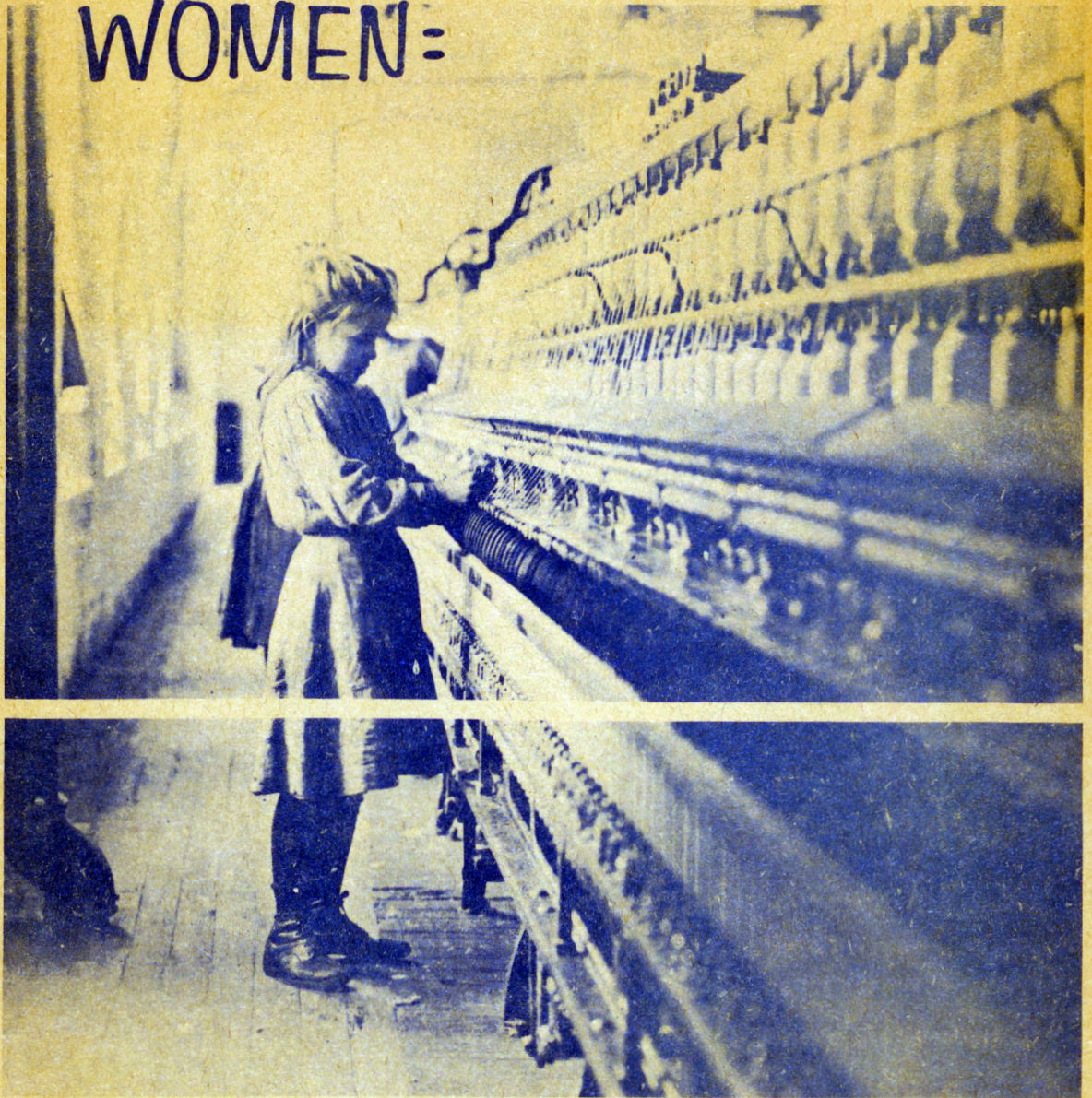


# AMERICAN WOMEN=



their use and abuse BY  
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## INTRODUCTION

*" I ask no favors for my sex. I surrender not our claim to equality. All I ask of our brethren is that they will take their feet from off our necks, and permit us to stand upright on the ground which God has designed us to occupy."*

Sarah Grimke, 1838

When Angela and Sarah Grimke, of Charleston, South Carolina, began their first tour in northern states to speak the horrors of the institution of slavery they were hooted, jeered, and stoned; sometimes they narrowly escaped with their lives. Undoubtedly the issue of abolition was inflammatory even in Massachusetts in 1838, but never before had two women been so bold as to dare to speak before a publicized political gathering, and it was for this that they were punished.

In the summer of 1840, a delegation of American women were refused seating at a World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, England. Among the delegation were two women, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who were later to become the strong leaders of a growing American women's rights movement.

The social condition of women in their time was appalling. As late as 1860 the eminent jurist, David Dudley Field, summarized the laws relating to married women thus:

"A married women cannot sue for her services, as all she earns legally belongs to the husband, whereas his earnings belong to himself, and the wife legally has no interest in them. Where children have property and both parents are living, the father is the guardian. In case of the wife's death without a will, the husband is entitled to all her personal property and to a life interest in the whole of her real estate to the entire exclusion of her children, even though this property may have come to her through a former husband and the children of that marriage still be living. In case a wife be personally injured, whether in reputation by slander, or in body by accident, compensation must be recovered in the joint name of herself and her husband, and when recovered it belongs to him."

Married women in particular suffered "civil death", having no right to property and no legal entity or existence apart from their husbands.

And where are women today? Over half of us still are in the home, tied to menial household chores; Particularly in the South, many of us are in the lowest paying of industrial jobs offered; Some of us, having attended an ivory tower school might be "professional", but the professions we occupy are still women's professions, as traditional as ever. Of equal importance is that we still have all the mental chains of female bondage, and those chains bind us to our stereotype, handed down from the days of "Southern Womanhood".

Since 1960 there has been a terrific upsurge in political activity, spurred by the quest of the exploited, disinherited and disenfranchised black population. The New Left, South and North, also received new life blood from protests against the war in Vietnam. As all these movements have grown, the numbers of women in them have also grown. Yet, in the South New Left, activist men outnumber radical women three to one.

Why are our numbers so few? How have we appealed to women to change America? What are our sisters concerned about? Who is our enemy? Where do we stand and WHERE DO WE GO?

These questions have begun a debate within the Movement. Women's groups exist in at least five Southern cities (New Orleans, Atlanta, Gainesville, Durham, and Miami), and over 35 more nationally. A flurry of activity has been sweeping co-ed campuses since 1968, with women demanding equality in social codes of the universities. Conferences and seminars are being planned to discuss these questions.

The condition of women in America did not develop and does not exist in a vacuum. It is interconnected with the politics, economics, and culture of our country. Women, because they have been taught not to see each other as full, thinking human beings, have rarely brought themselves together to examine and analyze their position as a group and how to change it. In the next few years we will begin to see the building of a dialogue. This paper was written as a small contribution to the dialogue that is long overdue.

Nashville, Tennessee 1969

## WOMEN, POWER, AND THE ECONOMY

What forces have determined where women stand today? Who controls those forces? From where do they derive their power? How does this power act on other portions of the population?

The position of American females has been primarily shaped by the same forces which manipulated every other facet of our living---the American capitalist system. Women's social and political history has been molded by the particular economic role they were forced to play. American women's participation has led them from being a producer in the colonial home to being the first American factory worker. Today, the limbo position of women---between home and vocation---is the dominant symptom of the role we play as a surplus labor force. Each one of these roles, in turn, produced its own set of psychological, sexual, and political assumptions which surrounded it and rationalized the transition from one stage to another.

In every direction a modern American woman turns she can see oppression. Some forces are more important than others, but all oppress her. A working woman, who labors an eight hour day plus endless hours at home with cooking and child-care, could say that her work oppresses her; A middle-class woman, who has never been trained might say that the educational system has oppressed her; A woman who had a particularly dominant and chauvinistic husband would say that he oppressed her. But what are the dominant forces?

America was founded as a colony. There is no denying that our early settlers came to escape religious tyranny and to find a new and better life. But the first explorers, and many after, were sent to find the great riches of the Orient. We began as a colony, for the economic good of the Mother Country. The settlers' culture and politics were pretty much their own business as long as their activities did not interfere with profits.

The people in the colony fought to become independent, only to see the same vested economic interests inherited by the native aristocracy. That class, in turn, took the lead in shaping our current political institutions, and in guiding the economic forces which guaranteed them power in the political and cultural spheres.

Our religion, education, laws and politics reflected the economy of the time. The early economy not only decided women's work, but helped to shape most aspects of her life: dress, family status, work habits, identity, etc. As American capitalism has developed, the woman's status has seen parallel development.

The institution of Slavery is an example of how a direct economic need determined many moral and political ideas. When the system needed slaves to reap the great agricultural wealth from our land, those who got the profits rationalized the institution with moral terms. "Slaves aren't human beings, they are property." Elaborate quotations from the Holy Bible proved this to be so! When part of the country no longer needed that type of institution economically, that particular rationale was no longer accepted. Even with the rapid growth of the abolitionist movement in the South and North, slavery was not dissolved for moral reasons.

How does this relate to the present condition of women? American females, from the time we stepped off the ships at Jamestown, Virginia, have been USED. We have been economically exploited for profits and we have been used to make the system run most effectively for the good of those who profit.

Many of our personal identity problems and our lack of political power are symptoms that can be traced to the economic usage of our sex. This is not to say that many age-old traditions (which may or may not have originally had economic implications) do not actively play a role in our dehumanization.

This paper will attempt to outline the ways in which we have been USED who has USED us, and how.

### THE EARLY DAYS

Twenty-four women landed at Plymouth with the Pilgrims. Nine were dead at the end of the first winter. The number of women in the colonies was much smaller than the number of men (in many places men outnumbered women 20 to 1). Many males left their women-folk behind in Europe bringing them to America after they had built a more established way of life. Many adventurers came with no women at all.

Recognizing the importance of permanent ties binding the colonists to America, the London Company undertook to encourage the migration of women; in 1619 it sent at its own risk, ninety maidens, "agreeable persons, young and incorrupt," and "sold them with their own consent to settlers as wives at the cost of their transportation." Since this venture yielded a fair profit to the Company besides wielding a moderating influence on the turbulence of the men, other consignments of women were sent from year to year---sometimes with great difficulty, because it was no easy task to induce comely English maidens "of virtuous education, young, handsome, and well-recommended" to tempt fortune by searching for a good husband among the hustling planters who pressed around the landing stage and offered the purchase money in tobacco.

Women were lured and sometimes even kidnapped from England. Many girls, stricken by debts, bound themselves into slavery, and became indentured servants for a period of five to seven years. "During their period of bondage they were under heavy restrictions; any offense committed was punished more heavily than that of a free citizen, and their term of service could be increased, a threat which hung over any attempt to run away from their master. Nor could they marry or engage in any occupation without the latter's permission."

Inside and outside the home, early American women were treated almost like Negro slaves. Both were expected to behave with deference and obedience towards their owner or husband; both did not officially exist as a human being under law; both had few rights and little education; both found it difficult to run away; both worked for their masters without pay; both had to breed on command and nurse the results.

"Soldiers could conquer and rule native populations but colonies could not be founded and maintained without women."

The basic social and economic unit was the family. The economy itself demanded a division of labor in the pioneer family because at first there was no alternative source of finished goods. Although the woman looked after the livestock in the farmyard, her province was in the house, which was a little factory that employed old men, women, and children. The younger men brought the timber, grain, the wool, and the meat; the women and children prepared and preserved the food, spun, sewed, washed, and ironed the clothes, and made candles for light. Every colonial woman was a perpetual housekeeper, even when she had servants --- and these were rare.

Woman's work was essential. "When a farmer in pioneer Illinois was asked whether he had married his wife because of her great size, he replied, "I reckon women are some like horses and oxen, the biggest can do the most work, and that's what I want one for."

Social beliefs, such as the "protestant ethic" or Calvinism, re-enforced the prevailing work habits of women. An "idle woman" was frowned upon by the entire community. Where people were so few, every hand was needed.

The social institution closest to most women was their church. Although the woman's sphere was usually socially oriented (men's were politically oriented) she was still denied any say in local religious affairs. The first church that allowed women a place in decision making were the Quakers, who were also persecuted.

Women never entered the political sphere---it was just simply none of a woman's business. Legally, women were not only vote-less, but did not carry on a recognized human existence, after they were married. In many Southern states there were no divorce laws at all.

During the Revolutionary war, the absence of men serving with the continental armies created a vacuum which women had to fill to enable the family and farm to survive and keep the economy of the thirteen states functioning. Women managed shops and businesses. Abigail Adams wrote to her husband during the period, "In the new codes of law which I suppose it will be necessary to make, I desire you would remember the ladies, and be more generous to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited powers in the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention are not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound to obey laws in which we have no voice or representation." After the Revolutionary war, women in Virginia and New Jersey enjoyed a few short years of suffrage, until it was decided by the men who wrote our constitution, that they were heads of each household and could adequately represent the wishes and needs of their entire families. It is important to remember the class origin of most of the men who wrote federal and state constitutions. Many local restrictions (property and citizenship) on male suffrage existed for years after.

In order to survive, certain stringent work and family patterns were essential. And although many of the new settlers left their respective countries for religious freedom and freedom of thought, their conservative natures made them look with severity on those of their kind who did not fill their economic, political and social roles.

Women, although there was growing difference between a plantation mistress and the daughter of an indentured servant in Georgia, generally faced exhaustive workloads and gross humiliation as a contributor to the good of a community. She shared all of the hardships and none of the privileges of men.

### INDUSTRY ON PARADE

America was now an independent country. In the years following our separation from the Mother Country the native capitalist class began to assume the economic functions England had formerly performed. The north became the haven for a new growth in industry. It was fed raw materials from the South and the countryside and produced in turn finished products for sale and profit.

With the invention of the spinning jenny, the power loom and other technological devices, raw human resources were needed in quantity. When men were needed at the more arduous task of tilling the soil, why waste his energies in the factories? The 'modern conveniences' that spurred industrial growth also reduced the time consuming tasks that a woman was obliged to do at home. This freed her for factory work.

'Mass production made it easier and often cheaper to purchase the family's needs than to rely on home production. This meant that the family's greatest need was cash income to buy processed foods and manufactured goods. Because the new factory system needed workers, women and even children were encouraged to seek employment.'

How did women feel about their new status and how was it socially rationalized?

When a woman's work was in the home, the opportunity of working in a factory seemed like real freedom. Twelve hours of hard, daily work at home was not uncommon for the average female in the 18th century. She had never before been paid and had probably never left the town where she was born. The early factory system meant a semi-skilled, repetitive job, which demanded moderate physical exertion. The pace was slow. Each girl might work for thirteen hours a day, but would work only a small number of machines. It was later that the systems of piece-work and machine stretch-out were devised to wring greater output from these women.

All that the machine did was to move the women and children from the home into a large shed. Now they were paid wages, which could help them and their husbands. Production by machine, of course, widened enormously the uses to which woman's labor could be put once physical strength was no longer a consideration. As workers outside the home, women buried the Victorian stereotype of the "lady" under a mountain of reality.

After all, it was difficult to argue that women as a sex were weak, timid, incompetent, fragile vessels of spirituality when thousands of them could be seen trudging to work in the early hours of the day in any city of the nation.

The typical working day for the factory girl lasted from sun-up to sun-down, and sometimes until after "lighting-up time." The hours ran from 12 to 15 or 16 a day. In New Jersey, women and children had to be at work at 4:30 and stayed until they could no longer see their work.

Women's wages, always lower than those of men on similar work, ranged from \$1. to \$3. a week, out of which they had to pay \$1.50 or \$1.75 for board in the company owned or leased boarding houses. Textile villages in Massachusetts looke the same through the 1800s as they did in the South, only a few years ago. Everything---the church, stores, houses, schools, cops, souls were owned by the mill-lords.

During one of the first known organized strikes, at Lowell, Massachusetts strikers marched through the town singing:

Oh, isn't it a pity, such a pretty girl as I  
Should be sent into the factory to pine away and die?  
Oh, I cannot be a slave,  
I will not be a slave,  
For I'm so fond of liberty  
That I cannot be a slave.

It is estimated that in 1833 women earned about one fourth of the wages earned by men. It is said that women in Philadelphia did not receive as much wages in an entire week of work (13 or 14 hours per day) as a journeyman's 10 hour day netted him.

The movement out of the home and into the factory was spurred by the growing need for labor and it did not go unopposed. Socially, it was looked upon as a "necessary evil", a term that has been used throughout our history to rationalize something that we know we have little power to change as individuals.

But something more was needed to break society's traditional habits of mind about the proper work for women. **WARS!** By their very disruption of the society they compel people to look afresh at old habits and attitudes.

At the very least, large demands are made upon the established work force (especially when many of its numbers are engaged in fighting the war) and unused portions of the population are drawn into the labor force. During the Civil War, for example, young women assumed new roles in the economy as workers in metal and munitions factories, as clerks in the expanded bureaucracy in Washington and as nurses in war hospitals. Moreover, when the war was over, women had permanently replaced men as the dominant sex in the teaching profession. At the end of the fighting, many women were unwilling to slip back into the seclusion of the Victorian home.

A middle class of women was also developing. From 1865 on, a veritable domestic revolution was underway, which freed those able to take advantage of it for pursuits other than housework. "The development of gas lighting, municipal water systems, domestic plumbing, canning, the commercial production of ice, the improvement of furnaces, stoves, and washtubs, and the popularization of the sewing machine aided growing numbers of women to escape the domestic treadmill. "

In 1870, fifteen percent of women were engaged in gainful pursuits, a proportion which moved up steadily to sixteen percent in 1880, to nineteen in 1890. In many cities one third of all women were employed out of the home by the turn of the century.



"The 1880s and 90s were periods of huge and rapid industrial growth. The founding of the Standard Oil Company was followed by more "trusts", at first in the distilling, sugar-refining, and lead industries, later in steel, tobacco, and elsewhere. Railroads spread North and South, in a network all the way from the Pacific Coast, spurred by such financiers as Henry Villard, James J. Hill, and others."

Cheap, contractable labor was needed to feed these giant enterprises; "In the decade after 1880, immigration from impoverished European countries topped five million. Women workers were in rising demand, always for the lowest-paying jobs."

Outside a large classification of employed housekeepers, stewards and family servants of all kinds, (totalling almost a million alone) the greatest number of women were found in the same occupation they carried on at home before the era of industrialization: the making of cloth and clothing; keeping these clean; and other so-called service occupations.

"Factory conditions at the turn of the century stank in the nostrils. Laundresses worked, stripped to the waist, for twelve hours a day in temperatures of above one hundred degrees Fahrenheit. Machines were unguarded and could amputate fingers or hands. Poisons fouled the air in many industries; women breathed brass and glass dust, naphtha and paint fumes, and the exhalations of lead and phosphorus. The jawbones rotted off girls who made matches. Pools of oil and grease lay on the floors, inviting tragedies such as the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire and its murder of one hundred and forty-five girls!"

Office work was a growing category of work that women performed. Expanding corporate businesses required more than old-fashioned bookkeepers who kept accounts without mechanical assistance. The introduction of women to government offices during the Civil War had helped pave the way for their entry into business.

As new social rationalizations and assumptions aided the transition from home to shop, so did they make the business world suddenly become a "glamorous" and exciting place.

The invention of the typewriter in 1867 also accelerated the rush of women into this capacity. By 1888 60,000 machines were in use. The 1900 census figures show almost 74,000 women employed as bookkeepers, accountants, and cashiers, while over 100,000 were grouped together as stenographers, typists, secretaries or were active in other occupations that today would be called "white collar".

Since women had no particular skills, except sewing, they were in great competition with each other, and this was heightened by the swelling populace. Because the concept of inferiority (and because training would cost employers time and money) barred women from training for more skills, they entered few high paying or new areas.

"The rapid development of a predominantly industrial society brought about, not only an immense increase in productivity and wealth (of a few), but worsened poverty and social tension. In 1892 there were 4,047 millionaires in the US and the slums were growing daily.

It is interesting that it is during this period of American history that women were allowed to excel in teaching, nursing and the hitherto unheard of category of "social work". As labor struggles became well-organized and the era's new "muck-raking" writers brought bad conditions to the eyes of the world, those who rule knew the situation might be getting out of hand. They put no real roadblocks in the way of the middle-class "do-gooders" if they would help soothe the sores that the rich had inflicted on the American people. Again, woman serving as the MOTHER, that soothes and comforts all.

"Men like to see women pick up the drunken and fallen! Repair the damages of society! that patching business is in "woman's proper sphere" --But to be master of circumstance-- that is man's sphere!"

Susan B. Anthony, suffragist leader

Generally, the occupations and social positions that women held before WWI have remained the same to date. Fluctuations, during the two world wars, changed the picture for short periods of time.

"The Second World War, with its even more massive demands for labor and skills, brought almost four million new female workers into the nation's factories and offices. Once again, jobs usually not filled by men opened to them. For example the number of women bank officers rose 40% during the four years of the war and the number of women employees in finance has continued to rise ever since. Furthermore, unlike the situation after the First World War, the female work force after 1945 not only stayed up but then went higher."

Again, and again, the "NEW WOMAN" appears on the scene, with each appearance being dictated by the rulers and profiteers who consumed her blood, sweat and toil. Her blood was replenished and her dress changed when she was needed to perform a different task for them.

### THE NEW WOMAN

#### At Work:

The picture we get of women performing their tasks of servitude in the home and factory in the past is relatively clear and simple compared to what we must comprehend today. There is no one great point of exploitation, there are many. The situation is gray.

There are three trends that are important to look at: Where are women today compared to the other two major historical periods (home and factory)? How and where women operate in the economy? What are the particular techniques of the exploitation of women?

At the end of WWII, approximately 1/3 of the female population was in the workforce. Today, almost 1/2 of all women are in the workforce. The growth shows a steady increase since the end of the war.

If measured by the number of women working, the changes in the economic position might look like a feminist success. Twenty-eight million working women cannot be ignored. But weighed on the scales of quality instead of quantity, the change in women's economic status is not so striking.

It is true that women now work in virtually every job listed by the Bureau of the Census. The popular press repeatedly echos "You've Come A Long Way--Baby!" But the fact remains that the kinds of occupations in which the vast majority of women are actually engaged are remarkably similar to those historically held by women.

For instance, the largest single classification of women workers is "clerical", over 5 million of them. There has also been a rise in other categories of jobs that are of low skill and pay, such as the increase in jobs classified as "service" (40% of all women worked in service jobs in 1940; today it has reached 54%). We have not only stagnated in vocations, but there has been retrogression.

Mary Keyserling, director of the Labor Department's Women's Bureau says, "indeed during recent years there has been a significant decline in the percentage of women in the more privileged occupations---professional, technical, and kindred jobs. Currently they represent 38% of all workers in these positions, compared with 45% in 1940. A 16% decline in these roles in so brief a time span should be a cause for concern." There are fewer female teachers today than in 1930.

In addition, the wage gap between men and women has increased. In 1945 the median wage or salary income of women who worked 35 hours or more a week was only 60% that of men. In 1955 it had been 64%.

Unemployment among women is also proportionately higher than men. 4.7% of the female workforce are without work compared to lower rate for men. Among teenage girls, unemployment is 13.7%. Also at least a quarter of the female workforce works only part-time.

#### WE ARE NO BETTER OFF THAN WE WERE BEFORE!

Who are the women who work and what do they work at? The women who choose to work make that choice from economic necessity. Forty-two percent support themselves and others, and an additional 24% of women who work have husbands who earn less than \$5,000 a year (And this is not to say that many of the remaining don't need to work to supplement their family's income.)

Women are in the crap jobs of the society. Five and one-half million women are among the workers still unprotected by the Federal minimum wage standards, like cooks and maids. Many of these are in the South, where there are no state minimum wage laws (with the single exception of North Carolina). We are secretaries, maids, the lowest paid factory workers.

What does this mean in terms of the general economy? Is there a pattern of economic channeling for women by those who control the economy?

YES. Modern industry by its very nature draws women into the labor market. Constantly seeking levers to use against the prevailing wage rates and jobs conditions in its search for profits, it creates and maintains minority groups. These minority groups (e.g., Blacks and women) find themselves in a state of super-exploitation. They are exploited at a higher rate (more profits extracted) than other workers. To keep a minority's identity clear, attitudes---such as male (or white) superiority or chauvanism, are perpetuated.

The feminine mystique, i.e. , the current middle class concept of the role of woman, parallels the concept of emasculation of the black male in its purpose (ultimately profits) and its use (forms discrimination).

Women, like blacks and other identifiable sectors of the population (like hillbillies when they migrate North) are groups that can be easily separated and exploited.

The business world uses women as the steam lever in the workforce. The female workforce is tremendously more pliable and flexible than the male. Women leave the workforce to have babies, and because women are not considered the "breadwinners", the myth about the necessity of the extra income allows the woman to believe she doesn't deserve employment.

The fact is that the "woman's place is in the home" myth is a phony rationalization for paying lower wages and providing worse working conditions for women than men. Because women often work only part-time, they employers escape paying them millions of dollars in fringe benefits. If these employers really meant what they said, they would not hire women at all, but leave them in the home. Instead they use the feminine mystique to mold women into "their place" in industry, the place of the reserve labor force. They can be thrown in or out of the labor market at will, used as part-time or temporary workers, kept in the lowest paying jobs with a minimum of resistance, and their rate of exploitation is the highest (women have a lower median income than black people!).

Propaganda control of women is widespread. During WWII "idle hands were tools of the devil" and Rosie the Riveter was the dynamic patriotic heroine. Articles appeared on the advantages of bottle feeding compared to breast feeding. Immediately following WWII, when the returning veterans needed jobs, women at work created juvenile delinquents at home, were competing with men, and surveys showed eight out of ten infants who died of stomach ailments within the first year of birth were bottle fed. But the employers found the rate of exploitation of man not so profitable as that of women. So women stayed in industry in their place, low man on the totem pole.

Some employers were even honest about it. Those kind are rarer today. During the Conference on Equal Pay in 1952, when an employer was asked why he employed women workers in his factory less for a given job than he paid the men, he replied, "Tradition, I suppose...anyhow it's cheaper."

Using 1950 Census reports, figures from the Federal Reserve Board and also from the Securities and Exchange Commission, Grace Hutchings (authress of "Women Who Work") calculates that manufacturing companies realized profits of \$5.4 billion in 1950 by paying women less per year than the wages paid to men for similar work.

Working women's fortunes fluctuate with the state of the nation's economy. If the system grows rapidly enough to utilize the kinds of work they can do and to absorb their growing numbers, women will probably have some leeway in choosing a job (i.e., WWII). If the economy is sluggish, however, their prospects are bleak. Somewhat like black people, we are the "last to be hired, the first to be fired."

Gone are the war time editorials saluting women in industry, the magazine articles praising our new-found mechanical abilities. Today we read about the 'foolishness' of women, their 'immaturity.' Above all, we get a barrage of the familiar propaganda that a woman's place is in the home with children. Paradoxical as it may seem, this is essential to a supply of underpaid women for industry; a familiar employer argument is that women leave their jobs when they get married or have children and therefore are not as valuable as men, and should be paid less. Hence it is necessary to preserve and reinforce the general opinion that women's jobs are transitory and unimportant and that her only real fulfillment comes as a wife and mother. (a woman is nobody, a wife is everything!)

Those who run the economy have used us very profitably and have shaped not only what jobs we hold, how much money we earn---but whether we work or stay at home and what we think of ourselves socially and politically.

### At Home:

The other half of American females stay at home. Why do they stay at home? What role do women play in the system when they are at home?

Ever Merriam, in a book called After Nora Slammed the Door, offers some interesting insights into these questions:

"What is surprising about the American social landscape today is not that so many later-age Noras (housewives) leave home, but that so many still remain as total housewives, even after their children are growing up and going off to school.

"We see these housewives' energies drained by unproductive chores without even benefit of paycheck, and we see their leisure hours played out in...nibbling fashion. Shopping becomes a way of taking up time, like a card game."

"Such middle-class women have been left presiding over a ghost town in our technological era where automatic timers mind the stew pots and irons convert into ivy-holders as wrinkled-shed fabrics improve."

Is it age-old discrimination that holds women to the home? She believes that there are not really enough jobs to go around. "During WWII women were to power the production line. And in many cases, child-care centers and family-aid services were provided by the government and even by private industry. Today national needs are different. Our economy is 'booming', but it is not so booming that it has a place for all the housewives who are ready, willing, and able to leave home." The ideal condition for the capitalist system is a large, readily-available pool of surplus labor, so it can depress wages and maximize profits.

Women have two primary tasks when they are home. MOTHER and CONSUMER. Both are essential to keeping the system rolling. And in the years since WWII, the wits of Madison Avenue have been put to convincing us that both roles were of patriotic importance and that they were also inter-dependent.

Mrs. Merriam continues in the chapter entitled, "The Myth of the Total Housewife", "As for part-time jobs, they would undoubtedly accommodate best to women's family responsibilities, but would not suit private industry's re-

quirements to the same degree. Where private profit has to come first, can the individual's welfare be far behind? The answer is VERY."

"Therefore, women must be convinced all over again that their place is in the home, because, frankly, there isn't much room in any other place for her. For the system can continue satisfactorily as long as there are satisfied customers for it. Now if the little lady can just be made happy at home!"

"YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU. No don't get excited and start changing from your housecoat into something more practical; they don't mean for you to go out to work. Stay home indoors, because there's nothing wrong with our economy that a red-blooded housewife can't fix."

"If homemakers loosened their purse strings to buy now what they needed and could afford, the country would be headed back to prosperity." This is what a leading businessman told a New York gathering of women. He was given the group's award for "promoting the best interests of American homemakers"

Consumer spending accounts for nearly two-thirds of all purchases in our country. Over two million tubes of beauty products are sold every week. This is called "conspicuous consumption." KEEP UP WITH AND SURPASS THE JONES! As our culture and economy progress, women are convinced that new luxuries are actually necessities that she absolutely cannot get along without.

The forces at work to keep a woman at home and the stereotyped condition of child-raising had tremendous psychological impact on a young mother, "DID YOU SEE ALL THE JUVENILE DELINQUENTS? AND DID YOU SEE ALL THE DIVORCES? AND DO YOU KNOW WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISINTEGRATION OF FAMILY LIFE? THE RUNAWAY HOUSEWIFE, THAT'S WHO. SO NOW, YOU WON'T TRY SLINKING OUT ANY MORE, WILL YOU?"

And the role of Mother is not of small importance. The family unit in American society (and most societies, including the supposedly advanced Socialist nations) transmits our culture and brings children up to believe all the American Myths (rather than African or Cuban Myths). Mother is the most important Socializer (one who develops the social characteristics) in the family, since she has responsibility for the welfare of the home, while the father works (or even while both work). Our ethics, religion, and even work habits and pressures, values like grades and money, for instance, are begun right at home.

At this point in history, the family is undoubtedly the most suitable arrangement for the development of pro-individual (but anti-community), materialist values. Just think what would happen to capitalism if we all lived in a free, communal fashion.

Mother also soothes and comforts her working husband (even if she works) when he returns from work; she fixes him his dinner; and sends him out the next morning on his productive way. Many middle-class women increase pressures on the man, by pushing the social status code of the day (cars, coats, homes, etc). Men in return, want their women to adopt certain social patterns---dress, make-up, etc---that fit into his materialistic aspirations (and that means more consumer money!).

It is clear, by tracing the history of economic "progress" of women, that we have been used and abused. The myths that are promoted about the NEW AMERICAN WOMAN, of career and fashion model stereotype, are counter-balanced by the MYTH OF THE TOTAL HOUSEWIFE. Women's position has changed some, but improved little.

## BATTLES FOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROGRESS

Many women in American history have fought bitter battles for their own equality and the liberation of other oppressed groups in our society. There has been tremendous "social change" since colonial days, but little improvement in our basically inferior position. What are the social changes that have occurred? Why did they occur? And how did the vigorous fights that women wage effect those changes?

Most all the social change that American females have experience in the last 300 years has been an effect of the shift from home to factory. Women have been granted few important social changes that did not result from economic "progress". Let's survey the noted social developments.

Education for women has improved since the colonial days. There are almost as many women in colleges as men. But what does this education mean? Women are never trained for occupations that are considered "men's jobs" (barring war-time when they can't get along without us). The generalized (no skills given education we receive prepares us for little else than a marriage to a "suitable man" who prefers an articulate wife. Many women attend schools simply out of inertia because it is expected and they're able to get a husband from their social acquaintances there. Many women who do clerical work, have their bachelor degrees in fields that are so vague (in terms of use) that they are able to do nothing else with them (aside from teaching). Graduate education for women has improved little in the last 25 years.

The political sphere, which was always a "man's concern" is still a man's concern. After achieving woman suffrage in 1919, most women have not used their votes in many ways different from their husbands. But electoral politics in our country has always been used for the ends of the real powers in society, the rich class. For the people, the "use" of the vote is a meaningless phrase, since very few real decisions are made through our political processes.

Culturally, we are more oppressed than ever. We have been used to promote the worst of capitalist propaganda. We have been made into walking-talking commercials to seal their fraudulent, over-priced products and we've been deemed mascots to cheer on the use of our men in imperialist wars like Vietnam (our boys are there to promote good things, like American Womanhood?) The image of us, created by Madison Avenue, and promoted by both sexes is as prostituted as ever.

What effect did our feminine social movements have? We battled for equal education and equal voice in church decisions. These battles were waged primarily by individuals, not by the great masses of women. Courageous pioneers like Anne Hutchinson and Prudence Crandall, did not organize women for social revolution, but established their own alternative educational and religious groups.

In the South and North, women acted courageously in the underground railroad, shuttling slaves to freedom. After the right of women to speak was won by the Grimke Sisters, women participated actively in the abolitionist movement. But unfortunately, this issue of freedom for black people among whites, became less important after Emancipation.

The strike at Lowell, Massachusetts of women workers who were fighting a wage-cut began a long history of women in the labor movement. Women like Leonora O'Reilly, Mother Jones, Rose Schneiderman, and many others fought battles along with thousands of working women to win better working conditions, equal and higher wages. Women have drawn some sympathy because of the feminine stereotype, but the real demand, that women no longer be "super-exploited", has never been met.

Most economic demands, that women have made, have never been met. The political and cultural demands have only been met when changes occurred for basically economic reasons. And most of what we've won hasn't been very significant.

## S T R A T E G Y

ANALYSIS: As we can see we have been significantly aided by a small group of "professors". Although there are many levels and modes of our oppression, there is no possibility of liberation without the elimination of economic suffering and its effect on our daily lives.

One of the first tasks ahead of us is to really analyze the existing power relationships: institutional and personal, economic, political and social.

The history of women has been feminized, divided, and always played down, as has the history of other minority groups. Because each woman lives "dissegregated" in a daily relationship with representative of the male domination system, she is separated politically from other women. She is convinced that most of her problems in living are merely personal, being isolated as an individual.

Many of the early suffragists considered themselves to be radical. They fought hard for the vote, believing that it could be used to change the more persistent of our problems: poverty, war, etc. They chose to attack the broader programs from an "abstract political" point of view, overlooking their own struggles (and what has happened since) we should be able to build an analysis about our situation. It might have been that if the suffragists had examined the real powers in society and how they worked, they might not have chosen the vote as their target.



## G O A L S

In order to begin changing our miserable situation, we must discuss and analyze what goals we wish to reach. The discussion and decision about our goals do not have to be so abstract or lengthy that we never begin other activity, but agreeing on basic points is an essential basis for building any radical movement of people.

As women, we must be concerned about our own destinies. We must begin to build a mass movement that holds our self-interest as primary, but the goal that our activity is directed towards, as radicals, must be for all humanity. Courtland Cox, of SNCC, gave good insight into the questions of goals as it relates to the oppressed black minority's cultural identity, "Blackness is necessary, but not sufficient."

Our goals should be concerned with building a society in which people are no longer exploited, by any force; a society that is a democracy in which all human beings have a voice over the decisions which affect their lives. A society of this type would have to include total equality and development of women as human beings, upon our own definitions.

In order to obtain this goal, we will need---as woman and human beings---to develop a strategy which is geared towards changing the power relationships that presently enslave us.

## S T R A T E G Y

### ANALYSIS:

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"The history of women has been rewritten, lied about, and always played down, as has the history of other minority groups. Because each woman lives "desegregated," in a daily relationship with a representative of the male domination system, she is separated politically from other women. She is convinced that most of her problems in living are merely 'personal'."

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Thinking out where we are will help us decide where we are going and convince other women to go with us. Our analysis should be a continuous activity and should be tentative and flexible enough to encourage new concepts and changes.

#### GROUPINGS:

In order to insure our own interest in a major power change, we must be organized for our self-interest. Because we have, in fact, been kept from one another, we need to meet together. Women who meet as women for the first time, often find that their own stereotypes of themselves and their sisters had been fixed, and that the self-doubt that many women feel can be relieved in a free and open discussion. Subsequent action can then be geared to organizing less radical women on issues of Female Liberation, integrating action with discussion.

The present system of power relationships victimizes men and sub-groupings of women and men alike (workers, blacks, professional people, youth).

From a radical standpoint, changing these exploitative and dehumanizing power relationships is in the self-interest of almost everyone (except the ones who actually own the system). Those in power will take every opportunity to divide the potential fighters. The political-economic changes can only be achieved if all segments of the population fight, because our only real resource for fighting is people. Basic change could not happen without women, just as it could not happen without black people. The important thing is that the interest of women (and all other groups) be realized in the struggle. This has happened in very few other revolutionary struggle situations. It is not automatic. It will only happen if women are organized before, during and after the battle.

This cannot be accomplished through "women's auxiliaries", groups of women simply following or supporting programs that are defined by men. We must organize ourselves for our own goals. We must also be a part of groupings that are fighting for the revolution.

On a local level, this would mean that every radical woman would belong to a woman's group. Much of her organizing time would be spent working with other women, both on issues of Female Liberation and general problems. But she would also belong to groups that were working for total change (such as SSOC, SDS, poor white community groups, etc.). It is important that she not only be represented but be an integral part of revolutionary and radical organizations.

In major radical groupings, women would not only play a part in decision-making but also determine the position of the radical movement on women's questions.

This isn't to say that the burden of educating and organizing men to combat personal attitudes of male supremacism is on us. It is the duty of all radical men to discuss the issue of Female Liberation. But we must provide the analysis and leadership because our lives and our destinies are affected.

## CONSTITUENCIES:

Women are not a completely homogeneous group. We do have many common problems. But there are women who are workers; women who are professionals; women who are young; women who are married; women who are from the South. All these groups have at least one other reason to be involved in a revolution besides being a woman. This must be considered in our organizing approaches.

Of particular concern will be the division between married and single women. Single women, as it stands now, are just prospective "married women". The question of the institution of marriage is very important, because socially, the family is the principal transmitter of our culture, and the present MOTHER-FATHER-WIFE-HUSBAND relationships oppress women daily. Alternative structures, such as cooperative living (more than one couple and their kids), where all parties take part in bread-winning, child-raising, and home-keeping. Although we won't be able to change the American family simply by adopting alternatives, it will solve some immediate problems of our own lives, as well as our children's and how they view future male-female relationships. Alternative life-styles also show others concrete examples of what we want society to look like. We should remember, when searching for what oppresses us, that the accepted marital relationship is as disastrous to men, as it is to woman and children. It is as oppressive for a man, for instance, to be expected to be a "bread-winner" as it is for a woman to be a "home-maker".

Working women suffer the most direct oppression from the system. For the Southern working woman, the contradictions socially---between the role of the plantation mistress and the spinning room girl, are enormous. Working women slaves in the shop and the home. Women occupy very specific occupations and ranks in other vocations, and we must begin to work on problems facing women on the job level, as well as at home in the community.

Different organizing techniques and issues will have to be used in dealing with particular regional and ethnic groups. For instance, Southern women have had a triple demoralization in terms of their historical identity. We've been denied our radical heritage; our true Southern heritage; and a positive identity as female human beings. Black women, of course, will have to be organizing around issues that are relevant to the black community as well as to females.

As frequently as possible there should be regional and national meetings to analyze activity and discuss strategy, to develop continuity.

## TACTICS

Unfortunately, when it comes down to outlining the program, we are always a bit short. But today there are signs of really exciting and new, creative activity in this direction among women. For the most part, though, we are starting from scratch. What we build is OURS and US. Because we are a new and fledgling movement, it will be possible for us to use the most imaginative and creative techniques in building a truly relevant movement. We have a great opportunity and a great responsibility.

Most existing women's groups have begun through discussion. Sometimes this has taken the name "consciousness raising". A consciousness raising group is small and begins with discussions about personal experiences about being a woman. Those personal experiences are then made into group conclusions and acted upon as the assumption for activity. This method helps develop a sense that each of our personal problems are in fact universal, which leads us to social conclusions, and lessens the feelings of inferiority. Although, the problem has personalized symptoms, it is an institutionalized menace, and must be approached as that.

After initial discussion (which might take two weeks or 3 months), the group should begin to reach out, becoming more active with new women, both educationally and politically. On campus this might mean a dorm discussion group would decide to demand equality in the university's social code or begin an abortion fund. In a poor white community, it might mean a discussion group might begin to fight consumer fraud or would organize a textile mill's spinning department. In a middle-class area, women might decide to begin a cooperative nursery school that is managed part-time by both them and their husbands. A group of high school girls might protest the unequal treatment of women in their history books or tackle the high unemployment rate among teenage girls.

Activities should be considered on at least two levels, "How does this activity raise the consciousness or increase the knowledge of the participants?" and "How does the action reach, educate and radicalize other women?"

As our movement grows, we build our own primer for action. Above all, we must begin to consider ourselves to be equal human beings, and act upon that assumption.

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