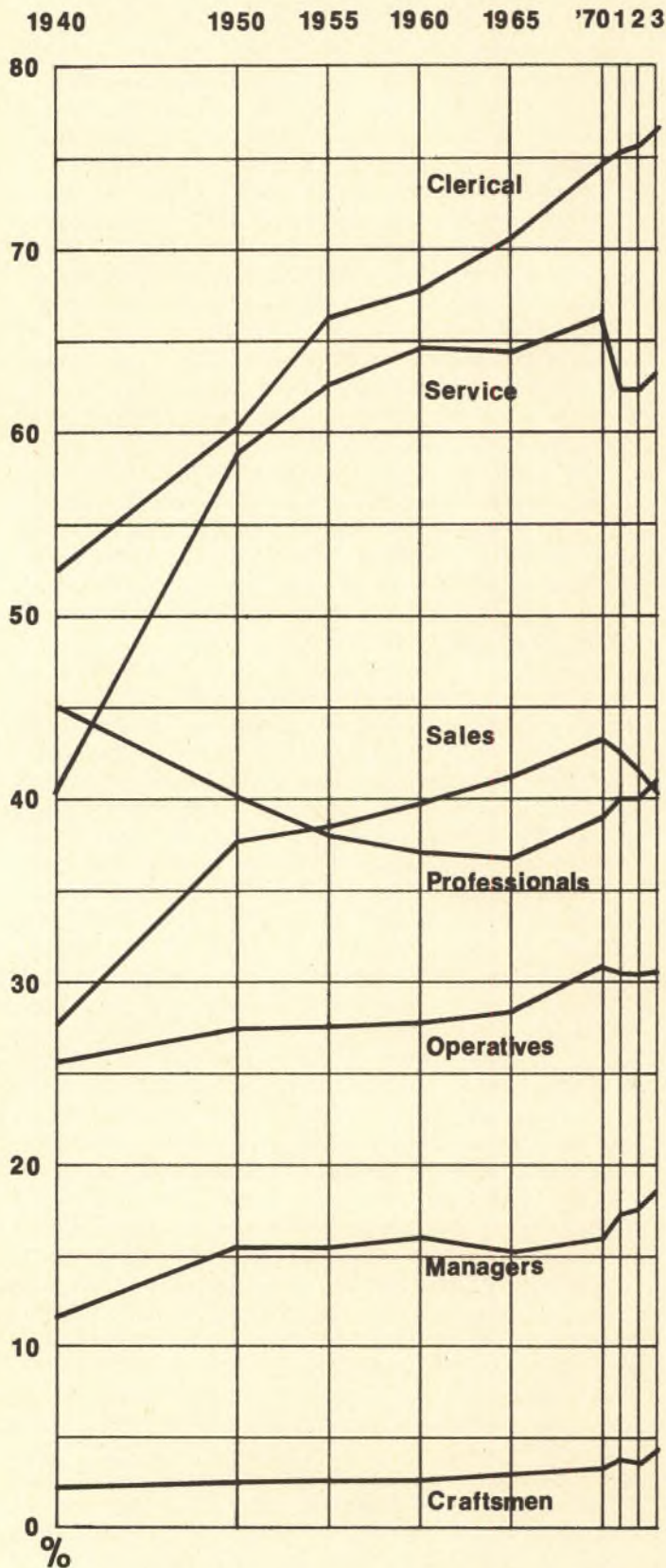


Figure 3 Source: Women's Bureau

policy of "last hired, first fired," but they were the last hired because before 1973 they were being discriminated against.

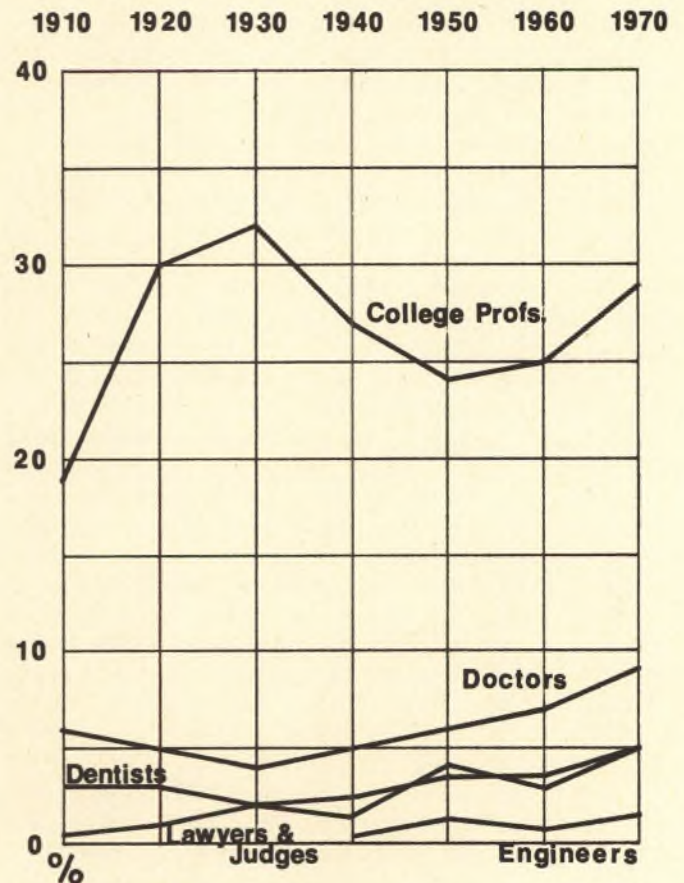
The conclusion of Dr. Gross's study of segregation in 1969 was that there had been little diffusion of women into anything other than typically "female" jobs. Well over half of all working women in both 1900 and 1969 were employed in jobs in which 70% or more of the workers were female. A more recent study printed in the *Economic Report of the President* in 1973 set about to measure whether men and women were in more similar jobs in 1970 than they were in 1960. It found only a "very small change" in the direction of "increased occupational similarity" (integration), which means for the most part men and women are still pretty much working at the same kind of different jobs they always have.

If you look at the graphs you'll see we're not moving into men's fields in any significant numbers and traditionally "female" fields are becoming more segregated (fig.3).

DISCRIMINATION: THE UNMENTIONABLE WORD

I was quite surprised by the picture that was emerging especially since I had had the general impression women

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN SOME "TYPICALLY MALE" JOBS





were making progress in the labor force. I wanted an explanation. I looked to the *Handbook on Women Workers*, a U.S. Government publication put out by the Women's Bureau, one of the standard sources of such facts. The *Handbook* had a lot of facts, indeed, but as I read on I realized I was going in circles looking for an explanation. The *Handbook* had no explanations. The few times they tried to offer one, it was contradicted by their very own statistics. Basically, in summary this is what it presented.<sup>2</sup>

Facts	Reasons Why
Women receive a smaller average annual income than do men	<i>More women work part-time than do men</i>
Full-time women workers receive a smaller average annual income than do men (and the gap in income is getting wider)	<i>It's because of the 'type' of job women hold in traditionally low-paying occupations and low-wage industries (it's funny how tradition seems to work that way for us)</i>
Women in low-paying occupations and low-wage industries make less money than men in the same low-paying occupations and low-wage industries	<i>No explanation</i>
Women in high-paying occupations and high-wage industries make less money than men in the same high-paying occupations and high-wage industries	<i>No explanation</i>
Women are concentrated in major occupational groups different from those of men, and women are concentrated in a relatively small number of occupations. One-third of all working women are in seven typically "women's" occupations: secretary, sales clerk, school teacher, household worker, bookkeeper, waitress and nurse.	<i>No explanation</i>
At all levels of educational attainment the median income of women is substantially below the median income of men (Women college graduates make almost as much as men high school drop-outs)	<i>No explanation</i>

Of course the questions I wanted answered were why women made less money than men and why the labor force remained so segregated. My own hunch was that I would find women educationally disadvantaged, but as the *Handbook's* statistics show (and the graph in figure 4) educationally our qualifications are not the problem.

Some of the more common explanations currently in vogue started coming back to me: that women are absent more from their jobs, that women don't need the money, that men are the supporters of families, that women really only work for pin money. But the *Handbook* itself says our job absenteeism rate is the same as men's. As for needing the money, all women need the money for personal independence. In addition most women have no economic

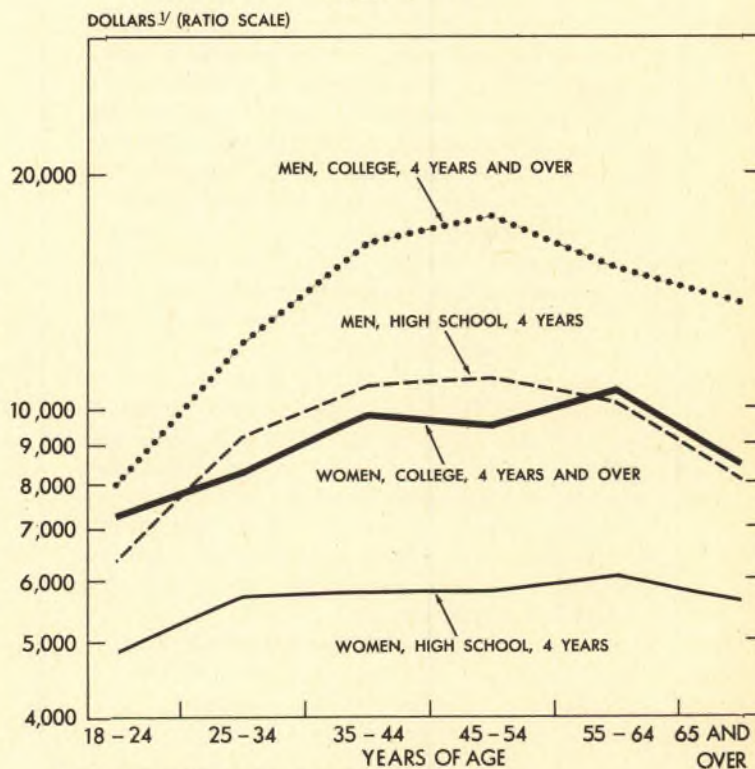
<sup>2</sup>U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1969 *Handbook on Women Workers*, Women's Bureau, Bull. 294.

choice but to work in order to maintain an adequate standard of living. Many also have to work to support families either because they are heads of households or their husbands don't earn enough. So lack of need is not the explanation. I wondered about the argument that women don't stay attached to the job market and so lose continuity of work experience which lowers their wages. But I came upon a *New York Times* article (3/26/72) that said a recent census bureau study of 5,000 women showed that women aged 30 to 44 who worked every year since leaving school had much lower incomes than men who were the same age, had the same education, and held the same types of jobs.

The only thing that came close to being an attempt at an explanation for the discrepancies in pay and the segregation of jobs was the recurring reference in the *Handbook* to what it vaguely characterized as the "type" of jobs women held. Just exactly what they meant by the "type" of jobs however, and what the defining characteristics were, was very unclear. If women made less money than men working in the same occupations and industries, whether they were high-paying occupations or low-paying ones, as the summary chart indicates, then the specific occupation or industry could not be what they meant by "type." From what I could see in all the explanations offered by the *Handbook* what the "type" of job which women held came down to is more accurately a "woman's job." i.e. any job which women do, which is therefore low-paying because it's women doing it. But there was never any explanation of the reason for this category of woman's jobs.

I thought the *Handbook on Women Workers* would clarify my understanding of discrimination but the word

Figure 4



<sup>1</sup>/ MEDIAN INCOME OF FULL-TIME, YEAR-ROUND WORKERS, 1971.  
SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE.



never comes up in its list of explanations for the discrepancies between male and female workers. (The few times the word appears in the book it is only in the context of discussing laws governing women's employment—laws for which there is no apparent reason.)\* It wouldn't be so bad even if the *Handbook* just laid out all the facts for us, impartially, objectively (as they say), so we could come to our own conclusions about what's really happening to women in the labor force, but their presentation is so confusing, slippery and contradictory that it's almost impossible to come to any conclusion.

As the picture gradually became clearer it was making me mad. Okay, so I was naive, confused, politically un-sophisticated, a liberal even on the question. I had been led to believe there were a lot of good reasons why we weren't able to compete equally with men in the job arena, things based on past discrimination, certainly not present; things

\*Perhaps it is a small sign of progress that in the new 1975 *Handbook on Women Workers* put out by the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor—the first edition since the 1969 edition discussed in this article—"discrimination" is finally advanced as one of the explanations for the discrepancies in men's and women's wages. But this token recognition of discrimination may still not give us much to cheer about considering how the government handles this thorny issue even when it has recognized discrimination as the main problem. What happened with the issue of racial discrimination as reported in *The New York Times* (2/25/70) is a case in point: "Several studies commissioned by the Government in recent years have shown that the major reason the income of Negroes lags far behind that of whites continues to be discrimination, not education or training. But Government has increasingly been emphasizing the latter in preference to the former, presumably because the policy makers consider discrimination too difficult to combat and education more likely to yield results."

#### THE MAKING OF A "WOMAN'S JOB" Work on an Automatic Screw Machine

Men were assigned to the job on a piece-work basis at a certain rate per thousand. After working on the machine a short time the men complained that they were not able to make a decent wage at the rate paid, and the employment manager and works manager decided to try women on it, transferring the men to other work. Women were put on at the same rate and, the employment manager said, "They ran riot with the job and before long were making over \$50 a week." Then the men wanted another trial at the job, and, as the employment manager does not approve of having women in the machine shop and tries to discourage it, the men were given another try-out at a slightly higher rate than the initial one. Again they failed to turn out enough work to earn a satisfactory wage. Women have been employed on this work ever since. Wages have been lowered several times since the women have been working on the machines, as it was stated that the work was in an experimental stage when the first rates were set.

— U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau.  
"The Effects of Labor Legislation on the  
Employment Opportunities of Women."  
Bul. 65. 1928.

based on discrimination against women by the society in general, certainly not by the male employers themselves; and I had bought it. Well, my consciousness is clearing now. I see that all the theories, excuses, and explanations for our inferior job status are inadequate. I see that education, skills, job occupations, continuity of work experience, seriousness about the job are all factors which influence salary, rank and job status but only when the girls are playing against the girls and the boys are playing against the boys. When women compete against men such factors are all but irrelevant.

#### WHY WE NEVER CAN REMEMBER THE FACTS: THE NEED FOR ANALYSIS

The more statistics I read, the more the reservations in my mind were disposed of, the clearer my consciousness became and the more furious I got. In these moments of impulsivity and clarity I started writing furiously. Women must know about this, I kept saying to myself, if only women knew . . . and then suddenly another thought struck me. How come I didn't know? I mean I've been in Women's Liberation for about six years now, and a worker for longer than that—how come I didn't know? Had I just become privy to some secret information? I expanded my research. You know, there are volumes written on this subject—volumes—magazine articles, newspaper stories, doctoral theses, popular best-seller books, pamphlets, manuscripts—all telling the very same tale. Worse yet, as I looked over the material it started dawning on me I had read most of this before. Something was terribly wrong. I read all this stuff now with my present awareness, my present consciousness, and I can envision female workers lining up for battle Monday morning; I read it then and can hardly remember having done so.

Maybe I've just never been terribly interested in the issue before, is all I could come up with. But what does that mean? I'm a worker, why shouldn't I be interested? I was interested enough to join Women's Liberation, so how come I didn't get the low-down on this issue from my connections with the Movement?

It was becoming very clear to me that a radical feminist approach to the job question was necessary now. The liberals in the movement who have focused so much of their time, energy and attention on this question (it's the scene they like to talk the most about) have actually had little or no effect. When I was fumbling around trying to pinpoint what it was about their presentation that seemed so wrong, why it was that I had gotten no clear understanding of what was happening in the job market from them, I kept saying to myself, "it's the approach, there's something wrong with their approach." Thinking about it for awhile I realized they have no theory worked out, no analysis which could be called feminist or even political. There is no structure into which we can put the data, the information compiled, and let it have its effect—no way of understanding the implications of all those powerful statistics. They haven't focused on or defined the root problems, they haven't pointed the direction in which we must move, they haven't been clear or precise in their



thinking, and worst of all, some of their basic assumptions about women in the labor force mimic those of the male power structure.

We must have a way of understanding reality. As a political feminist movement, we must have a political feminist way of understanding that reality. Trying to "make sense" of the facts, much less organize ourselves around them, is all but impossible without such a guiding principle. It's as if all the data were compiled in a neat little bundle and then dropped 50 feet to the ground—all the facts, the truths, would get scattered; it would be impossible to view the information coherently, much less make any relevant connections. Amidst such disorder and confusion, clarity, simplicity, precision and directness would go by the wayside. It would be impossible to analyze the situation, hence no one would ever come to a conclusion. The momentum, the energy, the power behind those truths would be dissipated and there would remain separate, isolated, disconnected, static piles of information, lacking any direction and having absolutely no effect. Such has been the problem with the liberals' handling of the job situation.

When you are serious about building a political movement designed to effect real change it is essential to be clear when presenting the issues. It is essential to be definite, to be precise, to be simple, to avoid confusion. Confusion halts progress and saps energy unnecessarily.

You can't dump a thousand statistics on people, with no theory or analysis of what's really happening, and expect those statistics to mean much. If you're going to examine the job situation for women workers then you've got to figure out what the problems are affecting women in the labor force, analyze the cause of those problems, and then state what must be done about them. The liberals aren't even sure what the problems are. Some of them do say discrimination is the problem, but in actuality their analysis is contradictory because, as we shall see later, they also claim women are unqualified for those jobs right now.

When they do accurately state the problem, they don't go far enough in their reasoning looking for the cause of that problem. With segregation, for example, they stop their search short claiming "sex role" learning is the cause of segregation, without adequately examining what "sex roles" in actuality constitute. They rarely call segregation by its name, much less trace it oppression and exploitation.

So they present contradictory and inadequate analysis which doesn't help our understanding of what's going on in the labor force, but for the most part they present no analysis.

To analyze a situation means to find the reasons for something, but the liberals seem to deny there are reasons for discrimination, for example, or good reasons. Since NOW's "Statement of Purpose" denounces discrimination I read through it to find out what they think the reasons for it are, only to find out that they claim that right now there are no reasons for discriminating against women. The Statement says that though there may have once been reasons for barring women from equal economic participation and advance such as the greater time which used to be required for child rearing and household chores, the enormous technological changes taking place in society today elimi-

nate these reasons. Further the Statement essentially argues that it is now in the employer's interest to hire women, "Today's technology has virtually eliminated the quality of muscular strength as a criterion for filling most jobs, while intensifying American industry's need for creative intelligence." In other words, there is no conflict of interests between what the ruling class wants or needs and what women want and need. Discrimination is therefore irrational, without reason. But this cannot be called analysis; basically this is a stand against analysis; it's anti-analysis. If there is no reason for something to exist, then how can an analysis be offered?

Liberals push this anti-analytical stand as being their analysis. They advance irrationality as the reason for discrimination. Liberal economist Barbara Bergman, for instance, goes under the assumption that there are no good reasons, no real reasons, only psychological hang-ups. Like NOW Bergman denies that there is a conflict of interests involved, even suggesting the employer is going against his interests. "... Discrimination does not by and large serve the economic ends of those who do the discriminating... the financial gains to those who do the discriminating are low or negative. The major cause served is psychological (it feels so good to have women in their place)." Whenever I run across this ambiguous, erroneous nonsense I see stars. Keeping women in their place may feel good but it pays in a lot more ways than that. For instance, if discrimination does not by and large serve the economic-ends of those who do the discriminating, then how is it economists have computed the total underpayment of women workers as amounting to \$109 billion each year? Not exactly a low or negative financial gain. Bergman is making a plea for irrational causes by advancing this idea of oppression for the hell of it, or because "it feels so good." Though I don't doubt it, aside from being a bit naive, I'm afraid it's a bit more serious than that. This clouds the very real benefits—more than psychological—which men receive from keeping women down. Discrimination benefits male employers in terms of money, status, recognition, power, prestige and fame, to name just a few factors.

To make matters worse some liberals, while they imply that men and employers have nothing to lose by ending the present system, imply that women do. Juanita Kreps, a liberal economist who has done a fair amount of investigating into this issue of job discrimination, suggests that a reason for discrimination is women's desire for protection. According to her the real issue is the stereotyped roles of the male as "protector" and the female as "protected." "And if the protected gains equal status, would she not lose more than she gains?" But what are we protected from in the labor force? We cannot run elevators late at night when the pay is higher and we cannot serve in restaurants and cabarets at that hour either when the tips are higher and the load is lighter. We can however clean office buildings till all hours of the morning because cleaning office buildings is a low-paying job and nobody wants to protect us out of our low-paying jobs. It has nothing to do with the issue of protection, it has to do with the issue of money. I can envision by no stretch of the imagination or flight into fantasy how women could possibly lose anything by equal



status, except for the monopoly they seem to have on the lowest paying jobs in the entire labor force.

Caroline Bird doesn't have an analysis either, though she claims of *Born Female* that "this is a frankly feminist book. It counts the social, moral and personal costs of keeping women down on the job and finds them high. . . ." But she doesn't question why, if the costs are so high, employers are doing it? For whom are the costs high? Are they high for men or for women? For private interests or the general public good? She says, "We are destroying talent. . . . We are wasting talent. . . . We are hiding talent. . . ." But who is the amorphous "we" she is exhorting? Women can't be discriminating against women on the job because they're not the ones doing the hiring. They're not the bosses, very few of them anyway. She says there is a morality: it is wrong to make gifted women prove they are twice as good as men, wrong to hamper them with all the burdens of house-keeping and child-rearing. But where does the concept of wrong fit into power politics?

The problem with women is not that their achievements don't happen, but that they are suppressed. Bird shows that the gifts and talents of women are being denied, resented and ignored, but because she gives no explanation for it, her lack of explanation undercuts her point. If women are so talented, then why are they being kept out and underpaid in the labor force? Since there's no answer from Bird, one suspects maybe they're really not so talented after all.

*Born Female* in an exact example of what's wrong with the liberal approach. Bird does excellent research and lays out the facts of discrimination for us precisely, and there they lie. Since the book lacks a political analysis—a frankly feminist political analysis—a way even of understanding the full impact of those facts, they never become the stirring, moving force they could be. Instead they're just another pile of statistics.

### THE ECONOMIC ISSUE APPROACH

The liberals further avoid analysis by taking the problems they're dealing with out of their political context and then proposing to resolve them. The liberals don't see causes, they don't see inter-relationships, they don't see connections, they just see "problems." Therefore although they won't acknowledge economic causes for discrimination, they do talk a lot about economic problems, in all their facts and figures, and economic solutions. Discrimination against women workers in the labor force has been categorized by them as an "economic issue" so they set up an economic task force and survey the problem. In fact, discrimination against women workers in the labor force can no more be narrowly defined as an economic problem or issue than discrimination in any other area. When you discriminate against women because they're women, whether that results in not letting them have full control over their own bodies or not paying them an equal amount of money for an equal amount of work, it is a political problem.

You might think that I am squabbling over words and ask what the big deal is about emphasizing that job discrimination is a political problem. It is essential to understanding the problem that the issue be viewed in this broader political context, because doing so reminds us that unequal

power is the ultimate problem. Whatever strides are made in the paid labor force, whatever reforms are won, they will never be permanently secured unless we are simultaneously building a power base equal to the power of men. Women have at different times in history made tremendous advances in the paid labor force—witness World War II, for example—but we were kicked out the minute the men returned because we didn't have the power to hold our ground.

Does this mean we should not fight for equal pay? No, not at all, we should always fight for what is rightfully ours; but we should also keep our analysis clear. Women aren't oppressed because they are paid less money for equal work (which is the implication of the "economic issue" approach), they are paid less money for equal work because they are oppressed. In the first case the focus is on economic advancement as a way of overcoming oppression (that's why liberals refer to a woman with a successful career as "liberated") and this tends to be individually advancement oriented. In the second case the focus is on political power building as a way of both fighting for and securing economic advancement and this tends to be collectively oriented.

Casting the problem as an economic one also allows us to get sidetracked into talking about the economic system this discrimination exists in, and the difficulty within that economic system. People tend to say "well women aren't getting jobs because the economy is tight," without looking to see if men are suffering the same fate; or some people say women aren't getting jobs because we don't have socialism, without looking to see that the same pattern of segregation with men at the top and a few token women sur-

By blaming things on the economy liberals avoid the necessary fight against male supremacy. This liberal avoidance has its right and left forms of escape into economic solutionism. The right liberals lean on "prosperity" to make a fight unnecessary, to try to make women's liberation possible without a fight—and give up the fight for women under depression conditions when "the economy is tight." The left leans on socialism to make a struggle on the issue of male supremacy unnecessary, and gives up the fight under conditions of capitalism. Whereas under any economic conditions, this fight will be necessary—the problem will have to be named for what it is and tackled head on whenever it occurs. It's already beginning to seem that under conditions of depression, the liberals in the feminist movement, never having been very firm on feminism to begin with, will all no doubt become liberals of the left variety—liberal socialists—attacking feminism on the by now familiar left ground. They will turn to this kind of socialism in the hopes of its ensuring the conditions of prosperity on a more stable basis, and make this into an argument for creating the conditions under which feminism will win—again without a fight.

—Kathie Sarachild, 1974



rounding them can also exist in a socialist system. The point is that economic equality for all women can never be achieved without political power.

### THE WORK ISSUE IN THE EARLY WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

If the liberals are at least partially responsible for the lack of progress of women in the labor market it is interesting to recall that from the start of the movement the job issue was their special province.

My initial attraction to the Movement had little to do with the question of job discrimination. It's not that I didn't think women were discriminated against in the job arena. I did, but then again I felt women were discriminated against in every arena. My initial attraction was toward the radicals who were concentrating on general feminist political theory, "raising consciousness" and dealing with the sex questions. This just seemed more important and a matter of top priority, the first step toward further changes. There was a general wariness in the beginning of the Movement toward getting too caught up in single issue questions before the basic groundwork had been laid, and I think that strategy proved to be correct.

There were differences in interest regarding the job arena. Some women in the WLM weren't interested in women getting jobs now at all. They knocked the liberals in NOW not only for their failure to question the capitalistic system, but for wanting equality in it. "Do we really want equality with men in this nasty competitive capitalist system?" "Do we want to be equally exploited with men?" "Do we want a piece of the pie or a whole different pie?"

The radical feminists, though they were against capitalism and wanted a whole different pie, also stood for equal jobs for women now. They were very clear that equality with men was a piece of the kind of pie they wanted, but there would still be jobs in this new way of life, there would still be work to be done. Many would be the same jobs as now, and women had better start fighting for them, both for some immediate benefits and to be in a position to make the new society and to insure equality in it.

The left said socialism first, and all else will follow. The liberals said jobs first, and all else will follow. The questions of housework, child care, sex, etc. would all be altered once good jobs came through. But radical feminists looked at countries where women were making more progress in jobs than the U.S. and countries which had socialism, and all else wasn't following. They looked at themselves, some of whom had good jobs, and all else wasn't following. Radical feminists knew there were other basic and important things to be done to win women's liberation in addition to fighting for socialism and jobs now. The first and immediate need was to raise feminist consciousness, organize a power base and deal with women's oppression within the family (housework, sex, childcare) and the so-called body issues (abortion, false beauty standards and clothing requirements).

Neither the liberal feminists nor the left were working on these very basic feminist issues and many actually opposed them. They seemed to be taking care of the other

issues however. It almost seemed like a logical division of labor, at least for the time being. And so radical feminists temporarily left the fight for jobs now to the liberals, and the fight for socialism to the male left and their non-feminist women. Jobs and socialism didn't follow.

Okay, I might not have thought that going after jobs was the first and most immediate priority, but besides that there was something about the liberals' presentation of the issue I could never quite connect up with. There were no "clicks," no moments of instant identification and recognition. I couldn't feel the impact or importance of all this on my life. The slogan "Equal pay for equal work" neither captured my imagination nor explained to me why I was a nurse instead of a doctor. Besides I always associated the whole thing with economic questions, something I felt I knew little about, and legal formal stuff, like filing petitions at the proper agencies and bringing law suits against employers, which I guess I figured I would have to hire a lawyer to take care of anyway, if it came to that. Even desegregating the want ads passed me by since the two jobs I'm qualified for, secretary and nurse, are almost completely women segregated fields anyway, even if they're no longer listed that way.

It seems to me now looking back on all this that there is a natural, orderly unfolding of issues which reveals itself in the process of building a political movement. You work on what you consider the basics, and in the process of resolving them, or at least winning reforms in the area, the next most prominent issue reveals itself. Some basic groundwork has now been laid; some reforms have been won in the more intimate "personal" arena of feminism and some basic consciousness has been raised. Our attention now turns to the work arena.

### HOW SEGREGATION WORKS AGAINST WOMEN

The first thing we see is a dual labor force. Men and women might work in the same labor force but they are separated for all practical purposes by the work they do. This can be seen from a look at even the broadest categorization of jobs. For instance women make up the majority of clerical workers while men make up the majority of craftsmen and foremen. Women make up the majority of household workers while men make up the majority of managers and administrators. And the division becomes even more sharply delineated when we look *within* job categories.

In the professional field: *Men are doctors, lawyers, scientists, draftsmen*  
*Women are nurses and teachers*

In the service occupations: *Men are bartenders, guards, firemen, policemen and detectives*  
*Women are cooks, nurses' aides and waitresses*

In the operatives: *Women are the hand finishers, thread trimmers and basting pullers*  
*Men are the finish pressers, under-pressers, cutters and markers*

Among managers and proprietors: *Women operate small retail establishments*  
*Men manage manufacturing plants and wholesale outlets*



Even in the same occupation men and women are in different positions. In teaching, women are concentrated in the elementary levels while men monopolize the college and university faculties. In computer programming, women are concentrated in the class B and class C positions while men are more frequently employed in the class A positions.

Well, so what? Men and women work at different types of jobs. The significant factor is not that the jobs are different, but what that difference amounts to. In each and every job category listed above the comparable "woman's job" commands less pay than the male version, is generally less prestigious, opens up fewer opportunities for advancement and is generally not the kind of work thought highly of by society's standards. To get the full significance of what "women's jobs" and "men's jobs" mean in terms of financial remuneration alone look at figures 5 and 6.

It doesn't seem to make a damn bit of difference where we are in the labor force, what sphere we move in or position we occupy, compared to men it's a less advantageous one. If we're in an all-female occupation we make less money than comparable all-male occupations; if we're in an

all-male occupation we make less money than the men in that occupation. If we work in the factories we occupy the bottom rung; if we work in the universities we occupy the bottom rung. So that's what the "type" of job, which the *Handbook* had such trouble defining clearly, amounted to. The type of job is the lower type, i.e. beneath men, with less pay than men. They were the jobs in the lower classifications of any field and subordinate to men.

Actually it comes as no surprise to anyone that the labor force is segregated, one only marvels at the consistency with which segregation has been maintained. Despite the fact that there has been a 91% increase in the number of working women since 1948, there has been only a slight increase in the diffusion of female labor over a broader range of occupational categories. Among the seven new occupations added during the decade as fields in which 100,000 or more women are now employed were baby-sitter, charwoman and cleaner, counter and fountain workers, file clerk, housekeeper and stewardess, music teacher and receptionist. Hardly the makings of an innovative or adventuresome career booklet in 1975.

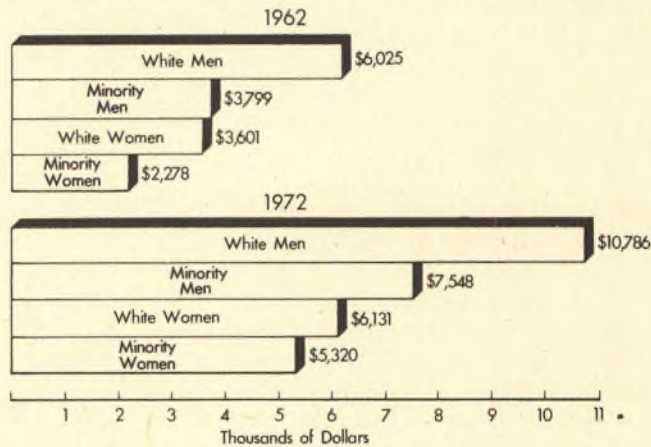
If one has a feminist ideal that men and women should work side by side in all fields, then one is shocked at how pervasive the sexual division of jobs still is. But it is not immediately apparent that these things are the result of oppression, discrimination, politics and power. We saw how separated men and women were in the labor force and how jobs remain divided by sex into "men's" and "women's" with women's being synonymous with low-pay, low-status, low-importance, etc. At various times there have been laws and written company rules clearly enforcing this pattern. However when the pattern persists during times without such laws, three possible explanations are left.

Either the continuing segregation patterns, the relentlessly continuing segregation patterns, are attributable to nature, a natural division of labor based on abilities and inclinations, as the conservative anti-feminists would say; or to tradition and education as the liberals say, the tradition in society whereby both men and women each learn and play their different, respective "sex roles;" or to the fact that women are being kept out of men's jobs by discrimination and exploitation, by force without laws, for the benefit of some against the interests of others.

That the division of labor is based on natural abilities or

Figure 5

Fully Employed Women Continue To Earn Less Than Fully Employed Men of Either White or Minority Races



\* Excludes all races other than white.  
 Source: Prepared by the Women's Bureau, Employment Standards Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, from data published by the Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce.

SAME JOB\* – DIFFERENT SALARIES

	MEN		WOMEN
Waiter	\$ 3.80/hour	Waitress	\$ 2.85/hour
Janitor	\$ 150.00/week	Maid	\$ 87.50/week
Organic Chemist	\$16,400.00/year	Organic Chemist	\$13,800.00/year
Fiction Editor	\$50,000.00/year	Fiction Editor	\$15,000.00/year

\*education, experience, length of service held equal

Source: American Council On Education graduate program rankings, 1969 survey

Figure 6



inclinations is disproved by history as well as a review of other cultures. The division of labor has changed. When babies were born at home, without instruments and all the formalities now attendant on it, delivering babies was natural for a woman; she was called a midwife. Then the Chamberlain family invented the obstetrical forceps, sold the idea to the Medical College of Amsterdam to which only men were admitted, and it suddenly became natural for men to deliver babies, and much more expensive. Canning and preserving foods used to be very much a woman's job before the invention of canning machinery which made food preservation a paying business. Men took it over then, although they still employed women in *their* factories.

Jobs have switched from women's to men's and back again. What is termed a "woman's job" in one generation, in so many cases becomes a man's in the next, or vice-versa. The only consistent thing at work here is the fact that regardless of the particular job being done, when women do it, it's low-paying and considered unimportant.

History attests to the real basis for the division of labor in the work force, and it has little to do with natural abilities or inclinations. Tracing women's work history we see that "women's jobs" became defined as either jobs men didn't want to work at, finding them boring and drudgery and lacking advancement, especially since they had other opportunities open to them where they could advance; jobs which opened up to women because they could be paid less; or jobs which opened up to women because men were scarce, especially during war times, and which they managed to keep a foothold on.

In the 1880's telephone operators were men. They were soon replaced by women supposedly because men didn't

"do well." Actually there were many better work opportunities for men around. They didn't need to put up with confined, disciplined, personal services. Telephone company jobs were among the few around for women and they took them, and did well, and for less pay than men.

The same thing happened in the clerical field. When the typewriter was first invented men alone operated it; it was then said to be too complicated for women to handle. But as soon as men were able to move up and out of clerical work and it became available to women, women easily "caught on" to this complicated machine (did they ever!) Interestingly enough, now that jobs are becoming scarce for men in other industries, they are now moving back into these two fields.

During the Civil War when men were away, women entered the teaching field in large numbers. They continued to increase their numbers in this field chiefly because of the dual pay scale which made it cheaper to hire women teachers. Women also became sales clerks during this time; storekeepers hired women due to the shortage of men. All these examples show that it's not natural ability that's the reason for the existence of segregation into "men's jobs" and "women's jobs" and the lower pay and status accorded to "women's jobs." Yet everywhere it would seem that natural ability is used as the explanation.

The liberals do not claim the continuing segregation patterns are due to nature; they say they're due to tradition and education. But what does tradition mean, except "things have always been that way." We're "programmed from birth into employment patterns" is the way they put it, and proceed through life learning our appropriate "sex roles" dictated by society through training or "condition-



The Women's Trade Union League was one of the most successful in organizing women in the early 20th century.  
—San Francisco Women's History Group, *WHAT WOMEN HAVE DONE*



ing." Women, for example, become nurses, secretaries, teachers, because they learn that is what they're supposed to be, that is what they see other women working as, that's how women are pictured in the books and in the media; and men become doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc. for the same reasons. Traditional work patterns just perpetuate themselves. To the liberal segregation is not natural, it's social. And by social they mean simply a teaching problem, a learning problem.

But nurses, secretaries and teachers make less money than doctors, lawyers and engineers—as do all typically female jobs. And when we looked at the segregated labor force we saw that women's "programmed employment patterns," if you will, landed them at the bottom rung of every job category in low-paid subordinate positions, while men's "programming" led them right into the highest paid jobs at the top rung of the ladder. So the "roles" women "learn" obviously don't benefit them in the same way as the "roles" men "learn."

The methodical consistency with which women end up at the bottom of the job hierarchy and the reality that one group (men) is benefitting from this situation and the other group (women) is not, does not shake the tenets of the liberals' "learning" theory however, nor does it inject any political insight or reality into their view. "Sex roles are oppressive" is their explanation—and their further elaboration, that they are equally oppressive both to men and women, obliterates the idea that one group is benefitting and the other is not. Neither is benefitting, they say. Women might think they have it tough being continually on the bottom, but men supposedly have it just as tough being continually on the top. Men are just as oppressed by their "sex roles" of having to be competitive, on the top all the time, aggressive and the provider for their families, as women are in having to be compliant, submissive and provided for, is the way they put it.

But the real benefits men receive in the labor force at the expense of women cannot be dismissed by claiming we're all suffering equal psychological turmoil. Radicals look at the division of labor in the work force, they look at the fact that men hold the best jobs and women the worst, they look at the salary differences between men and women which make men look rich in comparison to women, they look at the fact that women aren't in, are being kept out, of those higher-paying jobs, and it seems clear to them that the segregation of women in the labor force amounts to oppression. When you're talking about the concrete reality of one group benefitting from what amounts to the exploitation of another, you're talking about oppression.

The fact that women have been restricted from men's jobs, yet men have never been restricted outright from women's jobs further challenges the liberal theory that "sex roles" are equally oppressive. An interesting question to pose to liberals is why there were restrictions imposed on men's jobs in the first place, if this orderly division of labor were absorbed so obediently through our training. Are women after all so stupid that they'll keep proliferating in fields which are lower-paying and less important just because society says it's their place, their role, it's what

they've always done, it's traditional and they think they should keep on doing it?

Tradition, the tradition of what is woman's work and what is men's, never changes so quickly as when large numbers of women are let into previously all-male fields. This peculiar pattern of fields either having just token numbers of women, or turning all-women when a breakthrough is made, maintaining segregation either way, shows the systematic process of oppression at work. Why must fields turn either all-male or all-female, why can't equal numbers of women be accommodated into male fields and the salaries and importance of that job remain the same? Because the point to keeping a group separate is to keep them unequal, and integration would defeat such a purpose.

The third possible explanation, and the truest one, for continuing sex segregation of the labor force, is discrimination. Discrimination in the form of overt or covert restrictions of women from men's jobs is one way of keeping women out of men's jobs, but for segregation to be truly effective it is necessary for the power structure not only to keep women out of men's jobs but to make sure women's jobs remain defined as the low-paying, low-status, relatively powerless ones. For example, if women were suddenly to get equal access into medical schools and women doctors became commonplace, we might then see a situation similar to what happened in the Soviet Union, where a majority of doctors are women and so being a doctor is neither prestigious nor high-paying. If women are going to move into high-paying, high-status fields therefore, either their number has to be kept to token levels so as not to disrupt the basic imbalance of power, or if large numbers of women "move in" the field must then subsequently become low-paying and low-status. This is the whole point of segregation.

And this is exactly what happens. We have our token women in high-paying fields: women constitute 3.5% of dentists, 8.7% of doctors, 3% of lawyers and 1% of engineers, while making up 98% of all household workers, one of the lowest paying job categories. And we have the situation of jobs turning seemingly overnight, in some cases, from men's to women's, from high-paying to low-paying, when women move in. This syndrome is sometimes referred to as the blockbusting syndrome since it's similar to the situation of all-white neighborhoods turning all black overnight with the admission of a few black families. And here's how it works.

Women are discriminated against, which means that although they are qualified for certain jobs, they have a hard time getting those jobs. So when a field opens up to women they flock to it. The fact that women flock to a new opening in the labor force shows that some sort of restrictions must still be present on other fields, or else they'd be flocking to those available jobs. Because of this discrimination, because it's harder for them to get jobs, they can be paid less. Women's unemployment rate is always a good deal higher than men's and would probably double if you were to count all the women who are housewives but would want to work if they could find a good job. This sets up a vicious cycle for women, of either not being hired because they're women, or being hired just because they're women



I want to conclude my explanatory remarks on prewar women's movements by referring to women workers, who were the main labor force in the development of capitalism in Japan, and to the socialist women's movement.

The emergence of Japanese women into the modern industrial world began with the development of textile manufacturing at the end of the Edo Era and continued into the early Meiji Era. Shortly after the construction of a spinning mill in Satsuma Han and the silk mill in Maebashi Han, a model silk mill was constructed by the Meiji Government in Tomioka City, Gumma Prefecture, in 1872 (Meiji 5). Many daughters from the ex-samurai class and from the peasantry went there from all over Japan in order to master the techniques of spinning. These girls worked and studied very hard because they had the important mission of returning to their home towns and districts to promote modern industry by teaching. They therefore became the female elite in this first period of industrialization in Japan.

However, in the process of the development of capitalism, the conditions of the women workers became more and more difficult. Most of the factory girls who came from agricultural areas were apprentices bound to the payment-in-advance system. They were required to work under severe labor conditions such as extremely long hours, low wages, mandatory saving of wages, a rank system of wages, and a system of forced sending of wages to parents by the factory (to insure that the girls would not have enough spending money to run away). Their situation has been described as follows:

The slaves in ancient Rome who rowed the galleys must have been treated more humanely than the spinning factory girls in the Meiji and Taisho Eras in Japan. (Inone Kiyoshi, *A History of Japanese Women*, p. 215)

It was the factory girls at Amamiya Silk Mill who went on the first strike in Japan against the harsh treatment by owners. On June 14, 1886 (Meiji 19), the factory girls of Amamiya shut themselves up in a neighboring temple to protest against the prolongation of working hours (from 14 actual working hours to 14½ hours), and the sharp cut in wages (there was to be an across-the-board wage-cut of 10 sen in a situation where the highest paid workers were paid only 33 sen per day) that were decreased unilaterally by the owners, who then formed a silk factory owners' association and unified themselves. This job desertion was successful, and the factory girls won their demands.

After this strike, strikes by factory girls were carried out in many factories throughout Japan. The strikes in this early stage almost always resulted in a victory for the women workers because the owners had as yet no strategy to suppress these strikes. But gradually, the strikes began to be crushed by the owners, who began to conspire with the police. The most potent cause of defeat for the factory girls lay in the fact that they had no organized solidarity, while on the contrary, the owners learned to band tightly together.

- Kazuko Tanaka

*A Short History of the Women's Movement  
in Modern Japan*

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A spinning mill in England, around 1850

Women working in the mills pioneered the industrial revolution.

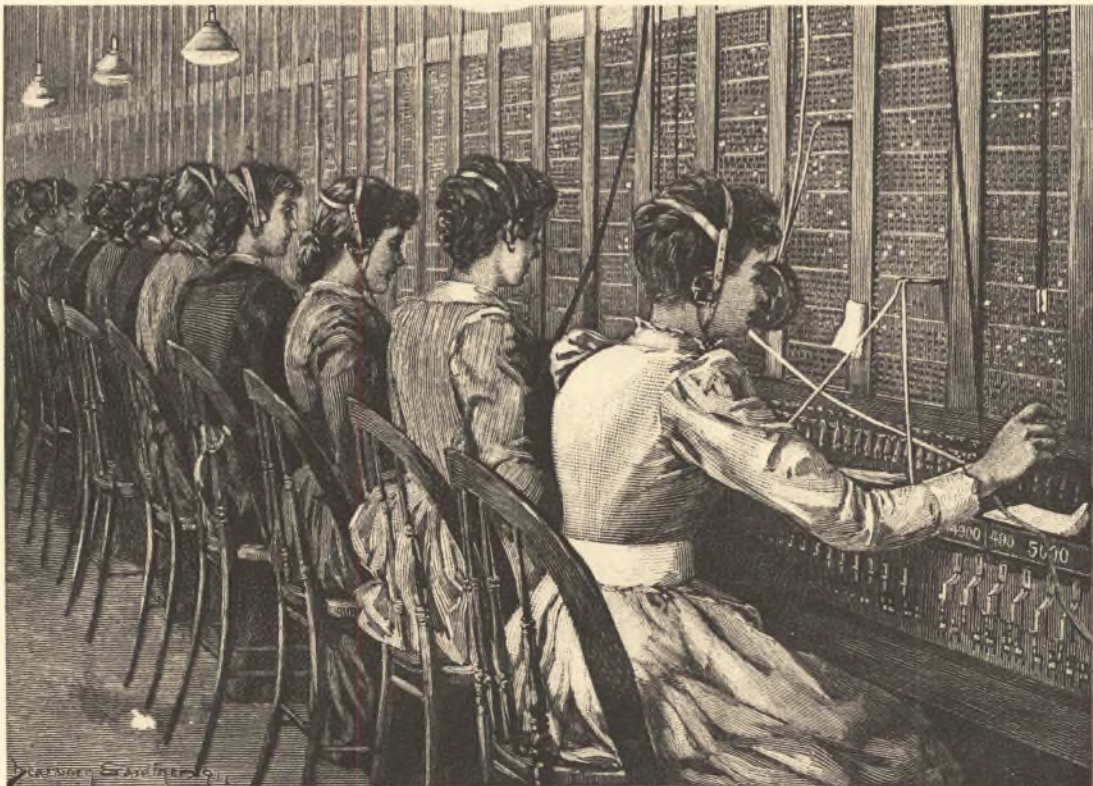


## The liberated switchboard



Above: An 1880 engraving of New York's central telephone exchange  
 Below: Manhattan's Cortlandt Street Exchange in 1890

The pictures reflect the dramatic change which occurred in just ten years as the job of telephone operator changed from a "man's job" to a "woman's job". Earlier, in 1878, Emma Nutt had been the first woman to break into the all-male field. Today, with jobs becoming scarce in other industries men are moving back into telephone switchboard work.





and can be paid less. If women move into a field therefore they're going to be paid less than the male workers. If their numbers are kept to a minimum the overall pay scale of that occupation will not be affected. If however large numbers come into the field, then naturally since their salaries are lower, the field becomes low-paying. Men leave both because they have more opportunities elsewhere and because the general salary range is driven down as well as the prestige of the work. Such is what happened in the case of telephone operators, bank clerks, teachers, and others.

Such are the cyclic manipulations of women workers which dictate the types of job we hold and enforce segregation.

### LIBERAL FALLACIES

At the outset of this investigation I was confused about the discrimination issue. I would say yes, women workers are discriminated against, but when I examined my feelings I came up with reservations about whether in fact we were on a par with men right now, whether in fact we were trying hard enough to succeed. Of course whenever I would come across a case which I felt absolutely sure had nothing to do with a woman's ability but rather that she was denied the job just because she was a woman, the anger and rage would well up inside me. But outside these specific contexts, since my consciousness was permeated by these doubts about women's adequacy, qualifications, I couldn't get very riled up about discrimination.

When I examined what the liberals had to say about discrimination I realized they were confused also; the contradictory feelings I was experiencing actually parallel the liberals' contradictory analysis on discrimination. Yes, they say, women workers are discriminated against, but they also push their "socialized," "brainwashed," "conditioned" view of women's behavior which claims we're damaged and therefore inferior (by training not by birth) which in the labor force translates into "unqualified."

Liberals recognize that job restrictions both overt and covert exist, they talk about quotas at length and the discrimination which abounds to keep women out of men's fields, but they also suggest it is women themselves who are the major obstacles to getting into men's jobs. Women "accept limited and damaging self-concepts, accompanied by low aspirations and lack of self-identity" as one New York NOW leaflet put it. Women have difficulty throwing off their "sex roles" is another thing they say; women aren't interested in moving into men's fields.

This suggestion and the concentration on this suggestion so undercuts the reality that barriers stand in the way of women's advancement—that women in fact are being discriminated against—that one hardly remembers such barriers really exist and are affecting us in the labor force, and one's focus turns from the realities to concentrate falsely on the problem of women, and their low job aspirations. Of course, if men thought our job aspirations as low as the liberals do they wouldn't have gone through all the trouble of putting up the various barriers to keep us out.

Your general view of women's adequacy or inadequacy is essential to how you see the discrimination issue. Because if you look at women as being equal right now to men, just as adequate and just as qualified, then you know the full significance of discrimination. If you see women as not equal right now to men, not adequate or qualified because of their "conditioning," then as with the male ruling class, discrimination turns out not to be the problem, women's inadequacy turns out to be the problem. The two lines are mutually exclusive. The argument about conditioning contradicts the discrimination argument.

Liberals to "clarify" the situation will say, what we mean is some women are qualified right now and being discriminated against, and some women are still functioning under the effects of their conditioning and so are not qualified at the moment. So sometimes it's a case of discrimination going on and sometimes it's just the fact that women aren't skilled enough yet or are being held back by their own inadequacies. But this straddling the fence stance also takes the force away from an attack on discrimination and in fact provides substantiating, supporting arguments for it. Recently in the pages of the *Times* (Feb. 9, 1975) a representative of NOW, which subscribes to the "socialized, brainwashed, conditioned" view of women's behavior and George Gilder, a biased male, have been heatedly debating women's situation in the work force. Gilder claims women just aren't qualified and as evidence of this fact states, "Hasn't the National Organization for Women been arguing for years that women are conditioned from birth to avoid competition with men?" Considering this, Gilder says, I have no trouble explaining women's lesser earnings.

The story in the spring 1972 issue of *Ms.* ("Heaven Won't Protect the Working Girl" by Louise Bernikow) is typical of this genre. It starts off by talking about Carmen, a Puerto Rican girl who is working at the checkout counter in a supermarket. Aside from the usual drudgery of the job which leaves Carmen dead on her feet the article says, today she is especially tired because she spends evenings in college classes and nights studying. Carmen is convinced that the way out of the supermarket is a college education. Carmen is dreaming the American dream of self-betterment, more money, greater dignity. "Do I have a right to tell her the facts," the author says, "that a college education for Carmen may only mean the exchange of a cash register for a typewriter?" The author spends the next two pages telling about the inequities women face in the job market, pointing out the tricks and devious manipulations used by the male power structure to block women's progress and advancement. Then, two paragraphs from the end of the article, in an incredible leap, the author states, "Of course, the root problems of discrimination are the social training of women which causes them to accept their own second-class positions. . . ." After telling us about Carmen working days, going to college evenings, and studying nights the author wants us to believe that her trouble lies with accepting her own second-class position! You know there aren't any hours left in Carmen's day to do much more about improving her second-class position in this society. Two



whole pages on the facts of discrimination—to be cancelled out in the end anyway by a careful, swift change of cause.

In the June '73 issue of *Ms.* magazine Gloria Steinem has an article entitled "If We're So Smart, Why Aren't We Rich"—a taunt directed at women by the male power structure. She proceeds to lay out the facts of discrimination, how women are kept down by the powers that be. She concludes: "The first step is believing in ourselves (us again); understanding that we are indeed smart, even if we aren't rich." (At the beginning of the article I thought it was men who were saying this to us, now it sounds like she is saying it.) Why does she spend pages on how *they* undermine our abilities and talents and then wish to assure *us* that we are indeed smart? Especially since all the facts she gives are about how poor we are and she has trouble mustering only a few about how smart we are (although those facts abound).

Granted it is an overwhelmingly outrageous experience to "look at" the discrimination against women in the labor force, to "see" and understand that the great majority of women are qualified, capable workers who are being kept out of better jobs, kept down in mediocre jobs, shuffled around into dead end jobs, and all for the benefit of the few in whose interests it is to keep women powerless. So outrageous is it in fact that many people will *not* see it. The effect of the liberal theory that women have been "socialized," "conditioned," and "brainwashed" is to soften this view, to dissipate the injustices of discrimination by suggesting all that much isn't going on, part of it is women's fault for not being qualified.

With all the talk of some liberals about discrimination, they're not really sure discrimination is the problem. They may be sure discrimination existed in the past—or in childhood—but they're never really sure it exists at present. Despite their talk about discrimination, their theories about women's psychological conditioning and sex roles (rather than oppression) undercuts the argument that discrimination is going on.

Liberals agree that segregation is one of the major problems affecting women workers, but they do not go far enough in their thinking, looking for the reasons why segregation exists and persists. They say men and women work at different types of jobs because they're taught to play different roles in society—"sex roles." They never analyze however what "sex roles" in actuality constitute; they stop short of calling it exploitation and oppression. They use the passive voice, with no actor involved in it. To talk about "roles" being oppressive does not say oppressive to whom, by whom, and how, and that's fine with the liberals. Because to them there is no exploiter and exploited—we're all being exploited, and by whom? Nobody in particular, by "sex roles."

Because they see the problem as a division into "sex roles"—equal on both sides—rather than a division into oppressor and oppressed and a fight against vested interests, they propose this psychological learning paradigm explanation and end up attributing segregation to women's submissiveness and low job aspirations. They say if women aren't in men's fields it's because they never got the idea,

they didn't try, they weren't qualified or felt they weren't, or some such reason as these.

## WOMEN ARE TRYING

Liberals say that women are not trying to get better jobs. Women aren't trying—it certainly explains a multitude of sins, doesn't it? Not only can it conveniently be used to explain why women are not in men's jobs but also why we're at the bottom of the men's jobs we are in. It explains why—allegedly—women don't try to get ahead, don't try and move into higher-paying jobs, don't try for professional careers, don't try to advance educationally and on and on. But before we even consider the validity of such propositions, let me ask, is "trying" for a woman the same as "trying" for a man?

Women need higher grades and higher test scores just to get into college. Women college students on the average get less financial aid than men, and since many families won't support women going to college, with some even still objecting, more of a try is required from a woman.

A Northwestern survey indicated that although 40% of all college students today are women, many companies do not regularly recruit college women through campus interviews. Since the companies that recruit at colleges seek outstanding senior students, graduates recruited on campus usually are offered higher beginning salaries than graduates who apply to a company's employment office after leaving college. Is this "not trying" or simply another form of discrimination?

Once in a male dominated field it seems it's even harder to survive. A woman scientist working in the lab said, "I was told not to expect favors just because I was a woman in a male dominated field. And yet every male I worked with expected favors of me because I was a woman. This ranged from expecting me to clean up after them, to keep smiling as it kept the 'atmosphere' of the lab jovial, to sex. . . . The drain of energy needed constantly to fight these pressures makes a woman lose interest, and confidence in her ability to do the work."

Sarah McClendon a particularly tough-minded and astute journalist, has been laughed at over the years for questions that turned out to be exceptionally acute, like her 1958 query to Eisenhower about dispatching troops to Lebanon without congressional authority. It seems that the *New York Times* ran an editorial denouncing Ms. McClendon for calling Nixon to account in a press conference for alleged minor transgressions. (McClendon was asking about the Veretans' Administration: the man whose transgressions she inquired into has since been fired.) Such inquisitive, persistent investigating in a male journalist would be highly praised, yet McClendon gets denounced. When Eileen Shanahan of the *Times* called editor John Oakes to complain, Oakes said, "Oh, come on now, are you sure you're not defending her just because she's a woman?" "No," Shanahan replied, "I'm sure you were attacking her just because she was."

We haven't even considered the aspect of punishment involved in these acts of daring. A woman has to pay a price



for achievement—I dare not even say fulfillment, since I'm not sure it can be obtained in this society. A woman in the pure sciences tells how her dates usually come to the conclusion she's "too smart for her own good." A prominent woman lawyer confessed at a consciousness-raising meeting that she used to pose as a Woolworth store clerk when she went away on vacation cruises—it proved more fruitful, she said. The tales from professional women about their sense of isolation, their frustration with a lack of recognition, are all too frequent.

If you're going to get into judging whether women try hard enough to advance or not, then what you must first prove is that what you're asking women to try is equal to what you're asking men to try. If it's not equal, and you're asking for a more enormous try from women, then you're discriminating. Nowhere in all this talk of trying is there the recognition that women are up against a lot more than men, that women are in fact facing discrimination.

Not only must we be excellent at our work but we must also constantly be battling the forces of discrimination which try and keep us down. To suggest that when we don't make this enormous try we are damaged, or that our position in the labor force is then our fault, is both illogical and anti-feminist. Trying for women is battling discrimination; trying for men is just trying. But despite this women tried anyway. They tried *and* they battled discrimination.

When you're talking about women trying for men's jobs in the professional realm the theory that's advanced is that we don't have the training, and when you're talking about women trying to move into jobs which don't ordinarily require elaborate training or long periods of formal education, such as in the transportation field, mining industry, construction jobs and the like, the theory that's advanced is that we're not interested in doing this kind of work. But for a group which is supposedly not interested, our work history, past and present, shows women flocking to do this kind of work whenever an opportunity presents itself. All the jobs we look around and don't see any women in; women have tried for—have even at one time or another filled and filled well, but they have been pushed out. If women are not represented in these fields at this particular cyclic period in history it's because strong efforts are being made to keep us out. And we're always trying to get back in.

In 1918 women became street car conductors and ticket agents. Railway companies allowed women to work at these kinds of jobs because they could not secure a sufficient number of men. It was a real opportunity for women since the pay was good; they were being paid the same as men, and some of their own comments about the job reveal how much they liked the work and how desperately they appreciated being paid a salary they could support themselves and their dependents on.

*"Lightest work I ever did and best pay . . . Had to do heavy lifting when I checked orders in the drug company; filled a man's place at \$15 a week, while men beside me got twice that. . . ."*

*"I worked as a waitress . . . walked miles and miles every day and carried tons of trays . . . and people were always complaining of slow service . . . this is pleasant work and I do appreciate being able to drop on a seat for a few minutes on and off. . . ."*

*"The wages are good and it's a million times easier than washing by the day. . . ."*

*"No one who has worked in a factory can fail to appreciate why we prefer this outdoor work. . . . I tried driving a taxicab, but found it too cold. . . . I am supporting four and my earnings now make it possible to give them food, clothing and shelter they need. . . ."*<sup>3</sup>

But we were kicked out.

Male street car conductors, backed by their union, objected to the employment of women; the only argument offered was that it was not their proper place, although women seemed delighted with the work, and the railway companies said they were completely satisfied with the work of women. The issue was submitted to Department of Labor investigators to decide "whether there was a sufficient shortage of men to justify the continued employment of women." There was not. While it was admitted there was still a scarcity of male labor it was felt companies could find men to do this work even though "they will have to lower standards somewhat." It was recommended that all the women be discharged. Women protested and brought the issue before the War Labor Board; the union threatened a strike if the company did not agree to stop hiring women and to replace all the women now employed with competent men. The next day the male workers struck and when the women conductors called upon the War Labor Board to arbitrate, it delayed a hearing until after all the employed women were dismissed. A year later—the Board came to the decision that all the women should be reinstated. The companies by this time just disregarded the decision and abided by the union action. A woman train conductor is as much an anomaly today as she must have been back then in 1918.

Come World War II, women tried again. During the war, necessity, plus the fact that women were proving to be as capable as men in many industries, eventually opened all industries to women. Their numbers increased from 13 million in 1940 to over 19 million at the peak of the war. Although 25.3% of the female population over the age of 14 had been working before the war, now they were able to enter or shift to industries and occupations previously reserved almost exclusively for men, hence the war provided them with better paying jobs than ever before.

Women worked as mechanics at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, in aircraft engine plants assembling airplanes, in the munitions factories, in the trucking industry, on the assembly line in automobile plants; suddenly they were perfectly qualified and competent. A government survey in fact showed that women could perform four-fifths of the almost

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Dept. of Labor, U.S. Women's Bureau, Bull. #11, *Women Street Car Conductors and Ticket Agents*, p. 34, 35.





"In a Chicago Freight Repair Yard, Women Pivot a Bad Boxcar Truck"

#### THE WEAKER SEX?

*Excerpts from an article in The National Geographic Magazine of August 1944—in the good old days when all the propaganda was aimed at driving women out of the home and into the work force. . .*

*(Rediscovered by The Pedestal, a Women's Liberation Movement newspaper, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, 4/71)*



"No Time to Prink in the Mirrorlike Tail Assembly of a Liberator"



"Repairing a Scout Car—One of the Many Necessary but Unglamorous War Jobs"



3,000 occupations studied, and in the fifth of the jobs not now suitable for women, breaking them down into simpler operations would make hiring women possible.

Women were working at good jobs at higher wages than ever before. However Roosevelt's female Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins, predicted that American women would go on preferring domesticity to factory work after the war was over, and to help her prediction along she advocated a strengthening of protective legislation and steps to insure that women who took jobs only because of the war be encouraged to leave the labor market. She was wrong; women expected to keep on working. On the average, 80% of the women who had been employed before Pearl Harbor intended to stay on their jobs. Among those who hadn't been working before the war, 75% who previously were in school expected to continue working, while more than half of the former housewives had similar plans.

But we were kicked out.

Within one month after the war ended over 600,000 women lost their jobs outright. In 1945 and 1946 layoffs came suddenly and without much explanation. By February 1946, four million fewer women were working than had worked at the peak employment period. The number of women working as operatives and in craftsmen jobs dropped by over one million. Although unions recalled "that women had done men's jobs during the war with 100% efficiency" such jobs were now redesignated men's jobs and it was actually claimed the work was too heavy and not suitable to women—the very same work which weeks earlier women had done adequately. Certain female classifications were changed to male classifications in order to exclude women. Seniority was either outright ignored or manipulated in ways to benefit the absent men. Protective legislation, which was suspended during the war to permit women in men's jobs temporarily, was reinstated.

Women who weren't pushed out or laid off were reshuffled into women's jobs. An employment study in 1945 showed that 40% to 61% of the openings for women were in clerical, sales, and service jobs but only 15% to 18% of the women claimants last worked in these fields. Women who tried to resist this reshuffling were denied unemployment compensation if they refused jobs at lower rates of pay than they had been earning. And so if women had jobs at all at the end of the war they were not essentially different from the types of jobs they had before the war.<sup>4, 5</sup>

But this is past history, right? Wrong. In 1974 a survey of 84 industries in Cleveland showed that 50 of them employed no women in starting blue-collar work. The employers said—are you ready—Women aren't interested in trying for this kind of work. Meanwhile a women's group in the Bay Area reported it had to stage a long, cold, overnight vigil just to get 22 women, four of them black and

one Asian, accepted as *applicants* for an apprenticeship program in blue-collar jobs. In December of the same year, liberals at the first national conference on women in blue-collar jobs, sponsored by the Ford Foundation, proposed that what was necessary was a program of sex role re-education. (A training program to get us to try?)

Before 1973, the first year the Police Department, under pressure from the Federal Government at the instigation of women, began hiring women in any number, women police officers were barely visible. Is that evidence of the fact that women weren't interested in police work? What liberal would have predicted that women would ever want to ride in a police car on active patrol duty? Yet in 1973 when the barriers were lifted, the quotas and other discriminatory criteria, women swarmed into police work, quickly raising the number in New York from the quota level of 350 to 618.

We have performed in every area. We are, in fact, sick to death of having to prove our qualifications. Our history, past and present, attests to them and to our ever-present discrimination, the real culprit behind such accusations.

#### WOMEN ARE ALREADY QUALIFIED

How do we know if women in general are qualified, equal? Have they been "conditioned" into being inferior? "Damaged" gets translated into "unqualified" in the job market. When liberals view the facts on women workers they have trouble "seeing" our qualifications. You know that's what bias, prejudice, discrimination is all about: "astigmatism of the eyeball," as the white music industry had trouble for years "seeing" the value of jazz, until they co-opted it for themselves.

We should recall that the liberal establishment puts forth the same conditioning theory in regard to Black people. They state that Blacks are unqualified on the whole for jobs in the labor force, not on the grounds that they are born inferior or unqualified, but like women, because of their previous condition of servitude, their training, their conditioning. The growth and strength of the Black Movement brought pressure to bear on such a theory and with the building of a separate black power base emerged the "qualified" black. Where did these "qualified" blacks suddenly come from? Were they transformed overnight, did they learn real quick, or was it just a case of the lies of the oppressor being overpowered and the truth being consequently brought to light? The case is similar with women.

Let's just look at some facts about women workers. A woman college graduate working in the labor force is making less money than men high-school drop-outs—are you going to accuse her of being unqualified? Although the bets were in that women police officers on patrol duty wouldn't be able to hack it, the Police Foundation reported after a study of the first year that there were no significant differences in job performance of male and female officers.

Even our best known, highest paid and most talented actresses are not immune to the charge of "unqualified" when the male establishment sees fit to use it. A *Times* article, "Come to the Night Club Old Chum" (April, 1974) tells how some of our best known actresses have been

<sup>4</sup>The Review of Radical Political Economics, Political Economy of Women, Vol IV, No. 3, "Women in the War Economy," Joan Ellen Trey.

<sup>5</sup>What Really Happened to Rosie the Riveter? Demobilization and the Female Labor Force, 1944-47, Module 9, Sheila Tobias and Lisa Anderson.



forced to begin working in night-clubs because movie roles for women have become so scarce. The rash of movies which seem to feature only male couples has contributed to this. Shirley MacLaine said, "... maybe we women have intimidated the fantasy processes of the men who write the scripts ... now there are fewer and fewer parts." Vincent Canby, however, writing a few months later, says, "What's happening has more to do with movie economics than it

In England, scantily clothed women work by the side of nude men in coal pits, and, harnessed to trucks, perform the severe labor of dragging coal up inclined planes to the mouth of the pit, a work testing every muscle and straining every nerve, and so severe that the stoutest men shrink from it; while their degradation in brickyards and iron mines has commanded the attention of philanthropists and legislators.

A gentleman recently travelling in Ireland blushes for his sex when he sees the employments of women, young and old. They are patient drudges, staggering over the bogs with heavy creels of turf on their backs, or climbing the slopes from the seashore, laden like beasts of burden with the heavy sand-dripping seaweed, or undertaking long journeys on foot into the market towns, bearing weighty hampers of farm produce. In Montenegro, women form the beasts of burden in war, and are counted among the "animals" belonging to the prince. In Italy, that land which for centuries led the world in art, women work in squalor and degradation under the shadow of St. Peter's and the Vatican for four-pence a day; while in America, under the Christianity of the nineteenth century, until within twenty years, she worked on rice and cotton plantations waist-deep in water, or under a burning sun performed the tasks demanded by a cruel master, at whose hands she also suffered the same kind of moral degradation exacted of the serf under feudalism.

— Matilda Gage,  
"Women, Church, and State"  
*HISTORY OF WOMAN SUFFRAGE, 1881*

From birth, black people are told a set of lies about themselves. We are told that we are lazy—yet I drive through the Delta area of Mississippi and watch black people picking cotton in the hot sun for fourteen hours. We are told, 'If you work hard, you'll succeed'—but if that were true, black people would own this country. We are oppressed because we are black—not because we are ignorant, not because we are lazy, not because we're stupid (and got good rhythm), but because we're black.

— Stokely Carmichael, 1966  
"Power and Racism"  
*STOKELY SPEAKS*

does with sexism. . . . This is not a time likely to produce many female superstars." Female actresses say the problem is too few parts; Canby says the problem is too few female stars.

The Coast Guard has admitted women this year as regulars and officers because, they said, of the manpower shortage that developed when the draft was ended. For openers, however, the women are required to have high school diplomas while men only have to pass a battery of Coast Guard tests. Despite the fact that women will go through the same exhausting boot camp regimen that the Coast Guard has been using for decades, and the commander of the women in present training assures us that he runs the women as hard as the men, they are only eligible for four jobs: hospital corpsman, dental technician, storekeeper and secretary. Interestingly enough, in the first rifle drill competition, a 19-year-old female finished ahead of men from nine other recruit companies.

In the academic world as well women's qualifications are questioned. Dr. Richard Lester, for example, economics professor at Princeton University, has published a report sponsored by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education stating that affirmative action programs are lowering standards and undermining faculty quality by compelling colleges and universities to hire more women and blacks. "There is an inadequate pool of such qualified people," he said.

Part of the problem with the smallness of the pool however, is the fact that Dr. Lester and his colleagues won't recognize it as being any larger. The same commission that sponsored Dr. Lester's report released a report on women in academia last Fall stating that "women constitute the largest unused supply of superior intelligence in the United States." Are we to believe in the span of such a few short months that supply has been used up?

In 1970 a group of women faculty members at Columbia University noted that although Columbia grants ¼ of its doctorate degrees to women students only 2% of the tenured faculty members in their graduate schools are women. "We are puzzled by the Graduate Faculties commitment to train women, but not to hire them," the report says (*New York Times* 1/11/70). At the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association it was noted that although 11.3% of all Ph.D.'s in political science are earned by women only 2% of the assistant professors in the field are women. The Carnegie Commission report said that women constitute 36.5% of the holders of advanced degrees throughout the country but are only 24% of the nations' college faculties and a mere 8.6% of full professors. Such statistics challenge Lester's claim that the problem is the smallness of the pool since the statistics show the pool is already much larger than the number of positions filled by women.

The real problem, Lester insists, lies with the fact that women hold only 13% of all Ph.D.'s. Yet how can this be the problem when in 1970, when the job market was less tight than it is now, on the doctorate level 20% of women psychologists, 20% of women in sociology, 10% of women in history and 14% of women anthropologist-archaeologists reported that they were seeking employment but had no



WHAT WOMEN MUST DO  
Two Versions

*LIBERALS*

get qualifications  
throw off sex roles  
go to work for self-fulfillment  
strive to advance yourself  
recognize you're your own worst enemy  
try to do better

*RADICALS*

fight to have qualifications recognized  
end quotas and barriers that enforce segregation  
go to work for independence and freedom  
organize to advance collectively  
recognize male supremacy and capitalism are your worst enemies  
try to have a revolution

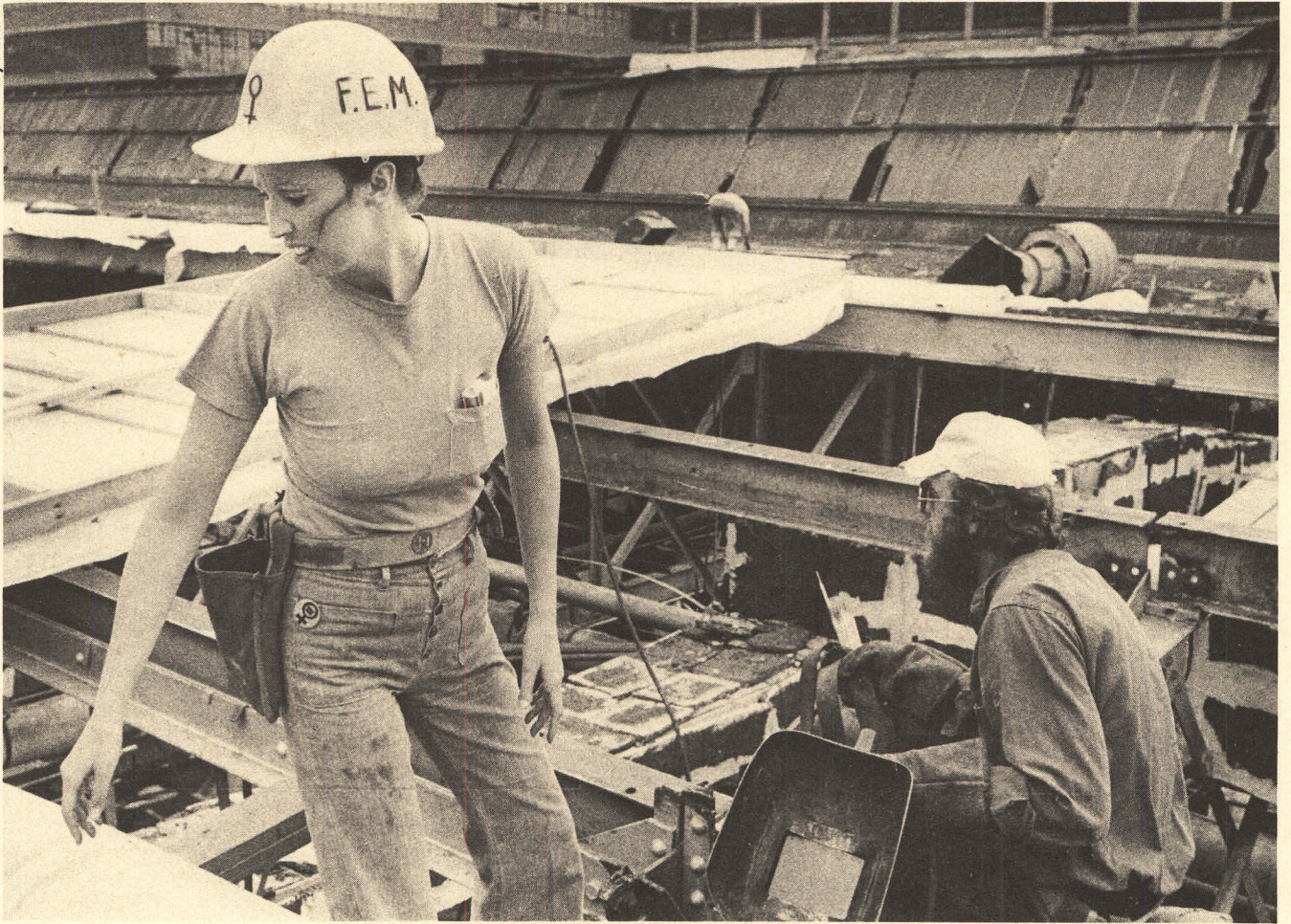
I viewed myself as assisting everything that was done, and you must recognize that this is what's key in the liberation of women. That the form of assistance that women give in political movements to men is just as crucial as the leadership that men give to those movements. And this is something that is never recognized and never dealt with. Because women are always relegated to assistance and this is where I became interested in the liberation of women. Conflicts, constant conflicts came up, conflicts that would arise as a result of the fact that I was married to a member of the Central Committee and I was also an officer in the Party. Things that I would have suggested myself would be implemented. But if I suggested them the suggestion might be rejected; if they were suggested by a man the suggestion would be implemented.

It seemed throughout the history of my working with the Party, I always had to struggle with this. The suggestion itself was never viewed objectively. The fact that the suggestion came from a woman gave it some lesser value. And it seemed that it had something to do with the egos of the men involved. I know that the first demonstration that we had at the courthouse for Huey Newton which I was very instrumental in organizing, the first time we went out on the soundtrucks, I was on the soundtrucks, the first leaflet we put out, I wrote, the first demonstration, I made up the pamphlets. And the members of that demonstration for the most part were women. I've noticed that throughout my dealings in the black movement in the United States, that the most anxious, the most eager, the most active, the most quick to understand the problem and quick to move are women.

— Kathleen Cleaver,  
*THE BLACK SCHOLAR*, 1971



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Women's abilities can be called into question at any time. Liberals in socialist countries do it as well depending upon what their goal is at the moment.

From Kittlitz, East Germany, a report about the coal mining industry . . .

"Huge steamshovels—operated by women, who Mr. Mahling (pit director) says do the work best, sit on the 25-foot-thick lignite layer in the bottom of all this and, with much clanking, whistling and grinding, scoop it into railroad cars." (*N.Y. Times*, 2/4/75)

Meanwhile, the USSR is in the process of prohibiting women from holding such jobs claiming the work is "heavy, unhealthy or dangerous." Such construction jobs in the USSR pay the highest wages. (*United Nations, 1974 Report on the World Social Situation*)

prospects? If Lester's colleagues can't even employ the 13% already available, why are they so busy looking around and claiming they need more?

Not only are women Ph.D.'s available and not being utilized, i.e. not only is there an adequate pool, but looking at the facts, it seems like it's a very selective, highly qualified pool. Just consider for a second—44% of women entering freshmen across the country had a B+ or better average in high school compared to 29% of the men; 45% of women seniors in college had a B+ or better average compared with 38% of the men. Add to that the fact that only 54% of women enter college as compared to 67% of the men and only 29% of those in college go on to graduate school compared to 44% of the men—this tougher selection process, points out a dean at Berkeley, would indicate that "by the time a woman finishes her Ph.D., she is probably better qualified than a man, since she had to hurdle more barriers." If this is so, as the evidence would seem to indicate, then why isn't every single woman Ph.D. not only employed, but employed at a salary and status position commensurate with such training and perseverance?

Qualified women are available; businesses and government, like the colleges and universities, have only to hire them.

#### "THE SELECT FEW"

Qualifications are what is being talked about and not the more obvious issue of discrimination because in effect liberals in the Women's Movement don't believe women on the whole are qualified any more than the male power structure does. We've seen the contradictory position they take on the discrimination issue, stating that it is indeed the problem, then undercutting it by focusing on women's "socialized," "conditioned," behavior, which then turns out to be the problem. Behind this contradictory stance lies, I think, the liberal position on discrimination and explains why they've fought discrimination at all.

What the liberal position amounts to is that some women, a small select few, are qualified, but most women are not.

It seems if you fight every obstacle placed in your way and manage to make it in some sense, like the tokens, that's the test that you're qualified. All the rest of us, however, who can't surmount the incredible odds, who cannot get around the barriers, prove we were never qualified to begin with and hence discrimination does not apply to us.

Some women, the small select few, have apparently overcome their conditioning, and because they're so qualified they are the ones the discrimination issue must apply to. But who are these small select few? They are the token women.

Since these are the only women who liberals feel sure are qualified, having society's stamp of approval, these are also the only women liberals will believe when they say they had to struggle against discrimination even to get into their token positions. Thus, ironically, while the select few prove to the liberal that discrimination does exist, they also prove that it does not (or how could these token women have made it?).

#### UNDERSUPPLY OF QUALITY?

In line with this view that there are large numbers of unqualified women milling about in the labor force and only a handful of highly qualified women, liberals can't fathom why society would be discriminating against a select few. This has to do with their basic assumptions about the structure of society, however. One of the main kingpins of the liberal failure of analysis is their assumption that U.S. society as it's presently constituted is being run for the benefit of all, for the common good. That the smart are on the top, and the stupid are on the bottom. That the present system (of capitalism and male supremacy) needs and wants quality and excellence. As we have seen, NOW's "Statement of Purpose" says that today's technology has intensified American industry's need for creative intelligence. And since the select few naturally have creative intelligence—society should want them, right? They see no problem here of vested interests contending with the common good and have no recognition (analysis) that vested interests exist, that the interests of capitalism and male supremacy stand in the way of women.

Along with their assumption that the present society is based on the common good, is their contention that there is an undersupply of quality.

That's why Caroline Bird exhorts society with pleas that it's "wasting the talents of women" and Gloria Steinem tells white male business executives "to take a hard look . . . and then decide for themselves if the degree of talent that they find is so high that business can afford to ignore more than one-half the American population. . . ." But society knows what it's wasting and it knows what it's gaining, and can well afford to ignore more than one-half the population. After all by ignoring one-half the population you can further the interests of the other half. Despite liberals' wishful thinking, society is not based on excellence or the greater good, it is based on a system of class privilege and male privilege. There is a conflict of interest between



what the ruling class wants and needs and what women want and need.

Not to understand the basic structure of society is not to understand oppression. Women are oppressed in this society not because men can't understand our capabilities or see what we have to offer, but because they have the power to see what they want to see, to use what they want to use, to make things as advantageous for themselves as possible. What class you came from decides your excellence, what sex you are decides what will be recognized. Liberals make their case for the few qualified women they wish to educate the power structure into recognizing, but they're fighting a losing battle. You don't educate away vested interests and the privileges men receive by exploiting women. They'll get their token women, but tokens can be replaced whenever it's thought expedient.

Liberals are in error about the structure of this society as they are about the amount of qualified, adequate women there are being discriminated against. They think the power structure has an irrational "blindspot" when it comes to the qualified few they see, yet they have a "blindspot" when it



Francesco del Cossa, circa 1435-77

comes to the majority of women. It is the essence of discrimination that female excellence is not wanted, is not seen, is found threatening; *not* that it is not there. The huge number of discrimination cases being brought by women before the courts challenges this view of the select few as any perusal of the facts about women workers challenges the fact that we don't have the qualifications.

Liberals see a society where quality is scarce and urge women to get qualified. Yet qualifications abound. Caroline Bird pointed out in an article entitled "The Job Market: The Class of '73 Need Not Apply" that there was a surplus of college graduates for the present job market, so tremendous in fact that the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education warns that during the 1970's there will be about three million more graduates than there will be jobs traditionally requiring a college degree. There is always a need for certain basic skills, but beyond that level, since that level is adequately being met, it is not a question of qualifications or quality. It is a question of goals. And if your goal is keeping your privileged position, rather than opening your eyes to excellence, then logically the "out" group can never qualify. Women are one of the "out" groups. The fact is that there is an over-supply of quality right now in the labor force and an under-supply of power to use people's abilities, all people's abilities, for a better society and not exploit them. The problem is organizing society to utilize all the quality and still get the hard work done. Capitalism white supremacy and male supremacy prevent this from happening.

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Although woman has performed much of the labor of the world, her industry and economy have been the very means of increasing her degradation. Not being free, the results of her labor have gone to build up and sustain the very class that has perpetuated this injustice. Even in the family, where we should naturally look for the truest conditions, woman has always been robbed of the fruits of her own toil. . . . Taught that the fruits of her industry belonged to others, she has seen man enter into every avocation most suitable to her, while she, the uncomplaining drudge of the household, condemned to the severest labor, has been systematically robbed of her earnings, which have gone to build up her master's power, and she has found herself in the condition of the slave, deprived of the results of her own labor. . . .

Woman has been the great unpaid laborer of the world, and although within the last two decades a vast number of new employments have been opened to her, statistics prove that in the great majority of these, she is not paid according to the value of the work done, but according to sex. The opening of all industries to woman, and the wage question as connected with her, are most subtle and profound questions of political economy, closely interwoven with the rights of self-government.

INTRODUCTION, *HISTORY OF WOMAN SUFFRAGE*, 1881

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