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American Women

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Joan Jordan

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The Place of American Women

by Joan Jordan

The social oppression of women in the U.S. has an economic basis and calls for drastic change in the system. Modern industry by its very nature draws women into the labor market. Constantly seeking levers to use against the prevailing wage rates and job conditions in its juggernaut search for profits, it creates and maintains minority groups. Wherever the superexploitation of the minority exists it uses chauvinism, the ideological tool of discrimination. Chauvinism takes many different forms, for instance in the use of terms like polack, hunkie, spic, chink, kanaka, frog, mick, nigger. Historically the splits and divisions within the working class have been imposed through fostering discrimination to divide the labor movement in any way possible, turning gentile against Jew, Anglo against Latin, oriental against occidental, white against black, and now male against female. The use of discrimination has as its initial cause and purpose, the profit motive. The workers themselves, the worst victims of the disease, may often be its most rabid carriers. Often, there are far more subtle and sophisticated carriers, intellectuals who maintain their privileges by 'he whose bread I eat, his song I sing'.

The woman question, like the Negro question, is dual and complex. On one side of the duality is direct economic exploitation at the point of production. On the other are the myriad social forms of discrimination and exploitation, like 'women shouldn't have seats in Postgraduate schools'¹ or the states in the South that put the flower of Southern Womanhood on pedestals so high that they can't serve on juries due to being 'incompetent because of sex'.²

Karl Marx thought that the class struggle was rooted in the initial division of labor between men and women.³ Engels developed this idea more in his The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. The basic changes caused by women and auto-



mation in labor and industry during and since World War II (in addition to the discovery of atomic power before we succeeded in abolishing war) have provided both the causes and the means for great economic and social changes.

The economic exploitation of women, black and white, is more extensive and intensive than that of Negroes, male and female. The feminine mystique, i.e. the current middle class concept of the role of women, parallels the concept of the emasculation of the Negro male in its purpose (ultimately profits) and use (forms of discrimination). Women are a third of the labor force, Negroes one tenth. That profit purpose is not so much due to the role of the woman as consumer as it is due to her role as producer. Betty Friedan, in her book The Feminine Mystique, while recognizing the effects of a society oriented to commodity consumption, fails to recognize the stunting of growth and the perversions, frustrations, and anxieties forced on women through their use as a reserve labor force in commodity production.⁴ Broader and deeper social and economic effects of discrimination against women exist due to many of them being heads of families. One out of ten families nationally, one out of eight in urban areas, has a female head. These are as many if not more than the families with Negro heads, and receive lower incomes.

There is now the possibility of the split between black and white workers being breeched by women, black and white - cutting across the color line through organization on the basis of sex - raising specific demands to meet the needs of women and children and reunifying the working class.

The Place of the Modern American Woman

A. The economic place of women is most important. The material conditions for the complete emancipation of women have long existed. But it has been only in the last few decades that women's strategic position, her assimilation in industry, has so altered as to make that emancipation an urgent necessity. To test the validity of this argument and the ideas in the introduction, a number of trends must be examined.

The number of women who work as a percentage of the female population and as a percentage of the total labor force has been steadily increasing. The number of women workers has nearly doubled in 22 years, while the percentage of women (34%) in the total work force has nearly surpassed the percentage in the peak war year 1945 (36%).

1. Sexual exploitation is greater than color exploitation. Women, white and Negro, make less annual income than men, both on a national and state level. White women earn less than Negro men. Women are half the population and a third of the labor force; Negroes are one tenth of the population and labor force. It is far more profitable to discriminate on the basis of sex than color. In the state of California there is a difference of \$216 between the annual wages of black males and females. It would seem that women have far more in common due to exploitation based on sex than they have differences due to exploitation based on color. The black woman is low man on the totem pole, triply exploited, as worker, Negro, and woman. There is a larger percentage of Negro women workers than total men workers -- 45% compared to 34%, respectively. The Negro woman has typically been forced to seek work because of the economic hardship implied in the total Negro unemployment rate of 11-12%.

2. Consider women as heads of families. One out of every ten families has a Negro head of family. One out of eight families in urban areas has a woman head.⁵ Clearly the low incomes of women, relative to men, affect not only the women themselves, but also the large numbers of families for which these women hold sole or primary responsibility. (The median income of the female family heads working full time in 1960 was \$4,689 per year, but when part time workers were included the median was only \$2,968.)⁶ A statement by the National Policy Committee on pockets of poverty, after a two year survey in 1963, said that "...families headed by females... are the most frequent victims of poverty."⁷

Consider women as wives and mothers. The majority of working women are married. This is one of many basic changes in the composition of the labor force

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that occurred during World War II. Previous to World War II the majority of working women were single. Both the extent to which wives participate in the labor force and the level of their incomes when they do work are directly related to the husband's incomes. In March 1961, about one third of the wives were working in those families where the husband's income was under \$3,000; about two fifths where it was between \$3,000 and \$5,000; and one fourth where it was \$7,000 and over.⁸ Among mothers with husband present in March 1961, the largest proportion in the labor force were in families where husbands earned less than \$5,000 a year. 'Since more than four fifths of all working mothers are living with their husbands, it can be concluded that most mothers who are working are doing so to help pay living expenses.'⁹ The percentage of working mothers with children under 6 in 1961 was about one fifth. Among mothers with children from 6 to 18 years of age, the ratio was two fifths. About one third of the mothers with children under 18 were working in 1961. This percentage has been increasing steadily since 1940, when it was one fourth. This increase has been sharper in the state of California than the national gain. Yet San Francisco has only twenty-five child care centers today compared to forty-five in 1945 which were open longer hours and gave more services.¹⁰

4. Changes have occurred in women's occupations and incomes. With the increase in women's employment, changes have occurred in women's occupations and incomes. The median income for year round full-time workers has not increased. The 1939 percentage includes part-time women and men workers. The effect of the influx of large numbers of part-time women workers into the labor force can be seen in the decrease of all women workers' median incomes; 59.1% in 1939 to 44.1% in 1951, to 30% in 1961.¹¹

5. Women are used more and more as a reserve labor force, as part-time workers. The use of women as part-time of full-time temporary workers is one more profitable gimmick in the employers' bag of tricks. As the payment of fringe benefits becomes

more and more costly the employers do everything possible to avoid paying them. The hiring of a skeleton crew of prime full time workers, eliminating the young, inexperienced, older or sick women and the use of a supplementary crew of part time workers is more and more common. If a union asks for two weeks pay the first year and three weeks after the first year and four weeks after the fifth year, you can bet there will be a number of layoffs before the end of one year's employment, or five years', as the case may be. The encouragement of seasonal aspects of work is increasing. The old-fashioned patriarchial type employer used to pride himself on planning his work schedule for the year to keep his full crew regularly employed. As corporations have merged and grown larger and more impersonal, the time study men have changed all that. Layoffs early in November avoid extra or holiday pay for Election Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, Washington's and Lincoln's Birthday, or whichever of these holidays the unions may have won. By hiring women for three months in the summer the employers can usually avoid paying extra medical benefits which would go into effect after 90 days. Labor is intensified by competition between the girls who are told the 'best' will be kept. This temporary hiring and firing can be of benefit to the local union also. They may view as sheer gray the 90 day workers who are paying dues under the illusion that they will be initiated into the union after a waiting period. If they are laid off before initiation they are not considered members, the local union is not obligated to find them jobs, all the dues paid are kept in the local, and no head tax is sent to the International Union. This is a real windfall for the officer who is more concerned with dues than grievances. A floating crew of experienced labor at cheap rates is established with the union acting as a hiring hall for the employers. Thus the use of part time and temporary full-time workers to break down working conditions, fringe benefits and wage scales often has the collusion of the short-sighted union officialdom. This is particularly true in 'trade' unions as opposed to 'industrial' unions, or in any union where the 'craft' mentality exists. The long term results of this policy bear out a statement made in 1952,

during a Conference on Equal Pay, by Dorothy S. Brady of the Bureau of Labor Statistics: 'It appears that where the earnings of women and men approach equality... the earnings of men and women are equally low.'¹² Through automation, rationalization of labor, division of labor and job classification, the employers take advantage of the wage differentials between men's and women's work and part-time or full-time temporary work. Meanwhile, the split in the ranks of labor grows and the gap between men and women workers widens, not to mention the effects this has on relations between men and women workers.

6. A comparison with men in industry shows much. Breaking the income medians mentioned earlier into large occupational categories reveals that, in general, the occupations which gained women workers relative to men had a decrease in women's median income as a percentage of men's; these were the lower paying categories. Conversely, those occupations having declining percentages of women relative to men had an increase in women's median income as a percentage of men's. These were the higher paying categories. While all occupations showed an absolute gain in both women's median income and numbers of women workers (except operatives) in relative terms, the increase of women workers tended to fall in the lower paying jobs and in those jobs which yielded the lowest relative gain in women's income compared to men's. The exception was the categories of managers, officials, and proprietors, which showed an absolute fall in income from 1960 to 1961 and a relative drop in percentage of women to the total workers in this category. The relative drop in women's income as a percentage of men's was also marked: from 58% in 1960 to 49% in 1961. This may reflect a decreasing percentage of women proprietors or a decreasing percentage of women in management since about half of the women in this group are in management.

7. Summary of economic trends: We see in the last 25 years many basic social changes indicated in the trends we have been examining. The age level of the woman worker has shifted and more than half of the women between the ages of 35 and 54 are working. One third of the mothers of children under 18 are working. Four out of ten women, married and living with their

husbands with children over six are working today.¹³ The vast majority of working women are married as compared to single in 1939. One out of every ten families has a female head. The double burden of home, children and work press down upon the American Woman. As millions of women entered the labor market, pushed into lower paying job categories, the median income of women compared to men dropped from 59% in 1939 to 30% today! This comparison is similar to that in Russia in February 1917, when women's wages were 1/3 to 1/2 of men's. [The first stage of the Russian Revolution began on International Woman's Day when the women textile workers went out on strike.]

Rationalizations

A. Economic categories are first. In almost every industry and occupation women are paid less than men. Women are massed in the lower paying major occupations. In industries and businesses with a wide spectrum of jobs women are found in the lower paying jobs. Women are hired for the lower paying jobs; women are paid less for doing the same job as men; women are passed over for on-the-job training, upgrading; women are denied advancement. Why? What excuses are given for this discrimination?

Many rationalizations exist for paying women less and keeping them from advancing. Some claim that differences in performance of men and women justify the differentials. Women, they say, are not as well prepared for a job as men in formal education and specific training. Women don't make good supervisors; women cost the employer more in fringe benefits; women have a higher turnover rate and more absenteeism than men. Women's place is in the home. Once in a great while an employer will admit 'it's cheaper' to discriminate.

1. Professional women are shrinking. The proportion of professional women is shrinking. (This trend may be changing.) As more and more women have entered the labor market they have been restricted to the lower paying jobs and prevented from advancement. This is in spite of the fact that women as a whole enter the labor market with more training and educa-

tion than men. In 1959 women completed 12.2 years of schooling compared with 11.7 years for men (median). This was a rise from 11 years for women and 7.7 years for men in 1940. 38% of the women workers and only 27% of the male workers completed high school in 1959. Consider this in the light of Betty Friedan's argument that women need more education to break out of the trap of the Feminine Mystique; if that education was to expose the political and dollar values of the mystique, she might have been right. Women also lead in college work of less than four years: 10% of the women workers, compared with 9% of male workers. An equal percentage of men and women workers have completed four years of college, 6%. It is only in five or more years of college that men pull ahead, with 4% of the male workers but only 2% of the women workers completing five years of college. The number of degrees given to women has also increased. In 1952 women earned 9.3% of all doctorates conferred, 31.4% of all master's degrees, and 31.6% of all bachelor's degrees conferred. By 1959 this had risen to 10%, 32%, and 35% respectively.¹⁴

The case for discrimination because of inadequate preparations for a job -- with the implication that the woman lacks the ambition to get that preparation herself -- remains unproven. The similarities between the woman worker and the Negro as minority groups are striking. The vicious circle begins with the refusal to hire or promote Negroes because they haven't the preparation, in combination with the implicit assumption that Negroes haven't the ambition to get the necessary preparation. It continues because discrimination on these grounds intensifies discrimination on other, more prejudicial grounds. The circle is completed when the Negro has little incentive to get adequate preparation when he knows that he will be the recipient of discrimination even with adequate preparation; hence he is unprepared to seize opportunities if they do open up. The same circle exists for women.

2. Arguments are raised against upgrading on the job and apprenticeships. If women enter the labor market with a better formal education than men except on the highest levels, then why the continued gap in income and advancement? One relevant factor is the question of upgrading, on-the-job training or outside

courses relating to improvement of performance on the job and advancement. Who chooses the recipient of such training and on what basis is a key question here. The role of the unions and apprenticeship programs enters in also. Most firms have on-the-job training both for specific skills and for supervisors. Opportunities exist for those whom management wishes to train. There is little information on training and recruitment programs more recent and specific than a study done in 1950 of women in higher level positions.¹⁵ Almost all the department stores studied recruited college graduates and gave them special junior executive training. In all but one out of 29 of these stores, the programs were open to women as well as men. In only one department store covered were training opportunities less for men. This store gave a year's training to the men college recruits, but only four months training to women.

In sharp contrast to department store practice, seven out of twelve banks recruited college graduates, but not one recruited college women. One third of these banks sponsored training courses for which women were not eligible. Seven of the insurance companies recruited college women as well as men; twice as many recruited only college men. Eight of the thirty insurance companies conducted training courses for which women were not eligible.

College men were recruited by half of the manufacturing firms scheduled. Less than one fourth of these firms recruited college women. Somewhat over one third of the manufacturing firms had training courses, and in almost two thirds of these firms such courses were not open to women. Several firms reported that union regulations closed certain apprentice courses to women. In manufacturing, training for executive jobs often began with overall planned experience. There was a general lack of interest in training women for supervisory jobs in production. In factories where all positions above the forelady level were closed to women, they have little incentive to acquire experience or training which would qualify them for better positions.

Management had different accounts of the extent to which women participated in training courses. Department stores said that women attended courses to the

same extent as men and even appeared more interested in them. In insurance, few women finished advanced training even when it was offered to them. Many women finished basic courses, however. Somewhat the same impression was given by the banks' experience. Women did not appear to be interested in advanced training in finance.

The extent to which women were allowed opportunity to train themselves for higher level positions gives insight into opportunities for training on the lower levels. There is little incentive for a woman to better her training if all positions for which she would be qualified with the additional training are closed to her. For example: 'Women in our plant have no chance of becoming foremen...' was stated by a woman member of the UAW in 1955.¹⁶ The widespread use of the job classification gimmick, men's work and women's work, is another reason for the lack of equal opportunity for advancement and the low pay regardless of the woman's qualifications. The argument that women are not qualified for men's work becomes meaningless if the only way a woman can get the preparation for that job is by on-the-job training. In the unions, the apprentice training programs are generally restricted to white males with the rationalization that the man has a family to take care of. That this same argument is given to women heads of families is irrelevant. The unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled classifications are rigidly controlled. As jobs get fewer and fewer with automation and the competition for jobs sharper, the payoff becomes more commonplace. This writer attended a union meeting where a fight over admittance to membership was taking place. The worker in question, the son of a shipowner, had been expelled from the union as an unskilled worker a year or two before. He was seeking readmittance under the Taft-Hartley Law as an experienced skilled worker. The apprenticeship period was six years. One member got up and opposed taking him in with the statement that he would be willing to give a thousand dollars for an apprenticeship if they were that easy to get.¹⁷

Another rationalization for preventing promotion of women is the idea that they don't make good supervisors, or that both women and men prefer to work under men. This is a subjective factor, not demonstrated,

and subject to speculation that it is not that women do not supervise well, if accepted, but that men in management fear that women will succeed too well; the relevant factor here might be the threat to the male ego. Count Marco (columnist of the San Francisco Chronicle) is an example of this. He is the Lucius Beebe and Barry Goldwater of the ruling class on the woman question. As a fire flares up brightest just before it goes out, so does this last gasp of the right wing (whose attitude toward women is what one would expect of a wealthy man's pimp) express the reactionaries' feminine mystique. While he usually tells women to stay at home, he really showed his colors the day he came out against equal pay: '... tell the world you really don't want it because you don't deserve it.'¹⁸ Only a man with a strong, stable core of self can see a woman as an equal human being without its being a threat to his masculinity.

5. Arguments are raised about fringe benefits. Employers claim that women cost them more in fringe benefits than men do. This is to justify their use of women as part-time or temporary full-time workers to avoid payment of such benefits as well as the more direct forms of discrimination. A main complaint is that pregnant women are required by law to interrupt their work for a number of months, and in most union contracts the job must be held open and benefits paid by the employer. In reality, most union health plans exclude maternity benefits with such rationalizations as 'maternity is not sickness but an act of God'. The Women's Bureau, in a pamphlet ('Maternity Benefit Provisions for Employed Women'), shows the results of several studies, all indicating that no more than 4% of employed women in any one year will become pregnant.¹⁹ As a comparison, the injury rates among workers was about 3% in 1958 (this excludes sickness). The benefits for pregnancy negotiated in union contracts usually are no higher than the benefits paid for sickness and disability to all workers covered by a particular contract. Actually, total amounts of workers compensation for injuries are increasing. In 1959, private firms paid 'probably more than \$25 million.'²⁰ By permitting the door to be opened in refusal to pay fringe benefits to women workers, the male unionists are in a weak tactical position when employers try to avoid paying fringe benefits to men. Runaway plants move to the 'right-to-work' law states

or non-unionized regions or just switch job classifications from men's to women's work or from permanent to temporary, etc., to take advantage of discriminatory practices and turn the lower wage scale into a weapon against male workers too.

6. Arguments are raised about turnover rates and absenteeism. The rationalization that absenteeism and turnover rates are higher for women than men usually hides the worse working conditions. Our economists were quick to point out this relationship between turnover rate, absenteeism, and working conditions in Russia during the years when they had a law restricting movement from one job to another. The feminine mystique silences the tongues of the economists when it comes to applying the same measuring stick to women workers here. The turnover problem appears less severe among women in higher positions than among women in less skilled occupations. The Women's Bureau study of 1950, 'Women in Higher Level Positions', showed that different firms give differing opinions on the turnover rate of women.²¹ Almost all firms whose training programs were closed to women gave as their reason the lack of permanency in women as opposed to men. On the other hand, several company representatives in the different fields held that, while lack of permanency is in general a deterrent to women's advancement, it is not important as far as the higher level positions are concerned. One large department store had in fact found that there was less turnover among young promotional women than men. A bank representative pointed out that women who were eligible for administrative and supervisory positions in his company had usually been there for ten years or more.

Quit rates for men and women for April 1952 in twenty manufacturing industries indicate that voluntary separations among men and women occurred at the same rate, 23 per 1000 employees. In two individual industries in the durable goods group, quit rates were higher for women than for men -- electrical machinery and instrument manufacturing. In the nine other heavy industries for which rates were reported, quit rates were approximately the same for women as for men, with the following two exceptions -- furniture manufacturing, where women are about a fifth of all workers and the women's quit rate was substantially

lower than men's; and lumber manufacturing (primarily a man-employing industry), where men's quit rates were substantially higher than women's. In nondurable goods industries, on the other hand, the overall quit rates for the industries reported are considerably higher for women than for men -- 26 and 18 per 1000 employees, respectively. Women quit their jobs at a somewhat higher rate than men in the large women-employing industries of apparel, tobacco and leather manufacturing. (About 50% or more of all the employees in these industries are women.) Women also leave their jobs voluntarily at a higher rate than men in the rubber, paper, chemical, and petroleum products manufacturing industries. With the exception of petroleum products, between a fourth and a fifth of all employees in these industries are women. The Women's Bureau concludes with the opinion: 'Differences in the rates between men and women in the durable and nondurable industries suggest that the relatively lower wage rates in the large women-employing industries may be an important factor in explaining some of the turnover among women workers.'²² A radio parts manufacturing plant in 1951 had adopted the principle and practice of equal pay five years before and had found it satisfactory. Management statement said, '...Equal pay... had contributed to a greater interest in the job on the part of women, with a resulting increase in efficiency and a greater turnover. Average seniority in the plant is eight years and women's turnover may be somewhat lower than the men's.'²³

There is no information on the relative rates of absenteeism of men and women, but one can assume that adequate day care for children of working mothers may be a factor. When adequate day care facilities were established in World War II, 'Employers... testified that the nurseries had great value in reducing absenteeism and turnover in their plants.'²⁴

7. The White Man's Burden. Another rationalization for discrimination against women that acts directly to divide the labor movement and use one section against the other, is when the employers tell the male skilled workers, or officers or contract negotiating committee as the case may be, 'We could give you a much higher wage if you just didn't have to drag those unskilled workers along with you.' The

Teamsters Council of New York City published an analysis of marginal workers in New York City including the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. It indicated the women were restricted to the lower paying jobs controlled by the union. The skilled workers in collusion with the bosses would trade off wages and working conditions of the numerous unskilled workers in exchange for greater gains for themselves. To do this it is necessary to intimidate the general workers and nullify any real grievance procedures in their departments. Any militant outspoken women are very quickly out in the street. (The officers of most unions today have as their mass base a layer of highly paid skilled workers -- the top hierarchy of the working class.) It is very easy for this to be rationalized by the 'role of women' and the 'major breadwinner' ideologies, the social rationalizations.

B. Social rationalizations for discriminating against women are persuasive in creating an attitude of passive acceptance.

1. Role concepts are advanced. A symposium on 'women as a growing factor in the labor force' at the International Management Conference in New York emphasized the fact that 'Discrimination in pay and sex is rampant. The woman executive has a hard time winning acceptance. The proportion of professional women is shrinking. At least part of the trouble seems to be that some die-hard men - and more importantly, some employers - are clinging to the old saw "women's place is in the home".'²⁵ The fact is that this is a phony moral rationalization for paying lower wages and providing worse working conditions for women than men. If these employers really meant what they said, they would not hire women at all, but leave them in the home. Instead they use the feminine mystique to mold women into 'their place' in industry, the place of the reserve labor force. They can be thrown in or out of the labor market at will, used as part-time or temporary workers, kept in the lowest paying jobs with a minimum of resistance, and their rate of exploitation is the highest.

2. Propaganda for control of women is widespread. During World War II, 'idle hands were tools of the devil' and Rosie the Riveter was a dynamic patri-

otic heroine. Articles appeared on the advantages of bottle feeding compared to breast feeding. Immediately following World War II, when the returning veterans needed jobs, women at work created juvenile delinquents at home, were competing with men, and surveys showed eight out of ten infants who died of stomach ailments within the first year of birth were bottle-fed. But the employers found the rate of exploitation of men not so profitable as that of women. So women stayed in industry -- in their place, low man on the totem pole. Some employers were even honest about it. Those kind are rarer today. During the Conference on Equal Pay, in 1952, when an employer was asked why he employed the women workers in his factory less for a given job than he paid the men, he replied, 'Tradition, I suppose... anyhow it's cheaper.'²⁶

A survey conducted by Dr. Vernon D. Keeler, head of the University of San Francisco Management Development Center, in 1962 showed that a group of firms in the Bay Area, employing a total of 60,000 workers, paid their women executives at both top and middle management jobs from 10% to 20% less than men. Why? 'Fully 50% of the 78 firms responding by the time this went to press had declined to offer an explanation. Those that did, invariably pointed to the traditional image of the male as family breadwinner.'²⁷

3. Psychological arguments are raised. The middle class concept of a 'woman's place' and its pseudo-psychological twin of 'feminism and passivity' recently dubbed the feminine mystique, are extremely valuable to employers. In addition to providing rationales for discrimination and exploitation they also serve to give women guilt complexes, making it easier to manipulate them. Women will often compensate by trying to work harder and for less pay. They may do the work of the executive or supervisor without the title or wage. After all, they don't want to be dominating, aggressive, pushy, and masculine. To make docile, happy, efficient, and cooperative workers (females), we need only make the employers rational, intelligent, and knowledgeable (males). 'These are mental health terms used by industrial psychologists who have generally worked for business and assumed the management point of view. They have

tended to ignore the political implications of their work, and have seldom examined the values which their opinions and activities involve.

'The problems of "human relations in industry" are set up from the standpoint of the company and its purposes and are seen as primarily due to misunderstanding and lack of open communication. The answer of more "cooperation" really means obedience accompanied by talk. Class and power are neglected as facts of industrial life; they are sponged up into status and prestige. This is one of the many ways of psychologizing all problems, for of all dimensions of stratification, status is the most relevant psychologically. Yet the neglect of specific power does not mean that that manipulation is neglected; in fact, much of what is called counselling is really manipulation. And there is in this a notion of industrial stability, which is pre-bureaucratic to say the least, consisting of false and contrived human islands within the managed and inhuman framework of modern industry.'²⁸

Betty Friedan has very adequately dealt with the rationalizations for the Feminine Mystique, particularly the motivational researchers' concern with women as consumers, purchasers of commodities. So we will return to the value of the feminine mystique in relation to woman, the producer. 'Using 1950 Census reports, and figures from the Federal Reserve Board and also from the Securities and Exchange Commission, Grace Hutchins calculates that manufacturing companies realized a profit of \$5.4 billion in 1950 by paying women less per year than the wages paid to men for similar work. The extra profits from employing women at lower rates than men formed 23% of all manufacturing company profits.'²⁹

Standing toe to toe against the hard facts cited above, clear and bell-like across the years comes the declaration of the Russian Revolution of 1917 of the inherent equality of women and their effort toward making that declaration a reality. The space flight of Valentina Tereshovka sent women into the streets dancing all over the world. And how can one measure the effect of the Chronicle article headlined 'Mothers Ready for Space'? Before Valentina's marriage, while on a trip to East Germany, she was

interviewed on television. Miss Tereshkova was asked, 'Are there married women among the female cosmonauts?'

She replied, 'Yes, there are married women among our female cosmonauts. A friend of mine is married and has children and she was prepared for a space flight the same way I was.'

Miss Tereshkova was also asked, 'Will you continue space flight once you are married?'

She replied, 'To have a family is no hindrance for space flights. When destiny decides that I will get married, I hope that that will not hinder me from continuing to fly in space or from continuing to prepare for my next space flight.' (Valentina kept her own name when she married.)³⁰

Claire Booth Luce, complaining bitterly in Life magazine about how much better prepared the American women who aspire to space were, told of their capabilities as pilots, well educated wealthy women who had paid for their own astronaut tests, etc., while Valentina had only been a factory girl and had never even been a pilot. This meant she had a great deal of additional knowledge to cram besides the regular astronaut lessons and tests. Mrs. Luce suggests that if the Cold War is going to be won, there'll have to be some changes made.³¹ She is opening Pandora's Box.

Changes to be Made

A. Economic demands are essential.

1. Society must be changed first. The first essential to solving women's problems, if one is not naive, is to win a society that poses all questions for rational solution. That means the elimination of capitalism, where profit alone - even when it means the waste of human labor power of millions of human beings and millions of working hours - is the determinant. Women can and will play a key role in this general historical task. They cannot expect to solve their problems without a struggle. Freedom will not be given them as a gift. It must be fought for and won as a human right. It is not sufficient

to equate the woman question with the struggle of the working class generally. One can no more say to women than to Negroes, 'Join us and when we have socialism, your needs will be met.' Because the woman question is a dual problem, because they suffer special forms of discrimination and exploitation in addition to being workers, there is a need for special organizations and special demands to meet their needs.

2. Economic organization is of course a necessity. But most unions have either defaulted in relation to organizing women, or have used them for protection of skilled workers' jobs (didn't want them to join another union or to cross the picket lines of the skilled workers) or as the expendable element in contract negotiations. When there is a compromise, WHO is compromised? Although one-third of the present labor force is composed of women, only 15% of them are organized into unions.³² However, the ferment among women may change that. Union leaders know a good thing when they see it. Between 1961 and 1962 three-fourths of all new members organized in California were women! This is at the same time there was a drop in overall union membership in the state. These women came from both government and private jobs.³³ Given the chauvinistic, exploitative attitudes of many union men as well as employers towards women, it is obvious that union organization is not enough.

3. Other organizations are needed too. Two particular forms of organization may be of value here; that of the Women's Bureaus of the United Auto Workers, CIO, in 1953 and that of the Negro American Labor Council. The first developed in 1953 when automation hit Detroit. Women were laid off with sometimes as much as 15 years seniority. They organized and went to the UAW Convention with demands to be included not only in the Constitution but in contract negotiations as well. The four major demands were: seniority in hiring, firing and upgrading; equal pay for equal work; maternity benefits in all union medical plans; and free child care centers for all working women. In March 1955, the UAW CIO Chevrolet local 1031 in Oakland, Calif., passed a number of resolutions sent to the International UAW Convention. Included was a model FEP Clause to be included in all future contracts. 'The company agrees that it

will not discriminate against any applicant for employment or any of the employees, in their wages, training, upgrading, promotion, transfer, lay off, discipline, discharges or otherwise, because of race, creed, color, national origin, political affiliation, sex, or marital status.' There was also a resolution that the UAW model maternity clause must be included in all UAW agreements signed in the future. In the same issue of the paper, The Spark Plug, that printed the resolutions, an article entitled 'The Role of Women--Past and Present' said, '...One may visualize in the not distant future... a call for an all Trade Union conference of working women... women who will come from far and near to discuss their common problems.'³⁴

The Negro American Labor Council developed in the late '50s as an organization of black trade unionists fighting to get into unions, to get apprentice training, to get upgrading and promotion on the job, to run candidates for union office and policy-making bodies. Such an organization as this, based on sex instead of color, would seem feasible for women. NALC members come from many unions, exist independent of any one union. The Woman's Bureau is within, not independent of one union; it has no members from other unions.

4. Special demands must be raised. Three main trends in methods of taking advantage of sexual discrimination on the job have become more and more widespread in the past decade. They create the need for other special demands.

[The first, the laying off of women and the rehiring of men in 'women's' classifications at women's wages, was used in the '53 recession in Detroit.] However, men were more aggressive, less passive in their resistance to this policy. They were more easily organized into unions. There was no 'Feminine Mystique' to control them.

[The second is the laying off of men and the use of more and more women with the reclassification of men's jobs as women's work. Electrical assembly in California used to be men's work. For years the men in the union felt that they could do better and should get more than women.] As the gap in wages and

conditions widened, so did the difference between the number of men and women in the union and the number of women in the industry where there was no union. Electrical assembly and electronics industries grew rapidly during and after the war. Already having become known as women's work 'traditionally', the new employees were recruited from among women. The men in the union complained bitterly about how the women's wages kept theirs down because women would work so cheap and how the women were taking all the jobs. Naked self-interest should have led them to demand equal pay at the higher male rates instead of accepting the sexual differentials and to demand a 30-hour week at 40 hours pay, or such a sliding scale of wages and hours as will provide a job for everyone who wants it and at a high take-home pay.

The third is the use of more part-time workers and full-time temporary workers to avoid payment of fringe benefits. Demands for equal pay to workers of this type, and complete medical coverage immediately and by length of time in industry rather than with a given employer; pro-rated vacations and the scheduling of work over the year to keep on a full-time regular crew; holiday pay no matter how long the worker has been with the company will help to overcome this. But workers' control of production and industry will do a lot better.

B. Social demands are important. There are a number of social demands that will have to be raised along with the economic ones:

- * Free public nurseries and child-care centers for the working mothers and mothers who attend high school and college
- * Planned parenthood centers available to any man or woman
- * Legal abortions done in free and well-staffed clinics
- * Summer camps for all children
- * Reorganization of home industry by application of mass production methods
- * Equal economic, social and intellectual opportunities
- * Fathers and mothers on four-hour days or shortened work weeks so that the fathers may regain their lost role and growth experiences with

the children, as suggested by Ashley Montague
* Payment of wages to mothers for the bearing and raising of children

This last demand would give social recognition to women for the bearing and raising of children and remuneration for their labor as being just as important as any other form of labor. It would eliminate victimization due to biological necessity and marriages based on economic necessity. It would recognize the bearing of children as a part of the socially necessary labor in the production and reproduction of life. It would help to eliminate 'commodity' relations between people and establish relations based on personality and emotional needs instead. It would make strong self-confident men and women not suffering from the sicknesses and neuroses of exploitative relations. Men and women could consider each other as equal human beings with unequal development of potentialities -- as persons instead of things.

FOOTNOTES

1. David Krech at UC Medical Center Symposium on 'The Family's Search for Survival', January 1964
2. Sara Louise Buchanan, The Legal Status of Women in the United States of America as of January 1, 1948, Summary for all States Combined, revised 1951.
3. Karl Marx, Capital, A critique of political economy.
4. Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique. Friedan believes the basic cause of social and economic discrimination of women is the exploitation for profit of their role as consumers. This concept flows from her position as a middle class intellectual. She almost completely ignores the working woman, especially of the lower class. However, she modified this position in an article a year later where she differentiated between women who worked from economic necessity and women who worked from choice. A woman 'who must take a routine job to earn money is not free to choose.' "Woman: the Fourth Dimension", Ladies Home Journal, June 1964.

5. Women as Workers, a Statistical Guide, Bull. D-65
6. Handbook on Women Workers, 1962, Bull. 285
7. San Francisco Chronicle, December 13, 1962
8. Handbook.
9. Ibid.
10. Pamphlet by Association for Nursery Education, Northern California, T. S. Mahler, legislative chairman, California Child Care Centers, California Parents Association for Child Care. Facts About Child Care Centers, San Francisco Unified School District
11. Handbook.
12. Handbook on National Conference of Equal Pay, Bull. 243
13. Friedan, op. cit.
14. The American Workers' Fact Book
15. Handbook on Women in Higher Level Positions, Bull. 236
16. 'The Debate on Job Security for Women Workers,' UAW-CIO Ammunition. April 1955
17. Local 17, Amalgamated Lithographers of America, regular business meeting, 110 Golden Gate Ave., San Francisco, Calif., Fall 1960
18. Count Marco, San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 18, 1963
19. Maternity Benefit Provisions for Employed Women, Bull. 272, 1960
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21. Women in Higher Level Positions.
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25. 'Women's Unequal Job Rights,' San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 20, 1963
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29. Grace Hutchins, Women Who Work, p. 25, as cited by Joseph B. Furst, M.D., in The Neurotic, His Inner and Outer Worlds
30. San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 18, 1963
31. Clare Booth Luce, 'But Some People Simply Never Get the Message', Life, June 28, 1963
32. Melba Baker, 'Women Who Work, International Socialist Review, Summer 1963
33. San Francisco Chronicle, Dec. 12, 1963
34. Spark Plug, March 16, 1955 (UAW-CIO, 1031 Chevrolet, Oakland, Calif.)