

Up

from under

60¢

Volume 1, Number 1



LEAFANIS

Up	Comune di Padova Biblioteca	
	Cod. Bib. <u>01</u>	
	BID <u>LOW 28037</u>	
	INV <u>65887</u>	
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EDITORIAL

When was the last time you heard someone say, "Mary just gave birth to her first baby, a little girl." Perhaps your response was, "Oh, that's nice, but didn't she want a boy?" Why don't we feel as lucky to have a girl? Why, right from the start, is a girl's life somehow less valuable than a boy's? How often do we find little to speak about with pride but the accomplishments of our husbands, boyfriends, or children?

We want to like ourselves and each other. We know we can be creative and productive. But what happens to us? Are we the goddess-like creatures that supposedly represent us in the almost religious cliches about Home & Hearth? Certainly we don't feel like goddesses at the end of the day after we have removed our outrageously priced makeup, our new clothes already becoming obsolete, our padded bras, our girdles, and crawled into bed with stomachs grumbling because of some new diet. Hair too straight? Make it curly! Too curly? Make it straight! Too fat? Skinny? Whatever we are in our natural state is *no good*, and billions of dollars spent on advertising ("Blondes have more fun") each year won't let us forget it!

Seventy-five percent of all consumer purchases are made by women, but we have little economic power. We are the lowest paid workers. And what kind of jobs do we get? Never mind our educational achievements—can we type? Take shorthand? Make coffee? Sleep with the boss? Don't be "unfeminine" by showing how bright you really are.

Why should we work for low salaries all our lives, doing the work nobody wants to do? Why should we do more than half the boss's job at less than half his pay? Even the rare woman who manages to climb to the "top" still earns less than a man in the same position and she is often considered less of a woman. Marriage as a career begins to seem a desirable alternative. A great fear overtakes us; what will happen if we do not find a man? Our families pressure us. Nobody thinks that some of us might prefer to remain unmarried. To live without a man is to be subject to ridicule and ostracism.

And once we find husbands, what then? Full and loving relationships become difficult to realize as our lives and ambitions become secondary to our husbands'. After all, we were raised and educated to be helpmates and comforters, weren't we? Our heroes, all the important and exciting people, have always been men. We learned early that the boys would be firemen and we would be "mommies." They would be the doctors, the nurses. They would grow up to be kings and presidents, and we—with the deepest sense of gratitude for being chosen—would be their faithful wives.

Then the shock to find ourselves in the dull, unending



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routine of housework. The movies never showed it that way! Chase Manhattan Bank estimates the average American woman works 99.6 hours a week. Much of this is in the home, work for which we receive no pay. And while having a baby is a wonderful experience, many of the pleasures of bringing up a child are negated as motherhood is made our only outlet for self-expression. We love our children, but we become disappointed and frustrated when they cannot fill all our needs. Moreover, most of us have finished raising our children by the age of thirty-five and are left with nothing meaningful to do. Loneliness and a sense of sense of isolation set in, along with the fear that we are becoming uninteresting and dull.

Those of us who want to work outside our homes are made to feel guilty for not having the proper "instincts" to be full-time wives and mothers. This guilt has kept many women from entering the labor market—a situation not accidental, but which keeps most women as a surplus labor force to be called upon in times of crisis, such as during wartime. Nowadays, most women who do work are those that have to. (In 1964, 70 percent of working women supported themselves or others, or had husbands who earned less than \$5,000.) Coming home, late at night, exhausted, these women still must shop, cook, and clean.

Our lives are said to be the most privileged, the most free of any women in the world. But what about the 10,000 of us who die each year from illegal abortions, the thousands of women in mental institutions, the quiet suicides in lovely suburban homes, the one in three marriages that ends in divorce, and the millions of women who turn in desperation to alcohol, tranquilizers, and barbiturates?

And what about those of us who get down on our hands and knees to clean the floors of empty offices when everybody else has gone home? Caring for a family—always left to the woman—is made extra difficult for low-income women who cannot afford modern conveniences. And when the children get sick—which happens often because of inadequate diets and cold and crowded slum dwellings—it is their mothers who must wait with them for hours in understaffed, poorly serviced health clinics. Many of these women must face the compounded burden of being non-white in a racist society.

We feel strongly that the ways women are exploited in this society are *not the result of inherent differences between women and men*. We think the inferior roles women play, and the limited options available, are perpetuated by our society, a society which finds it profitable to keep us "in our place." We are determined to redefine what it means to be a woman.

We do not believe that role-reversal is the answer, that men should spend their time thinking of ways to appear sexy and planning elaborate meals for us, or that we should be in their places. We feel sadness for those men who are stunted in their stereotyped strong-but-silent roles, emotional outlets denied them, alienated from their work and families, their manliness equated with the size of their paychecks. Like us, they have been channeled by their education and economic needs into routinized jobs over which they have little control.

This magazine will examine all aspects of the "American way of life" to see what it does to us and what must be done to change it. We are not looking for more women in Congress, lady judges, or even female astronauts—tokenism will make no essential difference to our lives. We must learn that the problems we thought were our own are shared by all women, that only by understanding the *social* basis for our predicament and joining with other women in struggle can we make the basic structural changes that are necessary. We demand a society which will not divide and condemn people because of their sex, color, or class, a society which will be responsive to the real needs of all its people.

Thousands of women in this country have been discovering that their lives are of profound importance; that being a woman can be a cause for celebration; that even the smallest changes in our self-images can bring about new relationships with other women, with men, and with our children. Women everywhere are getting together. Small discussion and action groups are springing up across the country. We are finding new hope and strength in discovering that our experiences, our secret thoughts, our anger are shared by many, many other women.

Up From Under is designed, written, and produced by such a group of women. We are working women, students, and mothers who have been active in radical politics and have come to feel women's issues are crucial. We want to explore with all women the new insights, understanding, and enthusiasm that are growing out of the women's movement. Women deserve a magazine that will speak honestly and directly to their situation, a magazine that is not designed to push useless products, or to re-enforce the convenient stereotypes.

Women are 51 percent of this nation. Together we have enormous strength! Join us! □

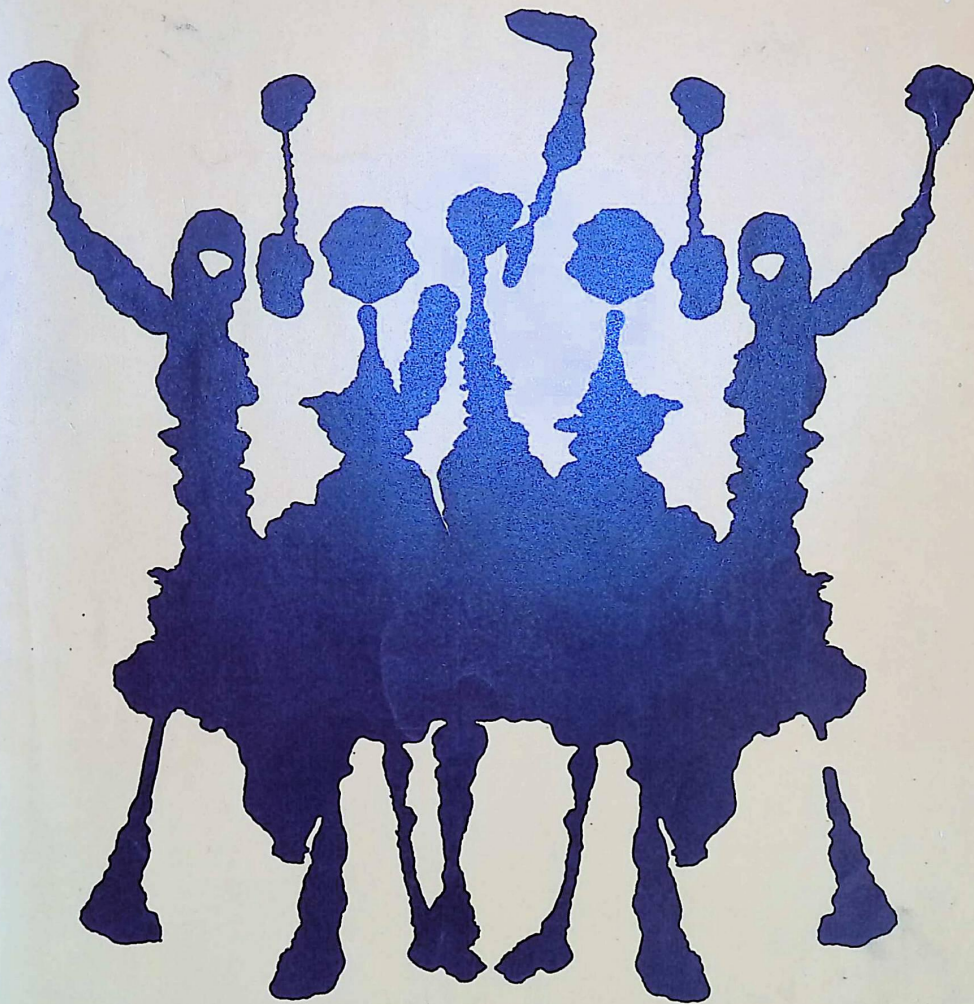
We welcome letters, manuscripts, and artwork.
Please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Up

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from under

by, for, and about women.



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Volume 1, Number 2
Published 5 times a year by Up From Under, Inc.
339 Lafayette Street, New York, New York 10012
Subscription rate: \$3.00 for 5 issues
Copyright©1970 by Up From Under, Inc.
Application to Mail at Second Class Postage
Is Pending in New York, New York

Cover by Ina Clausen



EDITORIAL

Up from Under was started last year with an intense feeling of sisterhood. Our group was formed out of a sense that we were united as women, that we shared a common anger born of common experience. We wanted to work together and with other women to direct that anger to build a strong women's movement for social change.

Since then, and particularly since our first issue was published in May, many changes have taken place within our group. We've gotten to know each other better and we have begun to participate more fully in each other's lives. As a result, we've come to realize that there are very real differences among us, differences which would have divided us had we ignored them.

It became apparent during discussions of our backgrounds and our present alternatives that the positions of those of us who have the option of hiring other women to do our work are different from the position of those who might be the ones hired; that a female boss might not choose to fight for the same things as her secretary, or a rich "homemaker" or professional woman as her maid. As we examined our lives we began to see that the things which divided women now and which have divided us throughout the history of our struggles, are clearly determined by the jobs we do. The work we do determines how we spend much of our waking hours, and how much time, energy, and money we can afford to spend on the hours left over.

That so many paid jobs for women are service jobs is no accident. It is a direct extension of the primary job of a woman—care for a house and children. If a woman works outside the home because of economic need she is forced to have two full-time jobs, as she still must fulfill her primary function as housewife and mother. This is because society tells us that housework is not a job, not real work.

By pretending that housework is not real work, the society has its children raised for free, its homes cleaned for free, and its food cooked for free. Individual husbands—workers needed for "real" production—are cleaned for, cooked for, and generally cared for by wives whose rewards consist of love and financial support. To be supported means to be economically dependent. From this basic dependency of a woman upon a man and upon a system that controls the man, flow all other aspects of her dependency. The subordination of a woman to a man occurs instantly when she becomes Mrs. Tom Smith, occupation: housewife. Work for no pay is hidden in the institution of marriage. It is even called a "labor of love."

What we are saying is that the family is the basic place of work for an entire group of people: women. Childhood and



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adolescence for a girl is very much a period of training in the basic skills for the job of wife and mother. We are apprentices to our mothers. We learn, willingly or unwillingly, sooner or later, to cook, iron, shop, sew, wash dishes, floors, and clothes and take care of children. A boy receives no such training. A husband is not a household worker. A wife is.

However, the husband is not the main beneficiary of woman's work. That he has a more privileged position in the home is certainly true; that his house is a place of rest and escape from a job is also true; but his "freedom" consists of having to work hard, very often at two jobs just to make enough money for him and his family to live. Both men and women spend most of their lives working for a living and little time living.

Certainly deep feelings of caring do exist between a man and a woman in marriage. All we are saying is that love exists between two people in spite of the institution of marriage and not because of it. It is basic to the humanity of each one of us to commit ourselves to caring about each other's needs. However, because women have more need to be married than men for economic security, and are therefore less free and more dependent than men in marriage, we tend to care more, to be more committed to the struggle for love. The struggle for love is the struggle for equal sharing of the problems of living.

The service role of women and their oversized share of responsibility for the problems of living extend beyond the home and into the "real" (paid) work world. Women can be found working in factory production in many industries, but most of the work women do is related in one way or another to some kind of service. Nurses serve patients, waitresses serve customers, secretaries serve their bosses, teachers serve students. On another level, teacher aides and nurses' aides serve people even more directly; for them are reserved the more personal, less "professional" parts of the work. They are paid less than nurses and teachers. Babysitters, live-in domestics, do the most personal of all services—keeping people, especially children, alive and healthy and growing. They are paid under the minimum wage levels. The most necessary, the most basic work a human being can do has little value in this society's eyes.

It seems that the more removed work is from the service of people, the higher paid and the better regarded it is. The executive secretary who makes coffee for one boss in a carpeted office has more prestige than the woman who cleans the entire office building for everyone. But who do we need most? Who is the more important to keeping the larger numbers of us healthy? Why do we think a bit more

of the waitress at Schraffts than we do of the waitress at Nedicks?

There is nothing wrong with the work women do. What is wrong is that the purpose of work in this society is distorted so that the greatest numbers of people receive the least benefit. Housewives are not there to love and serve their families, they are there to bring up the next generation of workers cost free. Waitresses are not there to serve customers, they are there to make sure they keep paying. No value is put on people, only on money. The purpose of our jobs is not to serve people, it is to serve bosses, owners of restaurants, drug companies, etc. This is not service, it is slavery. This is why the closer we get to the boss and the farther from the people, the more "important" we are.

No, there is nothing "lowly" about the work women do. It is "lowly" only in a system of life that values everything and everyone in money terms rather than human terms. What is wrong is that there are so few choices about the work we do. Most women cannot choose not to be household workers. Marriage is the major "career" open to women in America. There are not enough other jobs to go around. And the jobs open to people without training and skills are declining fastest. For example, from a peak of about 262,300 in 1952, the number of telephone operators employed by major telephone carriers dropped to 193,200 by 1967. The jobs available do not pay enough. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics states that a family of four in a metropolitan area needs \$11,236 a year for a "moderate" budget. Yet over 30 percent of workers in New York City make less than \$5,200 a year. Salaries of workers earning under \$10,000 are taxed 28.6 percent, those earning \$10,000 to \$15,000 are taxed 30.6 percent, while families of great wealth—with incomes of \$1,000,000 or more—pay an average of only 28.4 percent and the richest families manage to pay little or nothing. There are more than ten million women in America working full-time and millions of others working part-time. The majority of these women have children and only two percent of the children of working mothers are provided with day care facilities. Certainly we have the right to universal free day care.

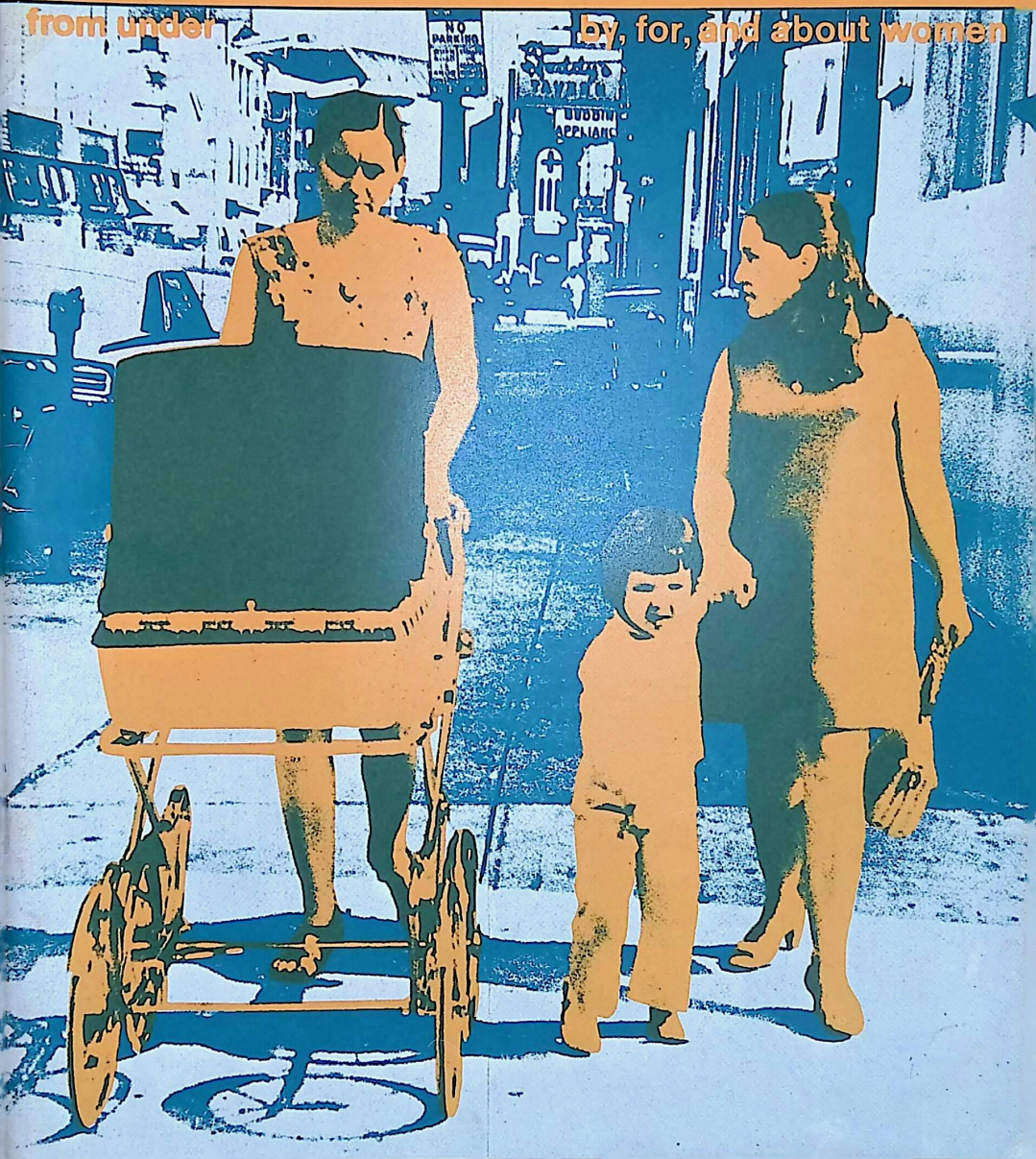
In job choices, in salaries, in our share of the tax burden, in the lack of public services such as day care, health care, adequate schools, etc., the women and men who labor end up the losers. Those with more money often can choose not to work, to live on interest and dividends from stocks in companies like AT&T where telephone operators make about \$2.00 an hour. They pay less taxes, go to private schools and the best doctors. We who work for these people

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January/February 1971 60¢

from under

by, for, and about women



EDITORIAL

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Published 5 times a year by Up from Under, Inc.
339 Lafayette Street, New York, N.Y. 10012
Subscription rate: \$3.00 for 5 issues
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Cover photo by Carol Glassman

To be able to put out this magazine, to know what kinds of articles will mean something to women's lives, we have had to spend a great deal of time talking about our own lives. Over and over again in those discussions, we found ourselves talking about our families. Whether it was from the perspective of being a daughter, a wife, or a mother, the family has been crucial to each of us. Though we are all deeply involved in our work on *Up from Under* and though we find tremendous fulfillment in that, we are not immune to the pressures and problems that all people have in their families. In fact, these problems and the ways they affect us largely determine the work we are or are not able to do on the magazine.

Within the *Up from Under* collective our family situations vary. Only one woman in the collective has children; a few of us have recently married; a few of us have been living away from our parents a relatively short time; most of us have or have had deep relationships with one man; one of us is a lesbian. In our discussions it became clear that our feelings about the family are determined by these specific experiences.

Our discussions have often been painful and difficult. For example, one of the women in the group was splitting up with her husband just as another one was getting married. Each of these women needed the support and help of the rest of us in the action she was taking. Out of the same basic need for security and stability, one woman was getting into a marriage and one was getting out of one. It was hard for the group to say that either of them was "right" when one was saying that marriage is essential for security and one was saying that it is not.

At other times our discussions seemed endless and overwhelming. We didn't know where to begin or where to focus our thoughts. Volumes could be written about each of the relationships within the family—between the man and woman, between each of the parents and the children, between two or more children. And there's as much to say about the relationships of different families to each other, about race, about class, and about the relationship between the family and the society. What we have written for this issue of *Up from Under* has been put together from our discussions. It is some of our thoughts and feelings, the beginning of what may become a series of editorials. For that reason we have chosen to discuss primarily the relationship of a man and woman in marriage and what that means to us as women. We have left out for now a full discussion of children, though we know that no discussion of the family can be complete without consideration of children's needs.

The one feeling that most clearly came out of our discussions, that we all share, despite whatever conflicts exist and regardless of whether our own experiences in families have been good or bad, is a sense that in this society the family is shot through with contradictions: that it is perhaps as essential as it is damaging, as much a fulfillment of our needs as it fails them.

We all agree that people need each other, that we have desires for love and intimacy. We all need to know that someone cares about us—that there is someone to turn to in times of crisis, to share the responsibilities of everyday life, someone just to talk to. We agree, too, that people need to help each other survive. Ideally, this is what the family should be—a cooperative unit based on love. That is what most people look for when they form families.

Why then is there so much pain in so many of our lives? Why do one in three marriages end in divorce? Why do more than half a million teenagers run away from home every year? Why do so many people rely on drugs or alcohol to keep them going? Why is it so difficult to have warm and secure relationships even with people we love?

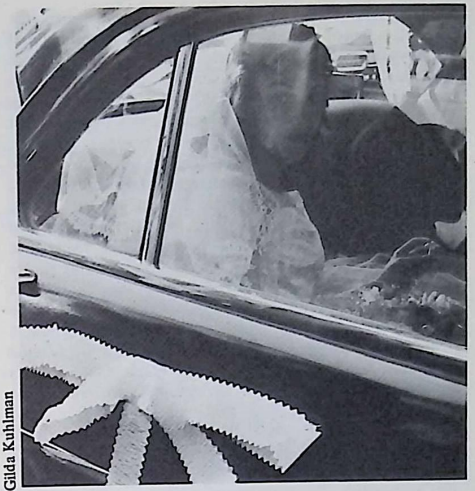
Perhaps a large part of the reason for this is that love and cooperation can't really exist without freedom and equality. It is hard for two people to love each other when you are both held back from being yourselves, when you are forced into playing tightly outlined roles. It is not really cooperation for the woman to stay home and have total responsibility for housework (or to work outside the home and still do all the housework) and for the man to go out and earn money. It is not cooperation because in most cases the man and woman involved cannot choose to have their family any other way. Cooperation, according to the dictionary, is the *voluntary* association of two or more people to work toward the same end.

For a woman, the family and her job in it as wife and mother is what her whole life leads her to expect. What she reads, what she sees around her, what she watches on television and in movies put across the idea that no matter what else she does in her life, what other kinds of jobs she works at, what other things she creates, her family and her children are her real and most important work. The family is almost inevitably a woman's workplace and identity, even if she works at another job. The family is prevented from being a "choice" by the conditioning a woman receives all of her life.

It is this conditioning that maintains the family at the same time that it destroys the relationships within it. Women are made to expect more from marriage than what a man's conditioning allows him to give to a woman who does not totally sacrifice herself to him. This is a source of constant struggle and conflict in marriage. It is one facet of what is meant by the "battle of the sexes." Yet it is mainly women who are questioning the family and searching for alternatives. This is because we are on the losing end of that battle.

An article about the family in a recent issue of *Time* magazine quoted a sociologist: "The trouble comes from the fact that the institution we call marriage can't hold two full human beings—it was only designed for one and a half." Women have always known this. We learn very early in life that to "succeed" in a relationship with a man we must be able to put his needs and desires ahead of ours.

Then too, marriage is often a solution to an economic problem. It is hard for a single woman, especially if she has children, not to live in a family with a man, because it is very hard for most single women to be economically independent. Most women are paid on a wage scale that is



Gilda Kuhlman

lower than a man's because employers assume that if she is single she is just working temporarily until she gets married, and that if she is married she is just working temporarily for "pin money." The facts are that most women work because they have to, that 40% of American women are employed, and that in at least 10% of American households it is a woman who supports the family—and this statistic doesn't include women with children on welfare. Because most working women are not unionized, and because most unions are not oriented towards women's needs, we have no job security, no health benefits or insurance, less chance of a raise. What is the single woman, earning a low salary in a time of rising prices, to do if she gets ill or when she gets old? Women who are not in families find themselves restricted in a society that seems set up only for people in families.

And those restrictions are more than economic. They are emotional and psychological. It is difficult for a woman to remain single or not to have children. She knows her life will be a constant struggle against the humiliation of being considered less than whole, inferior, a failure. She will find it even more difficult if she is a lesbian.

And what if a woman wants to have children, but for her own reasons does not want to live with a man, or if she has no choice but to have a child alone? If a woman has a child outside of marriage, both she and the child face the stigma of illegitimacy. The idea that any human being could be considered illegitimate is outrageous and inhuman. It is difficult to care for and support a child alone, and when that becomes impossible, the woman is forced to go on welfare and the state becomes the "head of the household." Circumstances force most women into a position of economic dependency which makes for inequality in marriage and which prevents our relationships with men from fulfilling our expectations of intimacy and closeness.

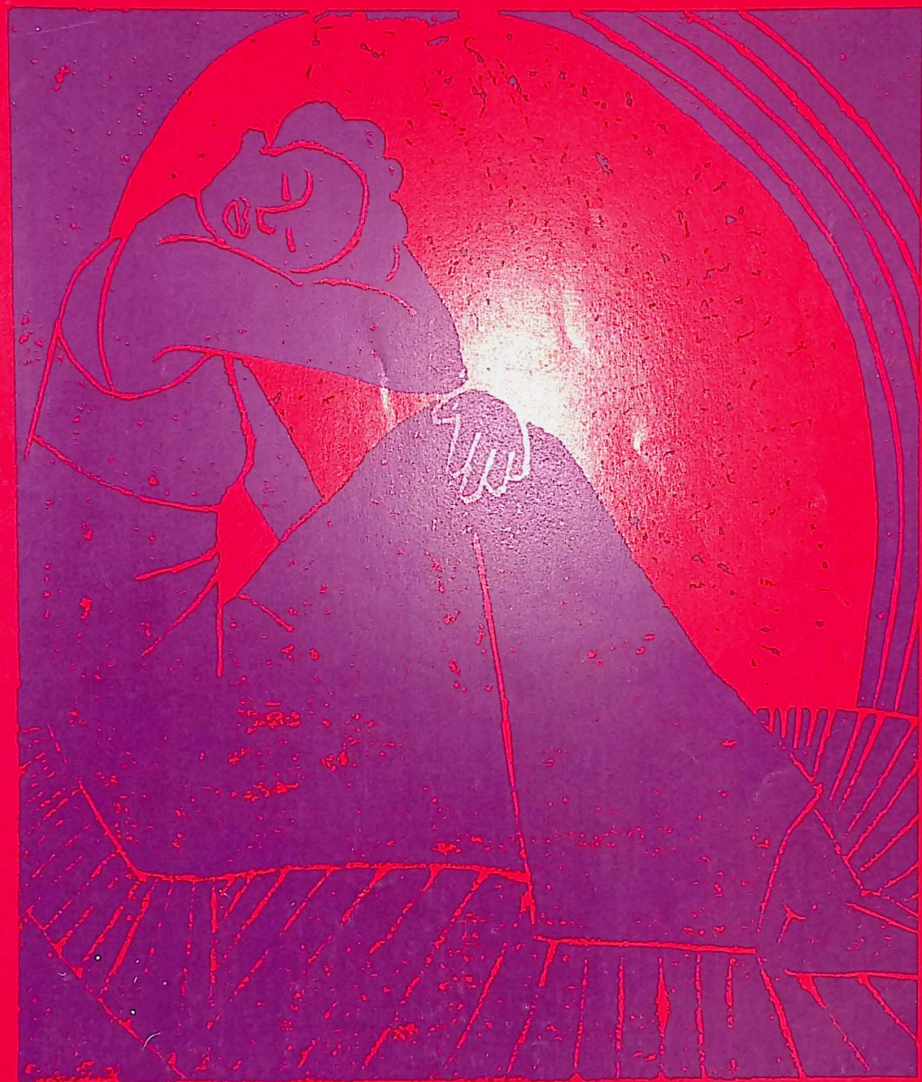
And what about men? Why do they choose the family as

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Published 3 times a year by Up from Under, Inc.
339 Lafayette Street, New York, N.Y. 10012
Subscription rate: \$3.00 for 5 issues
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Cover by Dindga McCannon
Back cover by Peg Rigg/SCEF

Faculty Press, Inc., Brooklyn, N. Y.



Photocell/Clara Gutsche



Carol Glasswoman



Diana Deitchman

EDITORIAL

When was the last time you yelled at a waitress for being too "slow"? Or got angry with a telephone operator who seemed "rude"? Or became disgusted with a saleswoman you thought "stupid"? Or when was the last time your husband belittled your cooking or made a fuss because his shirts weren't ironed "just right"?

It's easy to get angry with other workers. It's easy to blame the people who work for companies that are cheating us or giving us poor service since we are not able to reach the people who are really responsible for the policies of the companies. And because the jobs we women do are mainly service jobs, we are often the scapegoats of this anger. This is true whether we serve our family in our homes or serve the public in an outside job. It is the job of service workers to justify the company they work for to the outside world, even though they are in a position to see the way the company cheats its customers and mistreats its workers.

One thing you may have noticed in yourself and others is that you rarely let off steam at someone who is doing the same kind of work that you do or have done. A teenage girl may rant and rave at her mother, but she feels different when she becomes a household worker for her own family. Waitresses and ex-waitresses are the most patient diners; saleswomen make the best customers. Once you've done a job you can put yourself in the worker's place. Instead of being exasperated at a slow cashier in a supermarket, you understand that the store makes her job harder by not marking prices clearly and you notice when she doesn't have a packer to help her; one mother can sympathize with another who yells at and hits her children. You see things from the point of view of what is being done to, for and by the worker. You have a kind of bond between you.

This solidarity needs to be extended. Most people who work have basically the same problems—we are overworked and underpaid (housewives, who work an average of 96

hours a week, get no pay at all!) There is no way for any of us to solve these problems if we're divided from each other. Yet we live and work under an economic system—capitalism—that owes its very existence to pitting people against each other. To change this we have to understand it, to understand we have to examine how the system works.

The basis of capitalism is the need for profit. The way for owners to make profits is to pay the lowest wages possible. On top of that they must charge the highest prices possible for the lowest quality of goods they can get away with selling. A company starts out with a certain amount of money or capital and with it buys both raw materials and the labor of other people. After raw materials are paid for and the wages of workers paid, a product is sold—*always for much more than it cost to produce it*. The difference between production costs and the sale price is the profit. Instead of going to the worker who created it, the profit goes to the owner. In order to continue to make profits, owners must compete with other businesses in the same industry. Competition—the thing that is so highly praised about our system and the thing that's supposed to make American life exciting—creates this vicious cycle, a cycle in which people as workers and as customers get shortchanged in the race for profits.

Since profit depends on paying the lowest wages possible, bosses try to keep us competing with each other for jobs. Divisions are created among us. Since jobs are scarcer for all black people and for white women than they are for white men, blacks and women will work for less than white men. So the white man always works under the threat that he will be fired and a black or a white woman hired in his place. So he too accepts low wages.¹

Any division among people who work in the long run

¹In defining what is a low wage we must consider that whenever a man is hired, his wages must go for the work of two—his work and the work of the woman whose work allows him to leave his home and his children everyday.

helps only the profit makers and hurts the rest of us. The most serious divisions among Americans today are those arising from racism. We can expect that blacks will be treated badly by bosses, big corporations and others whose concern is for profit alone, who are looking for any excuse to cheat anyone. What is harder to understand are the reasons behind what black men and women have had to endure at the hands of their white co-workers and neighbors. The parents of one of us in the *Up from Under* collective feel horror and revulsion at their daughter's having friendships with black women and men. They see it as somehow "unnatural." What is really "unnatural" is to *not* have solid relationships with people who work at your side and live next door! This kind of racism can be as insane as a lynching or as the following remark made by a patriotic American during World War II: "I'd rather have Hitler win than work beside a nigger on the assembly line."² The craziness of this remark has one truth in it—when you choose to allow this kind of racism to control you, the choice means you are willing to let your enemies win. While Hitler didn't win the war, the owner of that factory probably won a lot because of the lack of unity among the workers in the plant and because of their fear of each other.

To understand why we allow this to happen we have to look at the history of this country. Things were not always this way between blacks and whites of the same class. The first black men and women to come to America came the same way that most of the whites came—by force. Under the system of "indentured servitude" thousands of poor whites were shipped to the colonies and sold on auction blocks to work for a master for a specified number of years. Some of these whites were kidnapped in the streets of Europe as blacks were kidnapped in Africa.

Being black at that time carried with it no sense of

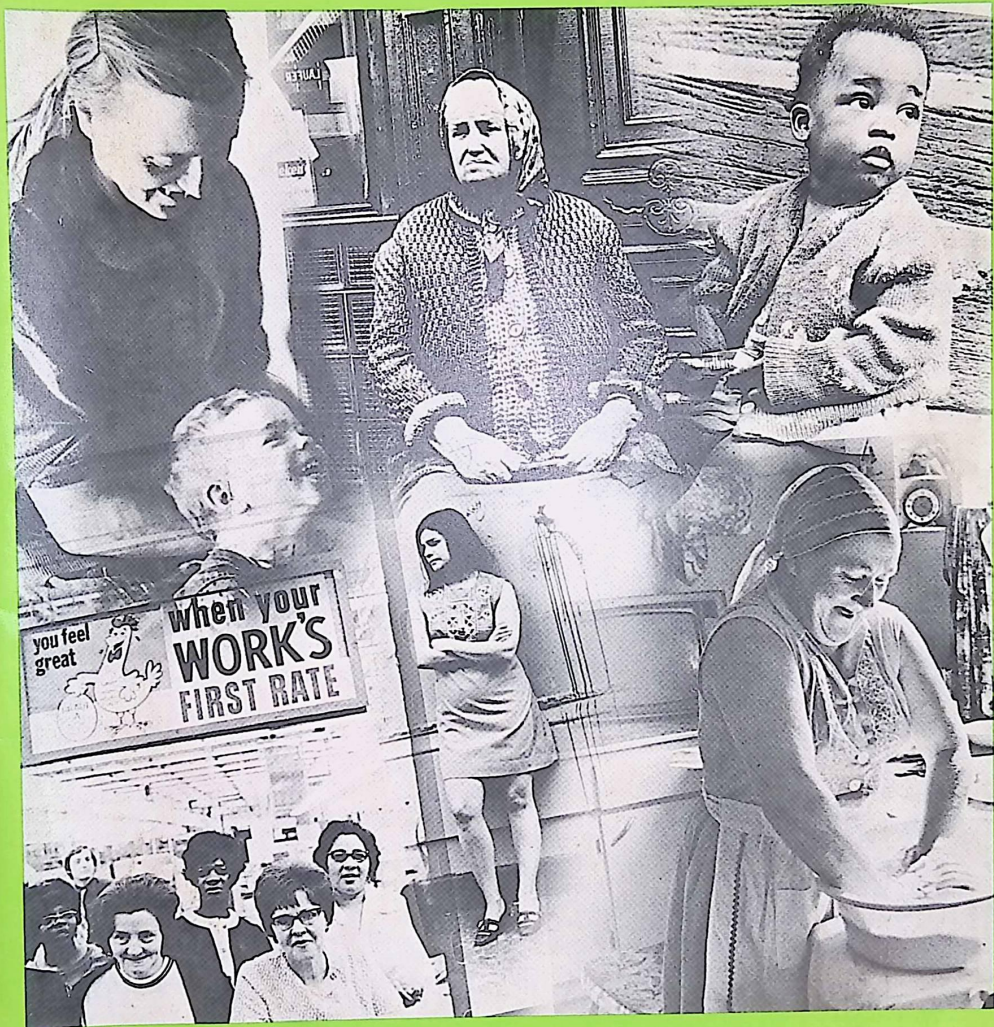
²from *Race Riots in Black and White* edited by J. Paul Mitchell, Prentice Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970., pg. 59.

SLDb. 24.346

Up

from under
by, for, and about women

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We chose the photos in this magazine to reflect the themes of the articles. They do not necessarily represent people in the articles.	
Cover collage by Linda Nopper with photos by (top, left to right) Charmian Reading, Teri Bartal, Charmian Reading (bottom, left to right) Ken Light, Ellen Levine, Pam Harris.	

EDITORIAL

The quotes in this editorial were taken from discussions we've had among ourselves.

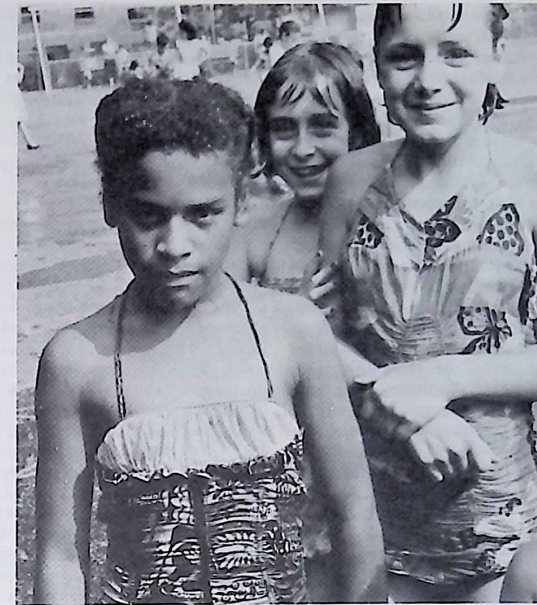
"My family always thought in terms of how are you going to make a living. They sent me to vocational high school to make sure I learned a skill. An academic course wasn't even considered because I would be nowhere when I graduated. No one in my family had gone to college so they didn't expect me to go. The same with my sisters; my mother wanted both of them to go into nursing. Not that nurses make so much money, but nurses are always needed and can always make a living."

"Because I was an only child, I was better off than most of the other kids in the neighborhood I come from. My clothes were nicer but, most of all, I went places. My mother, who was from a family of nine, wanted me to have more than she had growing up.

Every Easter and Christmas we would get all dressed up to go to Radio City and have dinner at Childs. Then we would come home to our cold water flat with no bath, no central heating. In 1956 my father drove a '39 LaSalle with a running board.

My parents saved for our vacations and outings. They had a different attitude towards money. They didn't believe in sacrificing to impress people. One time we stopped by some people's house unexpectedly. They had just moved away from the neighborhood and bought a house in the suburbs. It was supper time and all they were having was cabbage soup. Nothing else! All the way home my mother talked about how foolish that was. She said, "See that, they're going to wind up giving their money to the doctor." So that was our attitude—you ate good and you had a good time."

When we were young we learned that things don't come easy. We saw with what effort our parents worked and saved and how they wanted us, the children, to have an easier life. We know now that most people in this country have stories similar to ours and that we call ourselves "working people" or "lower middle class" in a country that calls itself middle class. We are just realizing as women and as working-class people how the class we are in affects how much control we have over our lives. We know we have enough control to buy the dress, car, or appliance that is within our means. But do we control what happens to us in the schools, where we're often discouraged rather than encouraged? Do we and the men we live with have control over our work, or are there limits on the kinds of jobs we're offered, the salaries, and working conditions? Do we control our neighborhoods or are they in the hands of real estate interests and urban renewal officials? When we have some security can we be sure it will last or do we have few ways of protecting ourselves and our families from job layoffs and medical expenses?



Gilda Kuhlman

"I remember watching "Father Knows Best" on TV. Though I watched it every week, I think I felt very remote from it. Problems like the boss coming home to dinner or the daughter joining a sorority were nothing like my family's problems. My father didn't make important decisions on his job and my mother didn't buy expensive hats to make herself feel good."

We look at magazines, go to the movies, and nearly every night watch some TV where we're shown pictures of the comfortable life the American family leads. The advertisements talk to us about new cars, flights to Europe, and plush rugs that make beautiful homes. The comfortable life shown reflects the lives of the people who make the TV shows and run the magazines. Our lives, houses, kitchens, and trips to the beach aren't shown on TV. The media sets up a standard of comfort and sophistication that the middle class can buy for itself. We don't earn the money that brings status and we're reminded at every turn. We want to be respected for the hard work we do and for the way we live. But we have to struggle for our dignity against the myth of the American middle-class way of life.

"I didn't want to go to the girls' vocational or my neighborhood high school, as I didn't want to be a beautician or take a commercial course. My eighth grade teacher encouraged me to go to a special school which took the kids with the highest grades from all over the city. You had to pass a test to get in. I passed and had brownie points (teacher recommendations). After I was there a while I

realized that even if you were smart, if you weren't a certain way smart you weren't acceptable—even though I was smart I always felt I wasn't dressed right for the occasion—I always felt my nails were dirty."

"I grew up in a Catholic neighborhood, mostly Irish and some Italian. It seemed like everybody in my neighborhood went to parochial school. We went to public school because we're Protestant. The public school had mostly kids from across the avenue who had more money. In that school my whole family was known—they would say, "Another one of them." We were sort of misfits. They had about four misfits in each class—a black kid, an Italian kid, an Irish kid that got kicked out of parochial school, and me—something like that. In junior high I was put in a slow class. The slow classes were all the delinquents of the school—and all the quiet kids—and all the kids that stuttered and all the kids that didn't fit in anywhere else, they stuck in that class. There were two classes like that. I was in the next to the worst class. I didn't make the worst class. I didn't hang around with the toughest kids, I didn't dye my hair, didn't have a blonde streak. I know now that I was just as smart as the other kids. I didn't know then. I didn't feel smart. In my family we defended ourselves with the attitude that we were better than them, we didn't have to be big shots, they were phony. You reverse the snobbism to be confident. That's the biggest thing I remember about school. Naturally, I couldn't stand it."

The standard in school was not our standard. Working-