

will have to continue to be a militant feminist movement here at all times.

And in order to stay alive, the movement must grow; it has to keep growing, reaching more and more women and therefore more and more corners of male supremacy. But women aren't going to keep on joining the movement, women aren't going to stay in the movement, unless it expresses our true desires, unless it tells the truth and fights for the truth.

For instance, most women wouldn't join a movement that called for "free love" when some women in the movement

were saying that it is okay for men to sleep around and to sleep with a woman and leave her the next day, because they know that isn't either freedom (for women) or love (for women). They would know it is a lie. And they also aren't going to join a movement that doesn't say anything about men, that skirts the problems with men and talks about women's "identity" all the time, even about freeing *men* from nagging wives and various other alleged female monsters. We *are* the nagging wives and we know we only nag in an effort to get what is our due . . . and when we escalate our tactics beyond nagging, men—and women—who complained about nagging are going to wish we had gone back to nagging.

The Double Standard Of Organization

Elizabeth Most

Older women, like many powerless Americans, are hooked on the cult of the individual. The more homogenized everything is around us, the more we are pressed into being unique. Older women, in particular, having been identified as the wife or mother of so-and-so, become anxious about their individuality when bereft of these props.

What the individual is most afraid of, must avoid at all cost, is organization. Organization calls up regimentation, the spectre of the automaton, blue ants. The worst enemy of individuality is structure. Among the least organized in our country are the housewives and, topping them, the older women. Yet, instead of being the freest, most independent sector of our society, we hear one another moan about alienation, loneliness, no one's caring.

A glimpse through Alice's looking glass to the other side, seeing the double standard at work, may help turn us "little" Americans around. The "big" Americans are organized within every inch of their roles and careers. They are companies, corporations, combines, consortiums, conferences, cartels, conglomerates. Jack Anderson said of Litton Industries' shenanigans, "Like all multi-million dollar matters the story is complex." Complex means organization. It means that one cannot separate the top Wall Street firms from the Rockefellers, the Duponts from

the state of Delaware; one cannot extricate the CIA from ITT, disengage Generals from corporation executives, detach Nixon from Mutual Funds or Pepsi-Cola (witness under-table negotiations on his trip to Moscow). Try to unravel interlocking directorates or to split up the military-industrial-government complex.

Organization means that the same families crop up over and over again. Multi-millionaires are on government payrolls (without benefit of OEO or Just One Break) in cabinet posts, as ambassadors, as heads of agencies; they are our most successful politicians. Patronage, the heart and soul of politics, means organization. Each member is beholden to others for favors, and each one's neck depends on the necks of friends (see Watergate). They are organized at all levels, from the small town big shot to the lifetime high office holder in Washington.

Organization means that those on top stay on top. No matter how wildly they and their extended families spend, their wealth is inexhaustible from generation to generation, as their establishment drains money from the earnings of the rest of us. They are organized to assure that Internal Revenue is mercifully soft on capital and interest, and firm on wages. Organized to pass laws favorable to themselves (oil depletion, farm and carrier subsidies) and to obstruct laws benefiting the less affluent public, such as industrial safety, environment, rights of blacks or migrants. They are organized to evade laws they don't like: Monopolies are stronger than ever; and who ever paid the upper-level maximum tax? Organized legislators sold senatorships for 124 years until 1913 before we finally pushed through a law permitting us to elect our own senators. In contrast, Johnson, with a last stroke of his pen, passed a law that was to raise Nixon's salary from \$100,000 to \$200,000 a year, in the spirit of bipartisan fraternity.

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Organization does not constrict the individuality of the rich. They are not alienated. They belong to society (or does society belong to them?). Their public relations servants show us their weddings, their charity balls, their first nights at the Met, the diamonds they wear. Gossip columnists feed us with innocuous tidbits parading their idiosyncrasies. The structures that publicize their personal lives are silent as to their impersonal selves—their bank accounts, their connections, their deals.

In a democratic society, organization at the top has to be based on secrecy. What we see is an occasional tip of the iceberg when something breaks away. Information is power, and those in power have information at their fingertips which they use for their own ends and keep from us. The government fact-finding organizations, theoretically available to all of us, are at the disposal of big business. Nixon prevailed on the Census Bureau to collect new facts, not, for example, to understand better our debilitated family life, but to benefit the manufacturers of mobile homes. What is more important, the government squanders money to exclude us from information. The Pentagon has at least two million classified documents in its files. More than 20,000 government officials, not counting CIA men, have the right to classify information. The FBI, nonetheless, has given out secret information to over 8,000 agencies. Which agencies are they? Which Americans deserve to learn secrets about other Americans? And we all pay the bill for this information collecting.

Our money is used to prevent our knowing when the organized top, not satisfied with things stacked in their favor, schemes to break the law. The Army uses its lush funds to cover up the PX swindle in Vietnam and its heroin traffic involving Air Force officers and General Ky. Remember him? It retired General Peers at 58 when he refused to remain a good member of the club and conceal the facts of Mylai. Our top people have lapses of memory, do not answer Congressional "requests," resist security (Mitchell refused to open his briefcase on entering the courtroom), destroy evidence (top FBI man, Gray, burned public files to keep Watergate CREEP forever secret).

Conspiratorial evasions are always balanced in the double standard with "strict construction of the Constitution" at the other end. The government is spending over \$5 million to "get" Ellsberg and Russo, who not only admit their role in the Pentagon Papers' disclosure, but are eager, without immunity, to tell much more than the court or the prosecution lets them. The Vietnam War Veterans, who got to Miami last August on a shoestring, are still being doggedly persecuted in the trial of the "Gainesville 8," accused of trying to hurt the goliath Republican Convention, while the wide and deep lawbreaking of top Republicans is being shielded, again with our money.

The organized top has one worry: organization from

below. Individual frustrations and resentments don't bother them. But their establishment does all in its power to prevent *our* organizing. In the first place, by brainwashing us into believing that organizing is somehow subversive, un-American, suspect and inimical to our personality. Secondly, by direct intervention. In 1970, then U.S. Attorney General Mitchell had 11,000 Americans arrested and herded into outdoor arenas without food or sanitation, for the crime of organizing *for one day* to protest our aggression in Cambodia. So many barriers, lawful and unlawful, are put up that less than a quarter of our labor force is organized, and the top sees to it that we are down on that one-fourth. The media connects unions in our minds with high prices. Well, *California farm workers are paid 2¢ for each head of lettuce they pick in the broiling sun*. The media doesn't bother to inform on the organized syndicates to whom we pay the other 47¢. Norco, Shell Oil's Louisiana refinery, on strike since January, is so afraid of worker organization that it pays the "high price" of union wages to scabs and picks them up from their homes in buses. Real estate boards have existed since cities began, but tenant organizations are daring, radical, unthinkable. Yet, together, we have only to withhold exorbitant rents. Can buildings move south?

The top prevents our organizing by the old method of divide and rule, renamed "Vietnamization." Yellows fight yellows and "little" Americans fight "little" Americans; "failures" fight "failures"; hardhats fight students; whites drive away blacks from schools and neighborhoods; men fear women will take their jobs. Competition is very keen at the bottom, while those at the top, even when discovered in wrongdoing, get other sinecures, and leave their posts with pensions intact. Last month 350 men jostled one another in a "fun city" street for three days *and nights* until, on the fourth morning, "chilled and sodden, . . . disheveled, stubble-faced . . . with rain dripping off their faces," 125 of them, lucky enough to be in the front of the line, got permits that might lead to jobs in the construction field.

We women are afraid not only to organize ourselves, but to join those whose circumstances do not coincide with our own. Anyone helping out another group is an "outside agitator." The double standard has no such epithet for the powerful ones. Chambers of Commerce and doctors (what do they have in common?) formed an alliance to stop "welfarism" in the shape of national health insurance.

Let us older women wake up to the double standard. Organization means participation, pride in group, knowing one another, belonging, and having purpose. We should recognize our buddies, even in diversified situations, and be ready to combine, to cooperate across the board. What do we have in common? Our humanity, our gregariousness, our social awareness, and the creativity within all of us when energies are released.