

FOCUS

"CHALLENGING COMPLACENCY"

WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

SESSION II

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WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

SESSION II

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C O N T E N T S**SESSION II****WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY****THE EMERGING ROLE OF WOMEN**

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**GOVERNMENT AND THE RESOLUTION OF
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THE EMERGING ROLE OF WOMEN

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Birth of the Feminist Movement

The interpretation of the status and role of modern women, indeed, the "women's question" as such, has been the domain of those feminist activists who made their spectacular entrance into the public arena in the early 1960s. It was this miniscule group of feminists, whose political base, incidentally, was surprisingly small, who defined and carried the public discussion. And although there have been some challenges in recent years to the feminists' monopoly to speak for all women, it is this group that continues to dominate the public discourse. For whatever reasons--and there are many--any serious attempts to counter the feminist-defined agenda have fared poorly. They have failed to capture the imagination and, what is more, the public support of large enough numbers of people to allow divergent visions to be translated into potent political and culturally binding positions.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

When speaking about the women's movement, there are four distinctive features that, to my mind, need to be singled out:

The first refers to the social location of the feminist movement in the educated middle-classes. In this, feminism perhaps more than any other social issue today is symbolic of the rise to power of what has been called the New Class--a phenomenon typical of the industrial democratic societies of the West.

The second feature that needs special attention is that feminism is neither a monolithic phenomenon nor is it sui generis, or unique. Rather it has important linkages to other cultural and political events of our time and has to be considered in relation to other trends.

Thirdly, feminism has undergone significant changes since its inception. At this moment we are about to witness the bursting onto the political scene of what I shall call a new feminist sentimental imperialism. This development, not yet broadly perceived, signifies nonetheless a new phase in the history of Western culture.

And finally--and most importantly--there is a paradox few have commented on. It refers to the continued discrepancy between feminist ideology and vision of life, on the one hand, and the persistence of very different values, hopes and social practices among by far the majority of women in Western societies, on the other.

Each one of these features singled out deserves more careful and detailed attention than can be given here, nonetheless, even only a brief sketch will help us to identify trends in the question of the emerging role of women.

The Emergence of a New Class

In the beginning

A convenient event by which to date the inception of the public discussion of the nature, role and future of women is 1963, when Betty Friedan's **The Feminine Mystique** was published. This book was an indictment of the middle-class woman's imprisonment in the kind of domesticity once described by Virginia Woolf as "the cottonwool quality of daily life." The solution prescribed by Friedan was clear: women have to go out of the household into the world of work, in which a new identity could be found. The move was to be from private existence, within the confines of the family and the household, to the public realm, where, supposedly, more-important things were going on. Thus freedom for women meant, above all, freedom **from** the family, i.e. freedom from husbands as well as children.

It should come as no surprise that this battle-cry to "turn the world upside down" found particular resonance in

the gilded cages of America's suburbs, the middle-class women's "comfortable concentration camp," in Friedan's words. Here, the educated, discontented women of capitalism's affluence were waiting to be saved from the "problem that has no name" to use once more Friedan's own words. They were to be rescued from the boredom of a life-cycle of split-level homes, manicured lawns, backyard barbecues and two cars--one spiffy little Volvo for him to commute and a station wagon for her to transport the couple's obligatory 2.3 children about, with the happy dog yapping from the rear window. It is, of course, tempting to be whimsical about this phenomenon. The women's movement invites such exaggerations, and one has to resist the temptation with all one's might, for middle-class existence without meaning can, indeed, be a problem. In any case, what is at issue here is the self-abnegating wife and mother. This abnegation, it is supposed, is not only bad for women but for their spouses and children as well.

It is important at this point to remember, that while Friedan was writing her book, women had already been entering the work-force in ever larger numbers for quite some time. In the 1950s, 20 per cent of all married women worked outside the home. By 1972, the figure had climbed to over 40 per cent, with women with young children making up the bulk of the rise. It is difficult to pinpoint here precisely the various causes for this remarkable shift in the participation of women in the labour market. Suffice it to say that the trend is of long standing and the feminist movement can neither be blamed nor praised for it.

In any case, as women, and in particular middle-class women, now began to move into the labour market--and into specific job categories at that--they encountered massive long-entrenched discrimination against them. Thus Friedan's message did not take place in a vacuum. It was related to very real social changes and to realistic resentments of many women experiencing these changes in their own lives. This realistic base of the feminist message helps account for its immediate, even incandescent resonance.

The impact of the feminist ideology

This position has both political and psychological aspects. Politically, it implies a struggle for equality in all realms of life. Psychologically, there is a struggle for personal self-

assertion. Both aspects were quickly radicalized in the general climate of the 1960s. By the end of that decade a new feminist ideology had been firmly established. At its centre stood the proposition that women in Juliet Mitchell's words are "the most oppressed of all people." This message soon escalated for Kate Millet to "sexist oppression is more endemic to our society than racism," a pronouncement to be quickly topped by Shulamit Firestone that, "sexism represents the oldest, most rigid class-caste system in existence." And it fell upon Yoko Ono to declare that "woman is the nigger of the world."

This was quite an escalation from Friedan's original critique. Now it was no longer just a protest against this or that aspect of the contemporary role of women, but a **reinterpretation** of history and, indeed, of the human condition. The family appears as an age-old evil. Heterosexuality is rape; motherhood is slavery; all relations between the sexes are a struggle for power. There came into prominence one huge outcry against being female. This outcry reached its peak in the early 1970s, then subsided somewhat, with the more radical feminists gathering in sect-like groups on the margins of the main feminist movement.

But what remained of this radicalism was the inability of feminism to separate out what is life and what is not. Also left is a recurring theme of total liberation, at least as an idea, if not an immediately realizable program. New bonds of "sisterhood" were posited against the confining bonds of male-female as well as child-mother relationships and that of the family in general. And, of course, there came into being a very vocal lesbian component of this radical feminism.

All branches of the feminist movement shared a strong missionary bent. "Consciousness raising" became a key feminist category. This ranged from national propaganda campaigns (around such issues as ERA and abortion) to cultural campaigns (such as the insistence on "non-sexist" or "inclusive" language), to therapeutic activities in small groups. In this manner, feminism met the requirement of many modern people for an ideology that is capable of spanning public and private concerns. In other words, feminism provided answers from the problems of bedroom and nursery to the big questions of national purpose.

The death of shrillness

In recent years, the feminist movement qua movement appears to have slowed down. There have been no substantial increases in the membership of various women's activist groups. The shrill headlines flaunting from every newsstand only a decade ago seem to be neither fashionable nor marketable. Gone, too, are the linguistic inflations and the strident rhetoric of earlier feminists. Thus social analysts and cultural pundits celebrate the arrival of a saner and more reasoned feminism.

It seems clear that the more radical versions of feminism have appealed to only small numbers of American women. But the less extreme versions have notably influenced the views and attitudes--although to a considerably lesser degree the behaviour--of large numbers of women, especially among the college-educated young. The movement on the whole has been extraordinarily successful in inducing legislative reform (abortion rights being only the latest). And it brought about massive changes in social practices, public perception and, above all, women's aspirations and own sense of self.

As with most cultural or ideological movements, it is difficult to determine to what extent feminism caused changes in behaviour or merely legitimated changes that were happening anyway. Thus divorce, pre- and extra-marital sex, and abortion are phenomena rooted in broad societal changes for which the feminist movement can neither be blamed nor praised. Clearly though, many people **perceived** feminists to be responsible for these changes, and this perception contributed to the genesis of the neo-traditional alignment. It cannot be emphasized enough, however, that the unfolding of the feminist drama contributed in a major way to a trend that is likely to be with us for some time to come.

Feminists look to government

In the crusade for the deliverance of women from a perceived state of oppression to what has been defined as their rightful place in the public arena and in the economy, the feminist movements of all Western democracies turned to their respective governments to promote their demands. It was the state, and the state above all, to which feminists looked.

They sought intervention, adjudication, legislation, policing and punishment in their behalf. Modern day feminists thus joined and reinforced the by-now-familiar strategy that has emerged as a general pattern in recent decades. It is also a pattern that has substantially contributed to the unprecedented ascent of government, its expansion and dominance in all areas of life in the Western democracies.

In fact, an argument can be made that in no other political protest movement has there been a more pronounced and far-reaching shift from proscription to prescription. In its earlier stages the feminist protest was largely concentrated on the various ways--official and unofficial, practical and ideological--in which women have been excluded from equal participation in public life and from the realization of their equal share in the labour market. More recently the feminist agenda has expanded, and encompassed virtually every aspect of personal and social life. At the same time, the totality of individual and social life was problematized and politicized. This basic prescriptive tendency that lies at the core of present-day feminism, is likely to become more visible and pronounced in the years ahead.

The Feminist Movement Influences Culture and Politics

Feminism and the left

Whatever else feminism may have achieved, it brought about a widespread sense of the relativity of conventional social life. It greatly helped to give respectability to the notion of "alternative lifestyles" which made traditional sexual and family norms appear as just one of many ways of organizing these human concerns. In this, feminism linked up with other challenges to these norms, pejoratively subsumed under the no-no term "bourgeois"--challenges such as the counter-culture, the gay movement, and the "singles" subculture.

To the extent that the "oppression" of women was perceived as endemic to capitalist society, feminism developed an affinity with other attacks on the **status quo**, notably those of the New Left and the New Politics. The feminist emphasis on self-realization and the quest for a new identity was linked to other manifestations of the "new sensibility"--a

general cultural trend, heavily infused with psychological and psychotherapeutic ideas, which, for lack of a better term, may be called the "California syndrome," best exemplified by the encounter movement.

In all of these linkages feminism appears much more than a movement for equal rights for women; rather it has come to occupy a specific place in the cultural and political spectrum. This gives it affinities (and, ipso facto, antipathies) to other cultural and political phenomena not intrinsically related to the issue of women's rights. Very broadly speaking, this cultural-political location is "on the left." To the extent that the general sympathies of the New Class phenomenon are on the left, feminism, symbolizing the New Class in most of its aspects, is on the left as well.

A new orthodoxy?

How effective has been this "revolutionary" vision of feminism? While the more radical versions of feminism have not been too successful, it has found considerable resonance in wider segments of society. This holds particularly among the college-educated middle-classes of Western democratic societies. Above all, it has found uncritical acclaim among the culture-defining intellectuals in the universities, foundations, churches, government and the media--television, the magazines, the newspapers, the movies: all the different organs of this immense apparatus of persuasion that has been developed in our time.

There is wide public agreement today that the revolutionary thrust of feminism has shaken the Western world, and established itself as the orthodoxy of today. There is considerable evidence that the feminist vision presents major problems to the vast majority of women and--in fact--is rejected outrightly by a not inconsiderable minority. However, contemporary feminists continue undeterred on their self-appointed path. Liberation now--and the future be damned! Bathing in the limelight of public approval, whatever dissent or challenge may emerge can be dealt with quickly and effectively.

A new growth industry

In view of these achievements, small wonder that a glow of considerable self-satisfaction embroiders the nearly cloudless

sky of feminist activists today. Firmly ensconced in those sectors of society that matter--at least to their mind--supported by legions of ubiquitous career reformers, under the institutional sponsorship of government, universities and the churches--let us not forget the churches!-- the feminist agenda has become the latest growth industry. The task for the decade ahead is clear: to drive out the remaining vestiges of gender-discrimination that still linger in the polity, the economy and the culture. And of course, this agenda has to be internationalized as well (it won't do to forget our sisters in the Third World, would it?)--as sundry activities of the United Nations, the private foundation and the church bodies on the national and international level attest. First the proletariat, then the underdeveloped, now women are the favoured "pets" of the "concerned." And divine bliss for those who can manage to combine all three.

The Emergence of Sentimental Imperialism

The feminization of society--a new imperialism

The general acceptance of the feminist definition of private and public life in the Western democracies as the new orthodoxy, in conjunction with the prescriptive thrust of feminism, result in the feminization of politics, the feminization of the economy and the feminization of the culture. Taken together we may thus speak of the ascent of a new sentimental imperialism. This is carried, in the main, by the feminist vision that seeks to radically transform world culture. There are significant indications available to us today that this general imperialistic thrust of feminism is likely to be with us for some time and will decisively shape the direction of future public debates.

So for instance, there is much talk today about the feminization of politics--no doubt Willa Ann Johnson will speak to this point presently. Suffice it here for me to emphasize the full-blown emergence of women as a powerful new political force projected by political pollsters. The manifestation of a gender gap in matters of great significance for national and international affairs--a gap, that, again, is more pronounced among highly-educated working women--is clearly a factor to be reckoned with.

In the economic sphere, we are witnessing as well a similar feminization process. After the phenomenal entry of women into the labour market, after the breakdown of legal barriers and traditional practices in virtually all categories of work, the new feminist thrust towards "comparable worth" is about to emerge as a formidable, and controversial, economic issue. Walter Williams, I am sure, will have much to say about this.

The feminization of culture

And finally, there is the feminization of culture. An argument can be made (c.f. Ann Douglas), that the 19th century had already seen a massive feminization of American culture. Under the vigorous tutelage of middle-class women, in close collaboration with a clergy already then at bay, a general sentimentalization of culture took place. The 19th century elevated the "private world"--the family, children and the home--as the preserve of women by women. It sentimentalized and imbued them with delicate and refined connotations that impress the 20th century mind and taste as maudlin if not downright silly. This is precisely what contemporary feminists are trying so hard to end. (Incidentally, it is one of the supreme ironies of our time that today, one hundred years later, contemporary feminists are of the firm conviction that women's traditional identities and roles--institutionalized and proclaimed as progress and heralded as an advancement in humanizing life by their sisters of the 19th century--have been forced upon women by hostile men and a male-dominated culture. Predictably, capitalism is claimed as the chief villain.

The contemporary feminization of culture, however, has an altogether different target. Its missionary aim no longer turns around the private, but the public. It is aimed at the feminization of the extra-familial world of education, work, government and societal life in general. It is precisely the exciting world of those "able, ambitious" men who went off to the city and "kept growing," the Mecca of early 1960s feminist ambitions, that is at issue today. For as women entered the world of work and began to stay in it, they discovered that this world was not at all what it had been trumped up to be. Conflicting with their own very feminist sensibilities, even more women of this new breed began to question whether and how women could avoid enslavement in

the competitive male work ethic. They spurned its "selfish" morality, which allegedly led to self-destruction. Feminists increasingly demanded that equality should not mean equal ulcers, equal cardiac failure, and so on, but something different, something more humane and better.

The humanization of society

Precisely at this point a new psychological theory came into coinage proclaiming female psyche and morality to be distinct from that of men--it was more caring, nurturing, more humane and thus on a higher plane. This may have been accidental but it was nonetheless fortuitous for the women's movement. Theoretical legitimation along with academic credence was in this manner provided for the attempts of those feminists who seek to identify a broader notion of "liberation" with a push towards a more "humanistic" society as espoused by other radical and reformist movements. The women's agenda was thus transformed into "humanizing" society. In the words of Gloria Steinem "...we can humanize the machinery of politics to make a better society." Said Betty Walker Smith, "Let's humanize America and save her." In the view of Bella Abzug, "We have the capacity to build a humanistic society. I hope we will get down to decide how to do this....What is good for women will turn out to be good for the country." These pioneer voices of 1970s feminist activists have become familiar bromides today: instead of women having to become more like men, men will have to become more like women.

In this way the feminist dream of a genderless economy without compulsory sex roles fuses with the leftist dream of a political economy whose subjects would be equally human. Both ideologies find a further congenial base for legitimation and action in yet a third ideology sweeping Western societies like a brushfire: the new environmentalism combined with a hysterical pacifism. These ideological movements characteristic of New Class politics join in the proposition that peace between men and women can only be bought at the price of economic contraction. Thus negative growth and extreme pacifism becomes necessary to reduce sexism (Illich)--in fact, endeavours towards military preparedness are identified with "machismo." The feminist struggle against sexism converges with efforts to reduce environmental destruction as well as with challenges to the "radical

monopoly" of goods and services over needs. The notion of national defense is transformed into a female vision of gentle persuasion and a feminist vision of love (vide Dr. Helen Caldicott, "We must learn to love the Russians.")

Ironically, this new sentimental imperialism contains in a nutshell what little girls have always been admonished to do: don't achieve, don't compete, don't fight and don't step on the flowers. Needless to say it is a prescription for disaster. For if this sentimental imperialism should be successful in becoming the new orthodoxy in all Western societies, it would be destructive in either of two ways: if we are not going to be wiped out militarily, we are, for sure, going to be wiped out economically.

The Feminist Paradox

The more things change, the more they stay the same

Before indulging ourselves in apocalyptic paroxysms, we are well served in turning to a final point that, I think, deserves special attention: the paradox of the discrepancy between feminist ideology on the one hand, and the continued norms and social practices of women. This is truly startling to any impartial observer of social life at the end of the 20th century. For as empirical evidence begins to pile up, when all is said and done, there seems to have been remarkably little change in the social practices of by far the majority of Western women.

Although women (especially those with small children) have joined the work-force in record numbers and remain in it, they, nonetheless, continue to marry and have children. And that goes--with minor differences--for college-educated women as well. To be sure, the divorce rate has skyrocketed; yet, the rate of remarriage--Dr. Johnson's "triumph of hope over reason"--continues to be remarkable. Moreover, those who have remarried are likely to be as happy as any other married couple. In this age of precarious marriages, married women are happier, healthier, and live longer than unmarried ones. Moreover, working women, when married, and with small children to boot, are the happiest of all. The idea of marriage then remains attractive. As has been pointed out frequently, the Western world is still in the family way.

The traditional family is still critical

The most astounding insight, however, comes from a variety of data indicating that to the vast majority of women the family is the most important value (92 per cent), that the family is the single most meaningful part of life (86 per cent) in contrast to the barely 9 per cent who claim that work is the most important aspect of their lives. Some 83 per cent of women in America would welcome today in the face of ardent feminist prescriptions for sisterhood more emphasis on traditional family ties. Young women today have a greater longing for traditional family life than they think their own parents had. Perhaps the experience of divorce has left deeper scars on more children of divorce than feminists had expected.

The persistence of traditional aspirations among women is born out by a number of recent studies. One Midwestern study examining the career aspirations of high school girls shows that by far the majority—including the "brightest and best"—feel that they will not be working more than five years after graduation. Another study of juniors and seniors of a small Midwestern liberal arts college indicated that 80 per cent expect to combine career and family (only 10 per cent interviewed were interested in a career alone and the remaining 10 per cent expressed a preference for family as a career). In my own college, similar sentiments have been expressed among the most recent crop of students. At the present time we seem to be witnessing as well the emergence of rather traditional sentiments even among the highly-educated young women who started out on their careers in the 1970s. Whereas only 10 years ago highly-educated women opting for careers alone were held to be the new pioneers, today's pioneers are those who give up their careers to raise their children.

Work is important to both sexes

It may be well at this point to remember that work means different things to different people. For working-class women and the poor it is a necessity. Liberation for them means to be freed from this economic necessity and to have the opportunity to spend more time on those things that rank high on their list of priorities: family, children, friends, neighbourhood, religious and other voluntaristic organiza-

tions. Yet the rising expectations of what it means to lead a "good" life will make it well-nigh impossible for most women to turn away from paid labour. Work is the avenue to the realization of a better life, materially and culturally. It increases the options for their children. It contributes to the prosperity of their families. In this, they are not that much different from men.

Educated middle-class women, who went out to find their essential identities in careers, are at this moment pausing in this pursuit. A similar realization seems about to dawn upon them as well--along with the realization that perhaps men alone have profited from their liberation activities. Regardless of class variations, women's continued participation in the labour force is here to stay, if for no other reason than to obtain the financial means for realizing what they think is best for their families.

Feminist distortions

How can it be that there exists such a blatant discrepancy between the much acclaimed feminist orthodoxy of today and these very different hopes and practices of most women? Of course, we must remember that the contemporary outburst of academic writings on women, the immense research activities conducted feverishly in the proliferating women's studies programs, as well as the political activism on behalf of women--largely financed by Government and the Foundations--is mainly a product of the women's movement. Not surprisingly, it incorporated many, if not all, of the pre-suppositions and values of the movement. Instead of serving as a sort of "laser-beam of change" (to borrow Jonathan Gathorne Hardy's term) the women's movement has thus merely served to manufacture a distorted mirror of social reality. Many good minds have been infected and perhaps ruined by the ideological pretensions of modern feminism and the flaming rhetoric of liberation. And many more good minds have been turned away from relying on their own experiences and trusting their own good common sense.

The real tragedy of contemporary women

And this is where the real tragedy of contemporary Western women starts. Although realizing full-well that something more than a successful career and liberation from confining

traditions is needed for a full life, an undefined and undefinable discontent prevails among them.

This discontent is only to a small portion related to their husbands and children, whom they love, to be sure. This discontent is focused on the **limitations** these relationships and responsibilities impose upon them. An all-pervasive yearning for a different life, a different world altogether, is at issue here. The women's liberation movement has merely conjured up utopian solutions for this undefined perennial human longing for some sort of salvation. In this, the very intensity of discontent among women seems to be an expression of women's inability to come to terms with life itself. In this, to be sure, women are not alone. The currently dominating vision of feminist activists merely illuminates the deeper crisis confronting the West. It is a crisis of decadence. But this demands a different presentation than the one assigned to me here.

III. CONCLUSION

Let me conclude: women are not the universal category feminists have tried to make them out to be. Women, like everyone else, live and operate in very different contexts. Their lives, like those of everyone else, are rooted in distinct traditions, groupings and neighbourhoods; they are influenced by distinct aspirations and norms. Above all, like everyone else, they strive for the expression of their very own hopes and wishes and the realization of their unique individual identities. In this, they are not so different from men. The crisis men and women are facing today flows, to my mind, from the inability of many to understand that everything they ultimately cherish, strive for and hope for--men and women alike--presupposes the existence of a society that provides opportunities and options for their realization. We are living today through nothing less than a watershed in the history of Western societies. The question is: can men and women realize that our kind of society, with all its problems and deficiencies--is the only alternative?

In the face of this crisis, what better time for women to find their own voices and to free themselves from feminism's crippling illusions. The state of the Western world, its future and its destiny, is too important to be left to the feminists.

WOMEN IN POLITICS

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"Exactly where and in proportion as women's capacities for government have been tried, in what proportion have they been found adequate."

John Stuart Mill, "The Subjection of Women"¹

I. INTRODUCTION

Women in Politics--this is the kind of theme freshman English composition teachers have always warned us against: a topic so broad that its discussion will lack clarity and significance. What needs to be said to members of the Mont Pelerin Society beyond those apparently commonplace views expressed by John Stuart Mill over 100 years ago? Mill makes no special claims for women. He notes that history provides limited information about women's political abilities. He asserts only that no one knows enough to deny that women will do as well as men in politics, government, or any other human endeavour if they are given the opportunity. Equal opportunity was a radical idea in 1869 when Mill wrote "The Subjection of Women." It is still a radical idea. Much has happened since Mill's time to increase women's participation in democratic politics and to increase their role in government. But the degradation of democratic theory and practice and the rise of totalitarianism in the 20th century have also left their mark on women in politics. They have caused much misunderstanding of what women can contribute to the political arena. And they have encouraged unwarranted expectations of what women can gain from politics and political life.

II. WOMEN AND THE RIGHT TO VOTE

It may be useful to begin by considering the right to vote, the most basic form of political involvement and a fundamental political right. The spread of women's suffrage throughout the world has seemed to progress in historical stages. At the start of the 20th century women had no political rights in any major country. Women were voting in a few outposts of Western society--in the territory of Wyoming since 1869 and in the state of Colorado and in New Zealand by 1893. Australian women were voting by 1902 and Norwegian women by 1907.

But the first major wave of women's suffrage occurred only after World War I: in the Soviet Union in 1917, in Great Britain in 1918, in Germany in 1919, in the United States in 1920, in Canada in 1921. Women's suffrage spread to southern and eastern Europe, Latin America and parts of Asia in a second wave in the 1930s and 1940s: to countries like Turkey (1934), India (1935), Cuba (1940), France (1944), Japan (1945), Hungary (1945), Italy (1947), Argentina (1947), and Mexico (1953). The newly-independent nations of the Third World might be considered a third wave: Pakistan and Indonesia gave the vote to women in 1950; Tunisia, Kenya and Syria granted women suffrage in 1969, Somalia in 1970. Finally, there are Islamic countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia where "undertow" seems a more apt metaphor than "wave" to describe the progress of women's rights. Clearly, women's participation in politics at the most elementary level is a very recent historical development.

Looking at these dates one notices also that women's suffrage was granted earliest in those countries and regions least shackled by customs, ideas, and laws which affirmed woman's natural inferiority or necessary subordination to man. In addition, it seems that nations were ready to accept women's participation in the political process at moments when they were preparing to enter upon a new stage of industrialization, economic development, political independence, or world leadership. What is the connection between the extension of women's political rights and the modernization of societies? No satisfactory answer can be given here. It is enough to suggest that as modern nations gave serious consideration to the components of national power and prosperity, they seem also to have given greater attention to the political potential of women.

Women in the Political Process

What have women done with the political power they have acquired in the 20th century? The available data--most of it fragmentary and some of it suspect--indicates that wherever women have been given the opportunity to participate in a democratic political process, they have done so, slowly at first, but eventually to the same extent as men. The data also indicates that women will use their political power cautiously, will express the diversity of their interests and not vote as a bloc.

Women have rejected much of the advice they have received. Radical feminists urge women to band together in a common sisterhood, aroused to a consciousness of their exploitation, and struggle as a class to resist a ubiquitous sexism. Fortunately, it does not appear that the feminist agenda is being implemented anywhere with success. Primarily male Marxist revolutionaries, on the other hand, demand that women subordinate their own concerns to a radical program and timetable, thereby demonstrating solidarity with an imagined working class. Unfortunately, the Communist version of women's liberation has succeeded throughout much of the world, condemning millions of women to lives of drudgery and deprivation. But wherever women have used their political power in their own individual interests they have demonstrated, as J.S. Mill expected, that their capacities for government are as "adequate" as the capacities of men in politics--a topic worthy of next year's Mont Pelerin Society meeting.

III. WOMEN AND THE VOTE

How have women handled the vote? A number of studies show that women have voted less often than men in the past, but that increasingly their turnout is virtually the same as men. For instance, the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center determined that female voter participation in the 1948 U.S. presidential election was 13 per cent behind the rate of men. But with each election women's turnout increased, reducing the gap to three percentage points in the 1964 and 1968 elections and six percentage points in 1972.²

The U.S. Census Bureau began collecting voting statistics in 1964. It found that women's voting rate ran behind men's by less than five percentage points in 1964, less than three points in 1968, two points in 1972 and .3 percentage points in 1976 and 1980. Some 59.4% of men and 59.1 per cent of women told the Census Bureau that they voted in 1980.³ Sub-dividing male and female voters by age, region, race, education, and status in the labour force reveals similar patterns of increased voting by women over time and reductions in the gap between male and female voter turnouts.⁴

Similar patterns are discernable in other nations as well. Women voted ten to fifteen percentage points less frequently than men in Germany, Sweden, Finland, and Norway in the years immediately following the introduction of women's suffrage.⁵ But these differences have been reduced to the point that they are now statistically insignificant. In Japan, despite the lack of a tradition of discussion over human equality and individual rights, women voted only about 12 per cent less than men in the Diet elections of 1946, the year women's suffrage was imposed by the American occupation. By 1976 Japanese women voted proportionately more than men by a slight margin: 74.1 per cent to 72.8 percent.⁶ The political activity of a woman voting can still cause social strain in countries like Egypt and Mexico, but it seems clear that in almost all advanced democratic industrial societies women's suffrage is uncontested and has ceased to be politically controversial.

While women's suffrage no longer stirs comment, how women will vote still excites as much discussion as it did in the days of the suffragette. The first advocates and opponents of women's suffrage believe that women would vote differently than men. Women's rights advocates argued that women would substantially change the nature of politics. Indeed, British politicians were so fearful that women's votes would swamp men's after World War I that they granted women's suffrage in 1918 with a more restrictive age qualification--30 years for women, 21 years for men--a restriction which lasted until 1928. How ironic that in the 1979 general election male voters swung more strongly than women to the side of the party that made a woman Prime Minister.⁷

Women--More Conservative or Liberal?

Whether women voters are more conservative or liberal than men voters is a subject which encourages much loose talk. In specific cases it does seem that women are more conservative. Women are the mainstay of Italy's Christian Democratic Party providing at least 60 per cent of the party's electorate.⁸ Likewise, the voters of Britain's Conservative Party have been disproportionately female.⁹ But to go beyond historical particulars where women's decisions have been shaped by a particular set of circumstances is to enter the murky realms of political and social psychology. Here women are said to favour peace over aggressiveness or security over risk because of their nurturing instincts or psychological dependencies. Women are thought to vote more in response to their moral concerns than their economic interests, or are said to respond to people more than to ideas, when compared to men. In our own time, this fumbling quest for the minds and hearts of women is particularly evident in the manifestos of radical feminists and the memos of worried White House political operatives and pollsters. Both are eager to identify what women really want, and the phrase "gender gap" is heard often.

While some of the polling evidence tends to substantiate the hopes and fears of those who believe women's concerns are different from men's, I am inclined to think that talk of the "women's vote" is much exaggerated. Women's lives and interests are too diverse to make them captive to a politician's appeal for support.

It cannot be denied that polls shows consistently lower approval ratings of President Reagan and his Administration among women as compared to men. In the 1980 election an Associated Press/NBC News poll found that while men favoured Reagan over Carter by an overwhelming 56 per cent to 36 per cent, women favoured Reagan by only 47 per cent to 45 per cent.¹⁰ An August 5-10, 1981 Louis Harris survey found that 42 per cent of men but only 34 per cent of women gave President Reagan an "excellent/good" rating on his job performance.¹¹ An April 1982 ABC News poll found a 19 point spread between men and women in their approval of the Reagan Administration.¹² Television polls of voters in the November 1982 congressional elections found that women preferred Democratic candidates three to six percentage points more than men, depending on which network conducted

the poll.¹³ And other opinion polls intending to compare male and female attitudes toward the political values of "force," "risk," and "compassion" disclose modest but persistent variations which seem to put women more often than men at odds with Administration policies.¹⁴

The "gender gap"?

Despite these results, it would be a mistake to regard women as a one-dimensional voting bloc. Women vote as individuals, and they are more divided by interest than united by sex. There are wide variations in the attitudes of working women and housewives, women professionals and blue-collar workers, young and old women, married and unmarried women. Richard Wirthlin, the President's own pollster, found that the difference between men and married women in their approval of Ronald Reagan's performance was only five percentage points; the same February 1982 poll disclosed a 24 percentage point spread between men and unmarried women.¹⁵

How should we react to such polls? Is the President's weakness with the unmarried the result of his stands on abortion and the ERA? Should the Administration curry favour with married women by appointing more of them to high office? We do not know how the White House interprets its polls. We know only that they reacted by appointing Margaret Heckler and Elizabeth Dole to the Cabinet.

The Reagan Administration has named other women to appointive office as well. Besides well-known women like Jeane Kirkpatrick, Sandra Day O'Connor, and Anne Gorsuch Burford, the Administration has placed over 300 women in high ranking government positions (96 presidential appointments with or without Senate confirmation, 145 non-career Senior Executive Service appointments, 148 high-level GS13-15 Schedule C appointments).¹⁶ And Republican party spokesmen hope women voters will recall that both women Senators, Nancy Kassenbaum of Kansas and Paula Hawkins of Florida, are Republicans. Still we can wonder about this political response to the polls, and we can question whether appointing more women is a satisfactory response to the "gender gap" in the President's approval rating.

Marital Status and Bloc Voting

If we examine the married/unmarried disparity, we find, for instance, that unmarried women tend to be younger, work more, and have less financial security than married women. Many of them, in addition, are heads of households. Perhaps then the Wirthlin poll reveals something about the differences in women's reactions as they are affected by inflation and recession. In that case, the poll would measure the unfavourable response of those women--the unmarried--who most want and need to participate in the marketplace, and who are most affected by government economic policies which curtail their freedom to do so.

It is unfortunate that opinion polls have been used to justify the wrong kinds of public policy and political strategy. A policy of earmarked funding or special government programs for women is likely to hurt those women it intends to help. While increasing the tax burden of all citizens, it removes opportunities and incentives from the free market and gives initiative to political operators and bureaucrats skilled in the dispersal of grants and the acquisition of power. And a politics of preference and confrontation based on mobilizing women's political power to promote their special interests will ultimately fail. It will prevent women from being regarded as equal citizens who should be judged on their abilities, not their sex. The diversity of women's interests has been blurred by politicians and the media who have shown too great an attention to the "women's vote." So also has an overly simple interpretation of "women's issues" obscured the real needs of women in the market.¹⁷

IV. WOMEN IN POLITICS

Besides voting at rates that equal or exceed the voting rates of men, women are also involving themselves heavily in grass-roots volunteer politics, and having a substantial impact. In 1835 Alexis De Tocqueville observed the propensity of Americans to form voluntary associations:

"...in the United States associations are established to promote public order, commerce, industry,

morality, and religion; for there is no end which the human will, seconded by the collective exertions of individuals, despairs of attaining (Bk.I, ch.xii)...Wherever, at the head of some new undertaking, you see the Government in France, or a man of rank in England, in the United States you will be sure to find an association." (Bk.II, ch.v)"¹⁸

This observation is no less true today. I do not know enough about the voluntary political activities of women in other countries to comment, but it is clear that in the United States the volunteer activities of women are considered crucial. Women are the foot-soldiers of political campaigns; whether in support of a candidate for elective office, lobbying on behalf of legislation, or in rallying to bring an issue before public attention, they are always present. Indeed, the ten-year struggle over the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment was essentially a political struggle between opposing groups of women who did not hold public office. Votes were tallied in Congress or in state legislatures, but the reality of politics was most manifest in the efforts of groups like the National Organization of Women (NOW) and Phyllis Schlafly's STOP-ERA. Almost all these women were unknown, and very few of them held public office, but they made themselves the key players in one of the major political conflicts of the last decade.

STOP-ERA

Despite her celebrity--or notoriety--Phyllis Schlafly is in fact a very good example of the grass-roots volunteer who has made herself politically significant. A Phi Beta Kappa who received an M.A. in political science from Radcliffe, Schlafly gave up further graduate study to become a wife and mother of six. She became active in local civic affairs in Alton, Illinois, a suburb of St. Louis; was elected president of the Illinois Federation of Republican Women in 1960 and 1962; lost a 1967 bid to become president of the National Federation of Republican Women; and twice, in 1952 and 1970, was the sacrificial Republican standard-bearer in her heavily Democratic Illinois congressional district. Schlafly held no public office and lacked any substantial political support when she founded STOP-ERA in 1972--after ERA had been ratified by 30 of the 38 states needed to include the

amendment in the U.S. Constitution. Yet she built a movement outside the parties and established institutions of politics. She rallied women previously uninvolved in politics, and she stopped ERA. Her achievement would be the envy of any feminist if her goals were not so contrary to theirs.¹⁹

When we look beyond mass voting and voluntary political activism, we find that the role of women at the higher levels of politics is sharply reduced. There are occasional signs that more women are campaigning and being elected to office. And rhetoric of political equality has never been so loud, insistent, and commonplace around the world as it is today. Yet as Jeane Kirkpatrick has noted, "The most interesting and important question about women's political behaviour is why so few seek and wield power."²⁰

Women's political rights are widely touted in most Third World and Communist countries, yet the most cursory examination reveals the limited political roles women play there. In the Third World women's suffrage may be legally guaranteed and practically tolerated, but participation at the elective level is minimal. Traditional roles appear to keep women from participating in politics despite the efforts at modernization made by Third World countries.

The Communist Bloc and Women

Women in Communist countries have made little political progress in the 66 years since the Bolshevik Revolution. Despite great claims for their participation in meaningless political bodies like the Supreme Soviet, whose membership is 30 per cent female, women in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe have very little place in the Communist power structure. Since 1917 only one woman has served in the Soviet Politburo, and women's participation in the Soviet Central Committee is 3.5 per cent. Percentage figures for women's participation in various levels of the governments and Communist parties of the USSR, Communist China, eastern Europe, and Cuba vary, but none of them indicate that women have significant influence.

In her wide-ranging study, **Women Under Communism**, political scientist Barbara Wolfe Jancar observes that the Communist party is the greatest institutional barrier to women's involvement in politics in East bloc countries. Because all political activity must be funnelled through the

Party, women are unable to organize at any level except that sanctioned by the Party. Ideologically, the most formidable barriers to women's politics are the Communist Party's insistence on the primacy of the proletarian revolution. And economically, the greatest obstacle to women's political involvement is the exhausting double burden of outside labour and domestic housework placed on the Soviet woman. Despite the massive entry of women into the labour force, traditional notions of women's work remain imbedded in male Soviet attitudes; moreover, Soviet modernization has neglected to produce the most elementary labour-saving household appliances that almost all Western women enjoy.²¹

Experience in The Western Democracies

Women in western democracies do not suffer from the brutal external constraints imposed on Soviet women. By and large, consumer needs--which are a genuine "women's issue" in the Soviet context--have been satisfied. Women can to a much greater extent turn their attention to public issues and political activity. But even though legal guarantees to equal rights, access to education, and a rising standard of living provide enhanced opportunities for women--and even though women are more than 50 per cent of the potential electorate in such advanced countries as Great Britain, Japan, and the United States--still the facts are that few women run for elective office and still fewer win; few women hold high appointive office; few women seek political power.

The figures are surprising. After the 1979 elections in Great Britain, there were fewer women in Parliament than at any time since 1951: only 19 of 635 members of the House of Commons were women--2.9 per cent. Of the 339 Conservative MPs, eight were women--although one was Margaret Thatcher. Canadians elected 10 women to the 282 member House of Commons in 1979--3.5 per cent. The United States elected 21 women to the 435 member House of Representatives in 1982--4.8 per cent. Women did much better, however, in the 50 state legislatures: 1666 ran for office in 1982 and 908 were elected. Thirteen per cent of all American state legislators are now women, more than double the percentage in 1972. Italians elected 54 women--8.6 per cent--to the 630 member Chamber of Deputies in 1979. (If our thesis tying women's participation in politics to the

degree of modernization is to hold true, Italy would appear to be overtaking Great Britain, Canada, and the United States.)²²

Women in Elected Office-- Why So Few?

Why do women remain marginal in democratic politics? This is a question which has provoked much scholarly research. Overt sex discrimination by men (or women) does not seem to be a major factor at the present time. Some political scientists tend to explain women's political marginality as a function of party recruitment patterns. Political parties, they say, renominate incumbents to safe districts and these are primarily men. New women candidates are consequently more likely to be the party's standard bearer in the district which is safe for the opposing party.

Other political scientists, as well as many sociologists, say women often define their own social roles in ways that reduce their opportunities for office-holding. Women may delay their political careers for marriage, or they may use volunteer political activity as a substitute rather than a stepping-stone for greater political activity. Whatever the reasons it does seem that at the present time women are not involved in politics to the same extent as men.

This raises one final set of questions: Is this a matter about which we should be concerned? Do we need more women in politics? Who will benefit? Who will lose?

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SEX DISCRIMINATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

Discussions of sex discrimination, like racial discrimination succumb to the temptation to look for evil spirits and conspiracies. Much of the literature both popular and scholarly, about sex discrimination, contains sloppy analysis and non-operational words and meaningless statistics as does its sister field of racial literature. Despite the enactment of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the wage differential between women and men has not decreased. Women continue to earn a median income that is 60 per cent of male income. Armed with this finding women's rights groups and their supporters have called for a new remedy: **equal pay for comparable worth**. The equal pay for comparable worth movement has grown out of the belief that past government efforts to equalize earnings across the sexes has failed. The equal pay for comparable worth concept rests on the finding that certain occupations are predominantly male while others are female. Truck drivers and typists are an example. Predominantly male jobs pay higher wages than those predominantly female. The equal pay for comparable worth doctrine would thus establish the worth of both jobs to the employer and quite possibly truck drivers and secretaries would receive the same wage.

II. WORKING DEFINITION OF SEX DISCRIMINATION

A first step to disentangle confusion about male and female wage differences is to give operational meaning to sex discrimination. In the sex discrimination literature, sex discrimination is used in a manner that may describe two, possibly three, different phenomena.

The word discrimination itself means choice. Scarcity requires selection among alternatives. We all discriminate because we all choose. When discrimination is prefaced by the word sex or race, we merely specify the choice criteria. For some activities we choose men (discriminate against women) and in others we choose women (discriminate against men). Most of mankind, even those living in multi-racial societies, choose for a mate for marriage a member of their own race and of the opposite sex.

Often when people speak of sex discrimination they really mean sex prejudice. Prejudice in the sense of one dictionary definition: "A judgment or opinion formed before the facts are known."¹ Another way to characterize this kind of behaviour is to say that people form stereotypes. Sex stereotypes or sex prejudice like other kinds of prejudicial behaviour is a part of the optimizing behaviour of people. The reason is that we live in a world of costly information which simply means that in order to acquire additional units of information, we must sacrifice some other thing of value such as time, money or effort. Since information is costly we reasonably expect people to seek means to economize on information costs. One way to economize on information costs is to use cheaply observed physical characteristics such as sex, as a proxy for some other costly-to-observe characteristic such as productivity.²

The use of stereotypes or prejudicial choices is one method which may reduce information costs. Some economists refer to this phenomenon as "statistical" discrimination.³ For example women present fewer auto accident claims than men; therefore, insurance companies charge women lower insurance premiums on the average. Since insurance companies lack prior knowledge of any particular individual they must set rates according to statistically significant risk groups. Therefore, the fact that a person is a female, cheaply conveys information which suggests a lower probability of accident claims. The fact that a person is a male, under 25, contains information which suggests a higher probability of accident claims.

Sex May Convey Employment Characteristics to Employers

Similarly, in employment choice, the applicant's sex may convey information about unobserved characteristics regarding expected applicant productivity. The employer, for

example, may believe turnover rates for women exceed those of men. Since employee turnover requires new training, which costs, employers can be expected to seek to reduce employee turnover. There are at least two ways employers can reduce retraining costs associated with turnover: (1) hire fewer employees with high expected turnover or (2) pay high expected turnover employees less.

Employers Discriminate on Basis of Customer Preference

Another form of sexual discrimination, which I call sex preferences, simply represents employer tastes. He may prefer to associate with one sex rather than another. Possibly the employer may be indifferent with regard to the sex of the worker but his other workers may prefer male co-workers. Yet another kind of sex preference exists. The employer may perceive his customers prefer to be served by one sex over another. Customer preference can be **for** female service, as in the case of bar hostesses or airline stewardesses and be **against** female services, as in the case of caddies and attorneys. Customers may value some performances more if performed by men than women such as in basketball, football and tennis.

Therefore, we can distinguish between the two different kinds of sex discrimination: that based on preferences and that based on beliefs about productivity.

III. SEX AS A PROXY VARIABLE

This paper does not attach a pejorative meaning to sex discrimination. It will be examined simply as a form of human behaviour. Sex prejudice is a part of optimizing behaviour by wealth-maximizing decisionmakers. There are several important reasons why women, as **a class**, can be expected to have an average productivity lower than men. First is the fact that women bear children and men do not. In addition, once children are borne, women are more likely to care for them than are men. Moreover, women are more likely than men to move, or change jobs, to accommodate spouse career changes.

These differences alone suggest a higher job turnover rate among women. Elizabeth Landes' empirical findings

support the expectation of higher turnover rates for women.⁴ Landes finds that according to U.S. Department of Labor reports, the median number of years on current job for men exceeded those for women by 77 to 100 per cent. Solomon Polachek, in a study of labour force continuity, reports most married women leave the labour force to bear and raise children and **may** reenter after the birth of their last child.⁵ Polachek's conclusions are that female married high school graduates are in the labour force, on the average, only one-third of their potential working years.

Therefore, if employee work continuity weights heavily in employment and human capital investment decisions, we can expect certain kinds of wealth-maximizing behaviour on behalf of employers. Worker job tenure influences both worker productivity and the amount of human capital invested by the employer in a mutually reinforcing way. Thus an employer interested in high productivity may use sex as one of his estimators for worker job continuity.

According to Cotton Lindsay, discontinuity in the labour force influences the amount of human capital that a person holds in several important ways.⁶ First, because women expect to spend fewer years in the work force, they have reduced incentive to invest in education and training. Their decisions can also be expected to influence the quality of investment. For example, women may be reluctant to train for highly specialized fields in math and science because the pay off period is longer than say sociology and non-university teachers. In addition many specialized fields like subatomic physics do not have a secondary household use. Secondly, a large amount of any person's human capital is acquired through on-the-job training. Because women may be out of the labour force for longer periods of time they have reduced amounts of this kind of capital. Finally, human capital deteriorates if not used and replenished. When people are out of the job market skills become rusty and may even become obsolete. All of this suggests, holding all else constant, a lower amount of human capital held by women as a group relative to men as a group.

Pay Differentials

Malcolm Cohen conducted a study of pay differentials between women and men which is summarized in Table 1

below.⁷ According to Cohen 50 per cent of a \$5,000 pay differential is explained by factors such as unionization, seniority, etc. The residual difference, according to Cohen, cannot be attributed to sex discrimination alone. He cites factors such as: greater concentration of women in low-paying occupations, less on-the-job training than men, greater desire of women for specific hours and geographic area for the job, etc.

TABLE I
SUMMARY OF CALCULATIONS ON DIFFERENTIAL IN PAY
BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN, DECEMBER 1969

Full-time (35 hours or more) wage differential between men and women	\$ 5,000
Adjustment to universe to exclude under age 22, over age 64, self-employed, persons without a steady job	- 700
Adjustment to remove professionals	- 800
Full-time men work 275 more hours per year than do full-time women	- 1,000
Fringe benefits and absenteeism	0
Seniority of men	- 150
Education	+ 350
Unionization	- 150
Remainder	\$ 2,550

From: Cohen, Malcolm S. "Sex Differences in Compensation." *Journal of Human Resources* 6 (Fall 1971): 446.

Thomas Sowell suggests another variable which has a significant effect on the careers of some women.⁸ He reports **single** women with a Ph.D. achieve the rank of full professor more than other similarly qualified academics. But **married female Ph.D.s** achieve that rank less often. Furthermore, the 1968-69 academic-year salary of full time female academics who were **never** married is slightly higher than male academics who were never married. Sowell's findings are summarized in Table 2. Additionally, female academics who were never married had a higher salary than their married counterparts.

TABLE 2
SEX DIFFERENTIALS BEFORE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
(1968-69 MEAN ACADEMIC-YEAR SALARY, ALL ACADEMICS)

	Male Academics	Female Academics	Female/Male Salary Percentage
Never married	\$11,070	\$11,523	104%
Presently married	\$13,562	\$10,264	76%
Divorced, widowed, etc.	\$15,065	\$13,176	88%

From: Thomas Sowell. "Affirmative Action Reconsidered," **Public Interest** (Winter 1976), p. 55.

Sowell reports that these differences, according to surveys, are readily understandable because: (a) married academic women put more time than married academic men into care of the home and family; (2) geographic location of academic couples is determined by the husband's career prospects rather than the wife's which often means that geographic relocation is a career move **up** for the husband and a career move **down** for the wife; and (3) women

academics, like other women, interrupt their careers more often than men and non-married men for child-rearing or other reasons.⁹ Marriage gives men a helper while marriage makes women the helpee. Apparently marriage has a similar impact on female earnings relative to men in Canada as found by Walter Block and summarized in Table 3 below.¹⁰ Sowell points out, "Such a situation may not be just--but it does not result, however, from employer discrimination."

TABLE 3
FEMALE/MALE EARNINGS RATIOS BY MARITAL STATUS, CANADA, 1971¹¹

	Never Married Female	Never Married Male	Ever Married Female	Ever Married Male	Total Female	Total Male
Sample Size	2,117	2,439	14,060	27,800	16,177	30,239
Income	\$4,169.72	\$4,201.24	\$2,216.58	\$6,674.91	\$2,407.70	\$6,430.30
Income Differential (Male - Female)	\$31.52		\$4,458.33		\$4,022.60	
Income Ratio (Female/Male)	.992		.332		.374	

IV. PREFERENCES AND MARKET RESPONSE

Sex preferences by employers, employees and customers can affect the market opportunities for the less-preferred person. If the employment of women imposed a psychic cost on the employer, in order to sell their services women would have to pay a compensating difference, i.e., offer their services at a price lower than their male counterpart. If the employer's preferences are sexually neutral while those of his male employees are biased against association with women, a pay differential will exist between men and women. That is, employers will have to pay male employees a premium to

associate with females if they choose to "integrate" their workforce. Finally, if customers exhibit sexual preferences for sales personnel, lawyers, medical practitioners, etc., the employer's employee selection will reflect customer preference. In some cases he will not hire female employees at all and in others he will hire them only at a lower wage thereby permitting him to pay a compensating difference to his customers in the form of lower product or service price.

Open market forces tend to reduce discrimination based upon employer and employee sex preferences for association. Not all employers can be counted to have these preferences and discriminate against the employment of women. Those that do not will be able to purchase the labour services of women at bargain prices which reflect the women's smaller set of employment choice. Non-discriminating employers will face lower costs of production and will capture a greater market share by offering products or services at lower prices than their sex discriminating competitors. Through paying women less than their value, non-discriminating firms will earn supra-normal profits. Market forces tend to eliminate supra-normal profits through entry by other firms. Entry by firms will bid up the wages of women who were paid less than the value of their marginal product. If men and women are equal in their productivity the long-run wage differential based on preferences will tend toward zero.

V. BARRIERS TO ENTRY

Markets will tend to reduce discrimination associated with preference indulgence. The essential condition for this to occur is the existence of open market competition. However, where there are monopolistic practices and legal restrictions which prevent women from competing with men for economic opportunities sex preference indulgence will persist. While no labour or professional organization can today expect to succeed in having a males-only membership policy it can design and lobby for policy which puts women at a competitive disadvantage relative to men. These policies raise the expected cost to the employer to hire women while at the same time reducing the cost to employers and male employees to indulge sex preferences.

(1) Wage Restrictions Handicap Women

One legal tool which handicaps women (or any less-preferred person) is legal wage minima.¹² Equal pay for equal work laws, mandated by the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 require **employers** to pay the same wage to all employees doing the same job. Government-imposed or union-imposed wage minima can have two possible consequences. First, where there are **real** productivity differences by sex the law will discriminate against the employment of women. Employers adjusting worker marginal productivity to mandated wage rates will hire fewer women. Second, by the employer adjusting worker productivity to mandated wages there will be employment discrimination against the least skilled woman worker. This will be especially true in the presence of mandated employment quotas. The profit maximizing employer, in light of equal pay requirements, will raise employment qualifications to match those of males. This in turn means that women who are employed by the firm receive the same wage as men but less-skilled women will not be hired at all. Thus equal pay laws have the tendency to discriminate against the employment of less-skilled women and favour the more highly-skilled or educated women.¹³

Anti-sex discrimination laws which are a part of the Civil Rights Act give rise to administrative laws and procedures which raise the cost to an employer to fire a black or female employee. The effect of these laws is they place employers in jeopardy of employment discrimination suits when they rightly or wrongly fire an employee. This tends to reduce the employer's willingness to experiment and perhaps revise his expectations about differences in gender (or race) productivity. In other words, if the employer can cheaply fire employees that turn out to be poor workers he would be more willing to hire and try out employees with different and unfamiliar credentials. But if it is costly to fire female employees, employers will have reduced incentive to experiment. Laws which raise the cost to fire women reinforce the effect of equal pay laws on employer incentive to experiment.

(2) Protective Legislation

Traditionally labour unions have sought to reduce job competition with women through the use of "protective" legislation.

One important case was Muller v. Oregon (208 U.S. 412, 1908) which upheld the constitutionality of state protective laws for women because of, "...a widespread belief that woman's physical structure, and the functions she performs in consequence thereof, justify special legislation restricting or qualifying the conditions under which she should be permitted to toil."¹⁴ By 1970 at least 46 states and other U.S. jurisdictions had regulations governing work conditions for women such as: maximum hours, rest periods, time of day or night they can be employed, weight lifting restrictions. No fewer than 26 states had outright bans on women employment in certain occupations such as mining and bartending.

Recent court cases and federal and state administrative actions have invalidated protective legislation for women under provisions of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.¹⁵ As a result of court action and state human rights commissions and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) decisions, early protective legislation for women has all but been eliminated from the American labour market.

The effect of protective legislation is that it has reduced the marketability of skills held by women. It did this by raising the cost to the employer of hiring women. In some cases it was quite flagrant as in the Arkansas statute (Act 191 of 1915, para. 81-601) which required employers to pay female employees, **but not male employees**, time and a half for all hours in excess of eight.¹⁶ Male workers and unions sought these and other forms of protective legislation as a means to raise their wages by restricting competition with women.

Union based restriction of women is a broad phenomenon. Writing about 19th century England, Susan Anthony said, "...Male labour came to realize they might more effectively unite to put forward a uniform demand based on their own recognized needs, and so secure higher payment than a woman could customarily ask, or be likely to receive."¹⁷ Anthony explains, "The Luddite riots, which came to a head in 1811-1812 among the Framework Knitters of Leicester, appear to have been caused "by the use of a new machine which enabled the manufacturers to employ women in work in which men had been employed."

In England, like the U.S., men suddenly became interested in the morals and health of women. "In the Metal Trades many attempts were made to secure the exclusion of

women, ostensibly on the grounds of their own welfare."¹⁹ Male trade unions such as Birmingham Brass Workers, Nut and Bolt Makers, Chain Makers and Nail Makers sought exclusion of women workers, in the name of protection, as a means to raise their own pay.²⁰

(3) Other Barriers to Women

Any law or institutional arrangements that sets entry requirements will have the effect of reducing options and hence employment opportunities for any group of people who may be characterized as latecomers, untried, less-skilled and in general, less-preferred. Not all women, but many, fit that characterization because of their historical experience in job markets, their socialization experience and real gender differences between men and women.

Occupational licensing laws, business regulation laws and wage laws will discriminate against women particularly those toward the lower end of the skills' spectrum. These laws provide those who may wish to discriminate against women an effective mechanism for doing so. It has been long recognized, for example, that occupational licensing laws discriminate in favour of incumbents.²¹ Incumbents regulate their occupation in a way that favours them momentarily, i.e., entry restriction. To the extent that historically women have been outsiders to many professions they bear a **disproportionate** share of the cost of entry restriction.

There are some laws which outright prohibit the entrepreneurial drive of some women. The most flagrant among these are current Department of Labor regulations that prohibit home industries such as embroidery, manufacture of handkerchiefs, buttons, buckles, jewellery, sewing women's clothing and making gloves and mittens. Only recently outerwear knitting was removed from the list of prohibited activities. Manufacture of goods at home, for sale to distributors, is attractive to some women in that it is compatible with their homemaking and childrearing activities. However, it competes with organized labour which has been successful in petitioning congress to ban such activities.

Aside from federal prohibitions on production within the home there are local restrictions as well. In some localities local ordinances prohibit the keeping of inventories in the home while others impose blanket restrictions on businesses in residential neighbourhoods.

All of these restrictive factors, coupled with the fact of a history of discrimination that has legally kept women away from certain pursuits, serve to reduce options and crowd women into certain occupations where, because of supply and demand conditions, wages are low.

VI. REMEDIES

Equal pay for equal work is now the law in the U.S. as a result of congressional act, administrative actions and numerous litigation. The economic effect of equal pay for equal work may be disappointing to some of its supporters. If we assume gender discrimination by employers the effect of equal pay for equal work laws is that of **lowering** the cost to discriminate. That is, if a man and a woman have equal productivity, it costs the employer nothing to indulge his preference for male employees over female employees. Equal pay for equal work denies women the opportunity to impose a market cost on biased employers.

Some may suggest that the way to avoid this undesirable market effect of equal pay for equal work laws is to have government-imposed sex employment quotas. Employment quotas will have several effects. First, if they lead to women being hired who are less qualified than men there will be efficiency losses to the firm and society. Secondly, they lead to more resources being allocated to job evaluation, credentialization, enforcement costs and paperwork. Thirdly, quotas coupled with equal pay for equal work provisions will discriminate against less-skilled or educated women. The employer who must hire a certain amount of women at a mandated cost will find it to his economic interest to hire only the most skilled women. Such a set of incentives among employers contributes to female job crowding and poverty.

The most recent arrival on the proposed policy landscape to assist women is the new equal pay for comparable worth concept. Proponents argue that women should receive the same pay as men who are doing jobs of comparable worth. "We might think of a job's worth as its contributory value to the employer's operation, or alternatively, to the community welfare. Jobs that contribute to the same degree would be judged of equal worth. Or jobs might be evaluated instead according to some view of their intrinsic worth."²²

Throughout proponent discussion of comparable worth runs the old belief in the notion of the "just wage." It is as if "just" or "fair" wage can have objective meaning and can be determined in the real world. Just wages have no meaning whatsoever in economic theory.

Should equal pay for comparable worth actually become public policy it would have the effect of multiplying disastrous effects of another public policy namely, the minimum wage. First, without raising the productivity of workers, comparable worth laws will raise their price. Second, a comparable worth law would drive many firms out of business because of the imposed rise in labour costs. Thirdly, firms that manage to survive in the wake of comparable worth policy will recognize their labour usage and substitute capital for labour in ways that economize on labour costs.

In summary equal pay for comparable worth will (1) discriminate in favour of highly productive males and females and against low productive males and females, (2) have its greatest adverse impact on poor, young females and (3) raise the level of welfare dependency among men and women.

VII. CONCLUSION

There is considerable discrimination in this world. Sex discrimination is just one of the many kinds of discrimination. The policy question is how much of what we observe is attributable to sex discrimination and how much is attributable to other factors knowable and unknowable and measurable and non-measurable. Too much of the public policy debate assumes there are little or no market-related gender differences. Too many professional analyses of gender wage differences assume their statistical equations capture all or most important variables that explain an individual's wages. In this matter there appears to be important variables omitted. Males are generally more aggressive and competitive than females. I have the suspicion that aggressiveness and competitiveness have something to do with economic mobility; but this variable, which may account for some observed differences is never mentioned. Then there is specialization in the household which may have an impact on non-household production. There is also the possibility that personal preferences can explain individual choice of investment and subsequent employment.

Finally, the movement for comparable work can be viewed as a triumph of sorts. Since feminists and their supporters cannot find enough everyday, garden variety sex discrimination remedied under existing law, and have turned their efforts toward the "just wage," it suggests women have made tremendous gains despite the median income canard.

APPENDIX 1
PERCENTAGE LIFETIME LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION
BY MARITAL STATUS AND EDUCATION¹

Marital Status	Elementary	High School	College	Graduate School
Married, spouse present	27.4%	33.8%	36.4%	50.0%
Married, spouse absent	28.3	33.4	54.1	NC
Widowed	31.7	32.4	44.9	56.5
Divorced	38.1	51.8	62.4	50.0
Separated	46.1	47.5	49.6	68.2
Never married	28.2	66.9	88.9	97.2
Total	30.1	36.9	41.4	59.1

SOURCE: 1967 National Longitudinal Survey

NOTE: Lifetime Labor Force Participation = total years worked divided by total exposure (age minus education minus 6) to the labor force.

NC: Not calculated (too few observations)

¹ Polachek, Solomon. "Discontinuous Labor Force Participation and Its Effects on Women's Market Earnings." In *Sex Discrimination and the Division of Labor*, edited by Cynthia B. Lloyd. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.

NOTES

1. Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (College Edition, New York World, 1962), p. 1150.
2. For fuller discussion, see Walter E. Williams, The State Against Blacks, chapter 2.
3. Edmund E. Phelps, "The Statistical Theory of Racism and Sexism," American Economic Review, 62 (September, 1972), pp. 659-661.
4. Elizabeth M. Landes, "Sex Differences in Wage and Employment: A Test of the Specific Capital Hypothesis," Economic Inquiry, 15 (October 1977), pp. 523-538, cited in Cotton Lindsay, "Equal Pay for Comparable Work," Law and Economic Center monograph, Miami, 1980, pp. 21-22.
5. Polachek, Solomon, "Discontinuous Labor Force Participation and Its Effects on Women's Market Earnings." In Sex Discrimination and the Division of Labor, edited by Cynthia B. Lloyd. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.
6. Cotton Lindsay, "Equal Pay for Comparable Work," Law and Economic Center monograph. Miami: 1980, p. 22.
7. Malcolm S. Cohen, "Sex Differences in Compensation," Journal of Human Resources 6 (Fall 1971), pp. 435-447.
8. Thomas Sowell, "Affirmative Action Reconsidered," Public Interest (Winter 1976), pp. 47-65.
9. For a comparison of lifetime labour force participation rates among women of different marital status and education see table, Appendix 1.
10. Walter Block, "Economic Intervention, Discrimination, and Unforeseen Consequences," in Discrimination, Affirmative Action, and Equal Opportunity eds. W.E. Block and M.A. Walker, pp. 103-125.

11. Ibid., p. 112
12. Less-preferred is not to be construed in the absolute sense. It simply means, that, at some price, one person is viewed by a decisionmaker as having lower value relative to another.
13. While the author knows of no empirical studies on the redistributive effects of the equal pay, casual observation suggests most feminists are highly educated females.
14. At page 10, Muller v. Oregon.
15. Hays v. Potlatch Forest, Inc., 465 F. 2d 1081 (1972); Rosenfeld v. Southern Pacific Company, 444 F. 2d 1219 (1971); Cooper v. Delta Airlines, 274 F. Supt. 781 (E.D.La. 1967); Weeks v. Southern Bell Tel. & Tel. Company, 408 F. 2d 228 (1969).
16. The court held the statute invalid in Hays v. Potlatch Forest, Inc., 465 F. 2d 1081 (1972).
17. Susan Anthony, "Trade Unionism and Women's Work" in Freedom, Feminism, and the State, ed. Wendy McElroy, p. 243.
18. Ibid., p. 245
19. Ibid., p. 249-250.
20. Ibid., p. 250
21. See Simon Rottenberg, "Economics of Occupational Licensing," in Aspects of Labor Economics, NBER (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962), pp. 3-20.
22. Report from the Center for Philosophy & Public Policy (College Park, Maryland: University of Maryland, Spring 1983), p. 4.

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