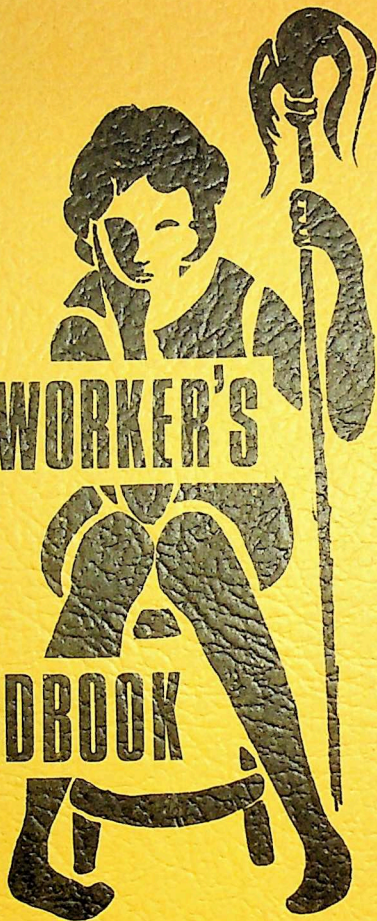


*Maria... 201*

201

**H**OUSEWORKER'S

**H**ANDBOOK



\$1.00

Comune di Padova  
Biblioteche

Cod. Bibl. FUV 55

BID FUV 1387439

INV 1058646

SLD 649.201

"Although woman has performed much of the labor of the world, her industry and economy have been the very means of increasing her degradation. Not being free, the results of her labor have gone to build up and sustain the very class that has perpetuated this injustice. Even in the family, where we should naturally look for the truest conditions, woman has always been robbed of the fruits of her own toil... Taught that the fruits of her industry belonged to others, she has seen man enter into every avocation most suitable to her, while she, the uncomplaining drudge of the household, condemned to the severest labor, has been systematically robbed of her earnings, which have gone to build up her master's power, and she has found herself in the condition of the slave, deprived of the results of her own labor..."

"Woman has been the great unpaid laborer of the world..."

Susan B. Anthony  
WOMAN: The Great Unpaid  
Laborer of the World  
c. 1848

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Self-Image of Woman as Shaped by Unpaid Labor .....

Excerpts from "Where Are We Going?" .....

Women's Work - The Price Women Pay for the High Cost of Housework.....

What's a Wife Worth? .....

Reasons for Houseworkers to Unite .....

Battered Wives .....

Homeless and Spendthrift .....

Some Europeans' Comments on Housework .....

Slavery or a Labor of Love? .....

Woman's Identity as Slave Laborer .....

The Source of Leisure Time .....

Excerpts from "The Theory of the Leisure Class" .....

Progress ? .....

Where Do We Go From Here ? .....

*"The one factor that all American women share is the response of this society to their child-bearing potential. No matter how much or little education or training women receive, no matter what choices of life-style or working situations they are presented with or how they choose to exercise these choices, society as a whole has dictated that the responsibility not only for child care (be it a private or group arrangement) but all home maintenance as well, including the care of all persons in the home, is women's duty by virtue of their child-bearing capacity and totally regardless of all other functions they may serve in the society.*

Houseworker's Handbook  
c/o Women's Center  
46 Pleasant St.  
Cambridge, Mass. 02139

.....Betsy Warrior .....	1
.....Lisa Leghorn .....	9
.....Lisa Leghorn .....	11
.....Chase Manhattan Survey .....	17
.....Betsy Warrior .....	19
.....Excerpts from Mills, Search, Butterly.....	24
.....Hodee Edwards .....	31
.....	32
.....Betsy Warrior .....	43
.....Lisa Leghorn .....	56
.....Betsy Warrior .....	62
.....Thorstein Veblen .....	68
.....Betsy Warrior .....	73
.....Lisa Leghorn .....	76

*The labor that women perform in the home is not seen as vital to the society as a whole, and its importance as free labor to the functioning of this system is not understood until one starts talking about payment of that labor. Think of all of woman's chores and responsibilities !! If one had to hire someone to do these things, either as individual jobs (laundry, child care, home maintenance, cooking, etc.) or together, think of the cost ! And where would it come from ?"*

Lisa Leghorn Dec. 1973  
"Where are we Going?"

## THE SELF-IMAGE OF WOMAN AS SHAPED BY UNPAID LABOR

*"O human degradation! Depravity! To possess!  
Who dares possess a human being? One may possess  
a pair of slippers, a dressing gown. But what am  
I talking about? Each of us, men, possesses  
some one of you, our sisters! Are you, then, our  
sisters? You are our servants. There are, I  
know, some women who subjugate some men; but what  
of that? Many valets rule their masters, but  
that does not prevent valets from being valets."*

Nikolai G. Chernyshevsky - 1863

*"What is to be Done"*

The wage a person receives, or lack of wage, is often the foremost standard society uses to judge the power and worth of a person, and how much respect and recognition that person is capable of commanding from their society.

*"In our culture money equals success. Does it  
also equal masculinity? Yes - to the extent that  
a man is too often measured by his money, by what  
he is "worth". Not by his worth as a human being,  
but by what he is able to earn, how much he can  
command on the "open market".*

Robert Gould, *MS. June '73*

*"Measuring Masculinity by the Size  
of a Paycheck"*

It might be a sad commentary to make on a society; that it only values what can be judged by a money standard. Nevertheless, in this society, that is often the case. Every service or product must first be recognized by a wage or a price to be considered worthy of respect as valid labor, or something that would be desirable to obtain. Furthermore, the degree of respect or desirability attached to any work or product is in accordance with the money value given it.

Following this line of reasoning, it becomes transparently obvious why the condition of slavery is such a despised state. The work of a slave is given no money value, and anything with no money value is, in this society's terms, worthless. The stigma of worthlessness is thus attached to the person who performs labor for no wage.

*"The value or worth of a man is,  
as in all other things, his price;*

*that is, so much as would be given  
for the use of his power."*

*Thomas Hobbes -1651*

Of course, the work that a slave performs may be very necessary labor to the existence of a society, but the condition of wagelessness/slavery indicates that the slave has no power to demand a wage for her work, nor the power to choose the type of work or conditions of work preferred. Slavery connotes powerlessness in a personal sense as well as worthlessness in a social sense; in that the laborer receives no wage.

The labor that a slave performs is most often labor that others don't want to do. Those with enough power or money can compel others to do it for them. This holds true even for labor that does receive a wage. Work that is the hardest, most monotonous, dirtiest or undesirable, often receives the poorest reward/wage, because those with the least power have the least chance of avoiding it, and those with the most power are the most effective in avoiding it.

*"But the salient fact in this discussion is that, whatever the economic value of the domestic industry of women is, they do not get it. The women who do the most work get the least money, and the women who have the most money do the least work. Their labor is neither given or taken as a factor in economic exchange. It is held to be their duty as women to do this work; and their economic status bears no relation to their domestic labors, unless an inverse one."*

*Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Women and Economics -1898*

Housework falls within the realm of slavery, because it's unpaid; and because housework is nearly always associated with women, the stigma of slavery and worthlessness is also associated with women's role in society. Even women who work outside the home (or are, in fact, never engaged in housework) are also stigmatized by the slave role that the majority of women must perform.

This is clearly reflected in the roles that women are allowed to play outside the home. These jobs are usually the lowest paid and the most limited in terms of power and authority exercised. By comparison, the jobs that govern, control and manage are almost solely occupied by men. The fact that women perform work for no wage inside the home, translates itself outside the home into occupations for women that are low-paid, low-status or in many cases, unpaid "volunteer" type work that is merely an extension of

the unpaid services women perform in the home.

### Room, Board and Gratitude

The argument often comes up that women (housewives) are actually paid by their husbands in the form of room and board and also by their husbands' love and gratitude. The husband is given the means to provide his wife and children with room and board, so the argument goes, by his employer who gives him a bigger wage than a woman to enable him (head of household) to provide also, for his family.

In the first place, receiving room and board for your labor is nothing less than an insult in this society. It is exactly the sheer minimal maintenance provided for every slave, and should make clear the terms of dependency on which the relationship between husband and wife is based.

As for love and gratitude: ask any man to be content with the love and gratitude of his employer and see what kind of an answer you'd get. He'd probably either laugh in your face, or reply that the only form of love and gratitude he likes to see for his work is a decent paycheck.



### Higher Wage to Support a Family

The polite fiction that men receive a higher wage to support their families is patently false and can be easily proven so by the fact that even amongst men not all are given an equal wage for the same work. Men who can't claim identification with the ruling class through race or religion have traditionally received lower wages than those who could. The instances of this type of discriminatory wage differential (or sometimes complete lack of wage) are numerous and commonly acknowledged.

In slavery, black men received no wage whatsoever. Did this indicate that they, in contrast to the white male, had no family obligations to discharge? (If so, the mode of procreation for a large segment of humanity is a biological enigma!) No, the lack



of wage was an indication of oppression and exploitation - a symptom of powerlessness over one's life. The Chinese were also subjected to the same discriminatory economic practices. Though they probably contributed as much or more labor than the white male to the building of the U.S. railway system in the 1880's, the Chinese were paid a wage far below his - less than half as much. In factories it was no different. Where the white male received \$2.25 to \$5. a day, and the white child received \$1., the Chinese male received .90¢. Here again, means to provide for a family isn't a factor in the wage difference.

Many other ethnic groups could also be cited to illustrate this point, but women themselves provide the best example. There have always been women who were the sole economic support of their families. This fact was never a criteria in inducing an employer to give them wages equal to their male co-worker. Now there are five or six million females who are the only economic support of their families. This hasn't made employers equalize wages between women and men, or even pushed unions into a national drive for equal wages or any kind of a campaign for equal wages for that matter! Only the concerted efforts of women have sometimes been able to achieve that.

#### Fact and Fiction

So the polite fiction of males receiving a higher wage because they must support a family is actually quite a bit more than a "polite fiction". It is rather a blatant distortion of a political reality that's built on the economic oppression of women. This fiction serves more than the simple purpose of justifying lower wages for women outside the home. It also succeeds in rationalizing and justifying keeping women working at slave's wages (room and board) in the home: because her husband supposedly receives a higher wage to maintain her as he sees fit. The acceptance of this explanation for men's wages can only be attributed to a stubborn sexism that remains unswayed even in the face of political and economic reality.

#### Sacrifice and Serve Others

The argument that hits women the hardest as a reason against asking for wages for housework (and it's really less of an argument and more a form of conditioning: an idealization of woman's role to serve and sacrifice) is that housework is something a woman does naturally, with great pleasure, for those she loves. To demand a wage for it would be mercenary and somehow ungrateful. Ungrateful for what? The room and board she gets in return? Grateful because she could never really make it on her own, doing

something else? That she's found a task that doesn't strain her humble capabilities?

An argument like this hits woman the hardest, because it hits her in one of her weakest spots - her estimation of her own worth. Woman's estimation of herself has been conditioned by generations of unpaid and low-paid labor; unpaid labor that has kept her in economic bondage to the male. This basic dependency has colored her perceptions of her worth and integrity in all other areas of life.

*"The working power of the mother has always been a prominent factor in human life. She is the worker par excellence, but her work is not such as to affect her economic status. Her living, all that she gets...., these bear no relation to her power to produce wealth, to her services in the house, or to her motherhood. These things bear relation only to the man she marries, the man she depends on, - to how much he has and how much he is willing to give her.... The female of genus homo is economically dependent on the male."*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman -1898  
Women and Economics

Woman's conditioning has led her to believe that her labor is worthless to society, and that she is capable of nothing other than trivial, worthless labor in the service of other, more worthy human beings.

If receiving a wage for your work is as mercenary and wrong-headed (as certainly many men will hotly proclaim in the instance of housework) then let these men undertake a serious campaign against wages being paid for any and all work - not just women's work. It will soon become clear that none of the necessities (food, shelter, etc.,) can be obtained without the money that comes in the form of wages. Should one group be denied the means to obtain the necessities in return for their labor, while another group receives these means through their labor? Though some people declare "money is the root of all evil", this opinion doesn't stop them from using money to get their food, etc. Because money is the medium of exchange in this society, if we don't use it, we can't function. If money or wages are objectionable and therefore abolished, another means of securing the necessities will evolve. But as long as money and wages are the only means of acquiring the necessities of life, how can women be denied those means with any justification?

Because 'wages paid for services rendered' is almost a universal fact, the exception of women from this standard has far-reaching psychological implications. If no one in this society received wages for work, but instead were supplied with the material necessities of life, then woman's wagelessness would be reasonable and just. She would be no anomaly.

### A Slave Without Slavery

But woman is the exception in providing services without pay. In all other cases, this state of affairs would be called slavery. (Especially when it's the male who provides the unpaid labor.) For a society to exempt one group of people from standards applied to all other people, is to exempt them from the human race in a subtle and rationalized way. This situation has conditioned women to accept lower than standard wages for work equal to men's. One exception thus justifies the other.

A recent example of the thinking used to justify woman's slavery was illustrated in the new Bangladesh parliament. Laws were being enacted to "completely" abolish slavery. The debate that ensued on this legislation was centered on the class discrimination that would result. To wit: rich men who could afford several wives would be in a favored position over poor men who could afford only one wife. With the abolition of slavery, the poor man would be denied the traditional right of buying one or more slave girls to make up for the ignominy of having only one wife. Females, as wives, are defined so similarly to slaves, that in one class (upper) what is called a wife, in another class (lower) is called a slave. It appears, that to some parliamentarians, the class insult is more grave, because it deprives poor men of the number of domestics rich men are allowed; while the insult of slavery is less grave because it applies only to females. Here we see a slave being postulated without the existence of slavery. In the very face of its abolishment!

*"Woman was the first human being that tasted  
bondage, woman was a slave before the slave  
existed." August Bebel 1883*

This also seems to infer that a slave can exist when there is no slavery. Queer logic! This strange logic seems of necessity, to accompany explanations of the nature of housework (female slavery). Housework has co-existed with many economic systems, as has male slavery. The slavery of women seems to have existed first though, and manages to continue intact even when and where male slavery has been abolished. The difference between the existence of a slave, and the existence of slavery can probably be

summed up in two words: female and male.

When slavery applies to the female it's invisible, a "natural" role, a "biological" condition that's taken for granted: wife, domestic. To paraphrase Bebel, maybe we could say, "Woman was the first domestic, before the domestication of animals."

*"The labor of women in the house, certainly, enables men to produce more wealth than they otherwise could; and in this way women are economic factors in society. But so are horses. The labor of horses enables men to produce more wealth than they otherwise could. The horse is an economic factor in society. But the horse is not economically independent, nor is the woman."*  
Charlotte Perkins Gilman - Women and Economics

An observation like this might help explain the frequency with which women are left out of analyses that are supposed to apply to the whole human race. It could only happen if women were considered more like domesticated animals than people.

No matter what the political structure is on the surface, if, at its base, it incorporates the political, economic and social subordination of women, then that's one of the features of the system. The point of whether woman's oppression is an indispensable feature of a system (socialist or capitalist) becomes irrelevant, when the domestic slavery of the female, from which her oppression arises, is still in existence.

In any society based on wages, the monetary and psychological value of work become interdependent, so that the psychological reward of labor is dependent on its economic compensation. By making women the exception in a waged society, we incur economic and psychological damage that resurfaces in all other areas of life.

Betsy Warrior 1974

# Indian women face greatest risks in famine; men would get fed first

By William J. Drummond  
Los Angeles Times

NEW DELHI -- The life-and-death implications for females, now that India faces a food deficit brought on by the worldwide fertilizer shortage, are cruel and ominous.

... Interviews with nutritionists, physicians, social scientists and economists forecast increasing malnutrition and deaths among female children and adults, because of the tradition of preference for males, which means that females are fed last.

... "There are specific social and individual mores which lead to nutritional deficiency in women," said Dr. Kalpana Bardhan of the Indian Council Of Social Science Research. Food distribution within the family arises from deliberate self-deprivation by women because they believe that the earning members (and the male children who are potential earning members) are more valuable than those who do domestic work and child rearing which they consider devoid of economic value."

Boston Globe May 26, 1974

## EXCERPTS FROM "WHERE ARE WE GOING?"

If a husband dies or leaves the family, most often a woman is incapable of supporting the children while caring for them adequately. She is expected to meet all their emotional as well as physical needs, often with a welfare check that couldn't decently support half that number of people. Whereas a man in the same situation is given a houseworker by the welfare department so that he can continue to come home to a clean house, warm supper, and healthy kids. If a woman is ill and needs to be hospitalized, or even just to rest, given that she could receive aid from medicaid or insurance to pay the hospital bills, who will take care of the home, the children and the husband if there is one?

These dilemmas are products of a society which views woman's work in the home as an integral part of her existence, unworthy of remuneration and by no means challenging enough to warrant aid. Seen as a private "labor of love", her function and value to society is not recognized and paid for as is most other socially necessary labor (the issue of how fairly labor is rewarded ie. the fairness of the wage scale, is a separate one). There are no provisions, outside the private home, for this work to be performed, aided or organized more efficiently.

No matter what the justifications of a pre-industrial society were for keeping women in and around the home, whether this arrangement was necessary, useful, painful or simply easier for men, it is obvious that now it is totally obsolete; not to mention the number of lives that it stunts, destroys and wastes - not only those of women, but also of the children who are subjected to such an isolated fate, be it smothering, nearly absent or some other private horror.

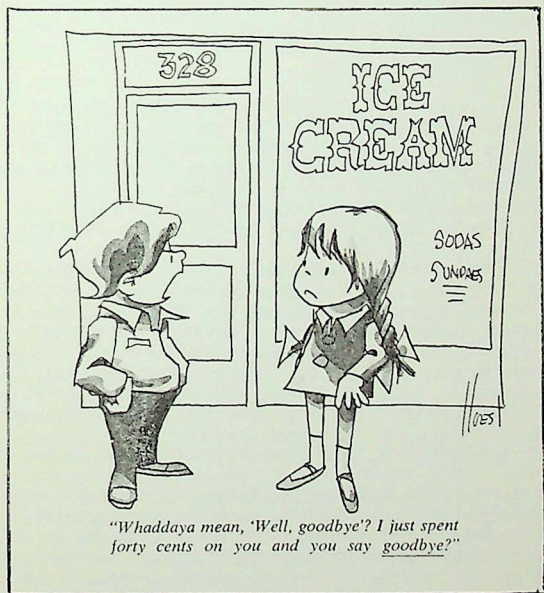
Women's contribution to society through the home involves bearing and caring for the future as well as present laborers of society, thereby making possible the performance of that labor in as efficient a way as possible under given economic and social conditions. If her function in society was recognized as perhaps the most vital of labor, and compensated as such, those inequities such as lower remuneration for equal work, discrimination in hiring, rejection in schools of technical or advanced education, and loss of legal rights upon marriage could not exist.

A wage would provide women the necessary independence to make

their own financial decisions, rather than allowing them to be made by others. This independence would also spare women the humiliation suffered by working the most degrading and alienating of jobs for the lowest of wages, since the clash between their official status as non-workers and dependents, and their need for money results in their being used as a surplus labor pool.

The wages for housework issue points out the necessity of women's place in the home to the male supremacist and capitalist organization of society. We as women cannot respect ourselves until we can direct our own lives with freedom of choice, independent of the assumption that *in addition* to whatever we may choose as a "career" or "hobby", we will tacitly accept all our "womanly" duties without compensation or recognition. As long as women's labor is viewed with such contempt, we will continue to be seen (and to see ourselves) as dependent beings incapable of responsibly directing our own lives or meriting positions of responsibility in the society at large.

Lisa Leghorn 1973



## WOMEN'S WORK

### The Price Women Pay for the High Cost of Housework

#### SCIENTIFIC FEMINISM

*Woman, by creating and maintaining labor power, and by creating leisure time, produces the very stuff of life - Time and Energy.*

*Mother Nature c. Pliocene Epoch*

#### TIME IS MONEY

In this society, the common standard for recognition of work done is a wage; and for the worth of a product, its price. The more money one earns, the more highly regarded is that labor and that person; the higher the cost of a product, the more valuable it is considered. Obviously, woman's work is esteemed to be of no value at all to society other than that of her room and board; which is really just saying it's worth only enough to keep her alive and well so she can continue to do it.

A job is remunerated according to the worth of what it produces. One is paid, in effect, for the time one must put into the work and the training one has received that renders one capable of performing the required work. The more training and experience one has received (ie., indirectly, the more time one has invested in preparation of one's skill), the more one is paid. The more time that goes into the fabrication of a product, the more that product costs.

In this sense, it is clear that in this society, time and money mean the same thing. If one works very hard and long hours, depending on one's earnings, time becomes more valuable than money, so that one pays others to do services that one could otherwise do oneself. After a long work day, one is more inclined, if one has the money, to eat out or take a bus or taxi to go home, than to walk home and prepare one's own dinner. The more money one has, the more personal services one can pay to have done: laundry, housecleaning, etc. It is indirectly recognized that one is, in fact, buying a product; and that product is the servicing person's time.

When one goes outside the home to seek out these services, one is willing to pay varying amounts of money, depending on one's means and the quality of the service. But one expects to pay at least the minimum wage, because it is understood that one is paying for a person's time. One is paying someone else to do the work that one



could do, but doesn't have (or want to spend) the time to do.

But what's happened to housewives? They perform all these services, in the home, round-the-clock, for both their husbands and their children. Even if, for some small portion of the day, they aren't actually in the process of visibly performing some task, they are on call, and they are as responsible for their free minute as a waiter is when s/he isn't actually serving, a security guard is when there's no thief in sight, or a babysitter is when the child is sleeping. In these other cases, one is willing to pay for the service, for *all* the time involved, because one recognizes that one is paying for a person to exercise their responsibility in a given domain.

But what about housewives? Millions of women who've dedicated all their time to the service of their families - the myriads of tasks that they perform, not just their "specialties" - and how are they thanked? Their work isn't even recognized as work! Because their product (ie. their service ie. their time) is practically invisible, it is completely unrecognized.

This is due partly to the fact that *because* they perform such a multitude of services, they aren't considered specialists in any one, and their work is scorned; thus accounting for the disparity between the recognition a "chef" receives (this being her/his "occupation") and a housewife who's "simply" a good cook.



*"We do not see the results of our giving as concretely as man does in his work. In the job of home-keeping there is no raise from the boss, the seldom praise from others to show us we have hit the mark. Except for the child, woman's creation is so often invisible, especially today...How can one point to this constant tangle of household chores, errands, and fragments of human relationships, as a creation? It is hard even to think of it as purposeful activity, so much of it is*

automatic. Woman herself begins to feel like a telephone exchange or a laundromat."

Anne Morrow Lindberg  
Gift From the Sea

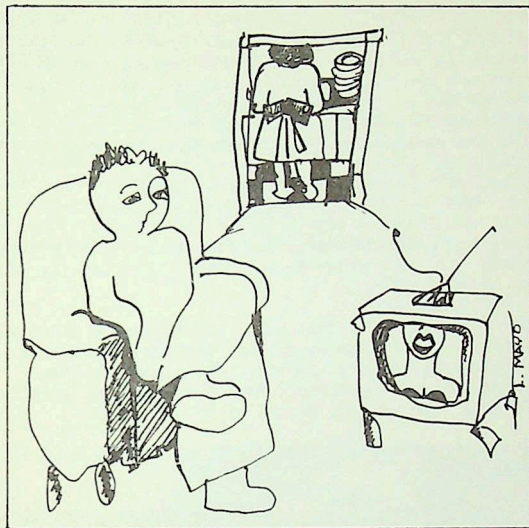
But above all, because woman's role is so mystified, because her services are deemed "natural", "instinctive" and an expression of her love, they are taken for granted as part of the natural order of things. As has been made clear, it's not the necessity of the service itself that is underestimated, because, if necessary, one is willing to pay someone outside the family to do it. It is only when woman is doing the service for her family that it passes uncompensated.

Before the industrial revolution, even before the wage system, in those societies that became our Western civilization, there was a division of labor by sex that accorded to women the responsibilities of child-care, home maintenance, and those agricultural and food gathering concerns that could be accomplished without detriment to their other responsibilities. Whereas the men's work, primarily hunting, carried them away from the home settlements; and it was they who were preoccupied with matters of defense, which became those questions of co-operation between extended families and, finally, what we call government.

As life became more highly organized, labor more specialized, and services were performed for and products exchanged between people from different family groups, the use of money was warranted. And it was those labors that were performed *outside* the family group that were compensated with money. The division of labor by sex remained, but the wage system was used only for activities and services performed *between* homes. The notion that women properly belong in the home remained, and only relatively recently has the stigma attached to women working *outside* the home, or (even more recently and far more rarely) men *in* the home, been somewhat mitigated. Even so, woman's labor in the society at large being considered improper, irresponsible and unnatural, she is not compensated for her labor as fairly as her brothers are; and her labor *in* the home rests as it always has been, ie. unpaid.

#### WOMEN'S WORK AND MEN'S LEISURE

What is really happening when a man comes home from work, sits back with a beer and a paper as his wife prepares dinner, watches television, as she does the dishes afterwards, and goes out with the boys as she puts the kids to bed, cleans up the house, makes tomorrow's shopping list, and mends the torn clothes?



the first.

There is an equation involved between work, and compensation for that work, that is so inequitable as to warrant careful examination.

The worker is paid an hourly wage for her/his labor, call it [B].

Payment of that wage comes out of the total value of what s/he creates, call it [A].

The difference between the value of what the worker creates, and what s/he is paid for their labor (ie.  $[A]-[B]$ ) is [C].

It is the enormous value of [C] in most corporations that make the bosses' trips to the Bahamas possible. The less they pay their workers and invest in clean, safe and pleasant working conditions, the more money they take home, and the more time they have to do as they please.

The housewife's situation is identical.

*"On the basis of the wages system even the unpaid labour seems to be paid labour. With the slave, on the contrary,*

Is it really any different from the corporate manager, president or investor who goes on a three week tour of the Bahamas in his private yacht while all those people who make his factory or other operations go are working 8, maybe 10 or 12 hours a day, 5, often 6 days a week?

In both these cases the work of the second category of people is making possible the free time of

*even that part of his labour which is paid appears to be unpaid. Of course, in order to work the slave must live, and one part of his working day goes to replace the value of his own maintenance. But since no bargain is struck between him and his master, and no acts of selling and buying are going on between the two parties, all his labour seems to be given away for nothing."*

*Karl Marx 1865  
Value, Price and Profit*

Her wage, [B], is her room and board, and perhaps a bit of pocket money (if she's lucky, and it's given to her totally arbitrarily and at the whim of her husband).

The value of her labor ([A]) is that which her husband would have to pay various other individuals to do all her services separately (ie. child-care, housework, laundry, cooking, etc.); or the time that he would have to spend doing these things himself, thus greatly diminishing his leisure time, or the amount of his earnings.

Again, the difference between [A] and [B] is her husband's free evenings and weekends.

In this society, the value of [A] is very high because there is no well-organized or efficient system for performing the services of housework. They are scattered, isolated and individualized, hence, very expensive. The time involved in performing these services is very great, *because* they're so badly organized.

If this type of service was collectivized and/or technologized (as, say, washing machines diminished women's time spent laundering, one can imagine an infinite variety of technologic aids to housework; or, for example, neighborhood cafeterias and child care centers would greatly reduce the number of individuals required to perform these same functions) the cost of [A] would diminish greatly; as it would if this labor were equitably divided amongst all individuals, thereby immensely reducing the time, per person, required.

Therefore, if the value of [A] was smaller, so too would be the total value of [A] - [B], ie. the huge gap between women's work and their compensation and/or leisure, would be greatly diminished.

This, too, would happen if the value of [B] was raised, ie. if women were paid a wage for their labor.

If both the value of [A] diminished, and the value of [B] augmented-

ed, a balance would eventually be achieved. This balance, in concrete terms, would mean that housewives would have more leisure as well as an independent income.

Scenes such as the one previously described could be transformed into a multitude of possibilities. One can easily imagine the husband coming home from work at the child-care center, bringing the kids with him, starting supper with their help and eventually the wife's when she comes home from her job at the neighborhood planning center, everyone helping with the dishes so they can all join their neighbors for a few hours of sports before they retire to their respective activities or studies for the evening.

Lisa Leghorn  
April, 1974



## WHAT'S A WIFE WORTH

The following is a reply we received from the Public Relations Department of the Chase Manhattan Bank, concerning a survey conducted in June of 1970.

It should be pointed out that this survey was conducted with the families of Wall Street employees; which is to say that it is representative of the economic means of a minority of the American population.

Mothers of families with lower economic means would in most cases not have to concern themselves with the jobs of gardeners or chauffeurs (accounting for 4.3 hours per week of these women's time, according to the survey). On the other hand, without modern utilities to aid them with most of the other chores;

with a food budget that calls for much more careful (ie. time-consuming) food buying and lengthy preparation;  
a clothes budget that requires much more sewing and mending;

a standard of health and limited medical funds which require more nursing;

and, above all, no means to pay for any form of child-care (who's caring for the Wall Street families' children the rest of the 123.5 hours per week?); mothers of less wealthy families obviously spend far more time at the same jobs.

This should be kept in mind while reviewing the following statistics. Just think of the "worth" of most American women!!

Thank you for your interest in the "What's a Wife Worth" exhibit prepared for Chase Manhattan several years ago. While we are pleased to provide the following information, we also feel it essential to caution against its presentation as a statistically authoritative source.

The information contained below was derived from an informal survey of Wall Street employees and their families which we believe demonstrates that maintaining a household often requires as many or more skills as required in jobs outside the home.

<u>JOB</u>	<u>HOURS PER WEEK</u>	<u>RATE PER HOUR</u>	<u>VALUE PER WEEK</u>
Nursemaid	44.5	\$2.00	\$89.00
Housekeeper	17.5	3.25	56.88
Cook	13.1	3.25	42.58
Dishwasher	6.2	2.00	12.40
Laundress	5.9	2.50	14.75
Food buyer	3.3	3.50	11.55
Gardener	2.3	3.00	6.90
Chauffeur	2.0	3.25	6.50
Maintenance man	1.7	3.00	5.10
Seamstress	1.3	3.25	4.22
Dietician	1.2	4.50	5.40
Practical nurse	0.6	3.75	2.25
TOTAL			\$ 257.53

## REASONS FOR HOUSEWORKERS TO UNITE

Housewives and mothers have no position of power from which they can bargain to secure a better life for themselves. If we compare the situation of houseworkers to that of other workers maybe a common basis can be found to effect a change.

Labor unions are formed on the assumption that laborers have a louder and more effective voice when they they speak in unison. Pooling their power together they can force employers to make decisions that will be more favorable to them. This stems from the fact that many are together in one factory, plant or mine, and have a chance to compare and relate their grievances against a common boss. By many workers being together and having the same complaints, the complaints no longer remain personal and individual dissatisfactions, but become social, political and economic injustices. When enough laborers make demands for change, the boss has to listen in some cases; for laborers can strike, boycott or just make things difficult in general for their bosses or the economy.

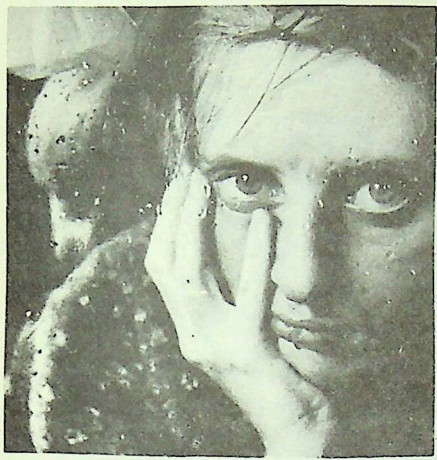
This doesn't always work, because even if they threaten to leave their jobs, another job might be hard to find or other bosses might be equally as bad, but their work is recognized as a social necessity and is paid for. It is recognized that male workers have a right to protest against the way they're being used. This gives them some self-respect and the bargaining power to sell their labor making the best deal possible in the existing market.

Compare this to the situation of housewives: each woman that works at home (doing housework) is isolated and separated from other houseworkers physically and mentally, and each has a different boss.

This would be the same as each factory worker, working in a small, separate factory, under a different boss, with little chance of grievances becoming collectivized. In fact, the worker might begin to believe there was something wrong with him if he was discontented at his job, being unable to communicate easily with other workers.

This is the situation of houseworkers: isolated from each other, believing they're inadequate if they find their situation unsatisfactory, thinking other women don't suffer from the same feelings of tiredness, boredom, fear and isolation. We believe





we might be abnormal because of our feelings. This makes us feel guilty, and prompts us to try to make things look smooth-running and happy on the outside. A need to keep up appearances creates the fear that people can see things aren't really as they should be. All women are sisters and we all have relatively the same problems. Once this is admitted the first and hardest step will have been taken to remedy our situation. Just giving up appearances releases one from a burden of fear and guilt.

There are a number of oppressions that houseworkers suffer from. You can probably think of others I've overlooked.

1. This is a culture in which almost everything has a money value to judge its worth. A man gets paid for his work and so it is respected. This in turn gives him self-respect and a feeling of worth.

Houseworkers (housewives) don't have their work recognized as having a stable value that gets paid for consistently and fairly. When your work seems worthless to society you begin to feel worthless too.

As a houseworker you get an amount of money that has nothing to do with how hard you work, or the conditions which you work under. The money you receive depends on the whim of your husband or the welfare department. Even if your husband works hard and tries to give you as much as he can, if he doesn't make much money you are not fairly compensated for your work.

If he's giving it to you, that's not the same thing as

your having earned it. You don't build self-respect through handouts. It has to be recognized that you've earned this money and you deserve it. It's not a favor you're receiving, but your right.

Your wages shouldn't depend on your husband's wages, as your work is independent of his. If he left you or died you would still have almost the same amount of work to do. Your income should not be dependent either on the kind of man you are with (rich man, poor man, drunkard, gambler, etc.) or your ability to get a man. This is inconsistent and unfair and forces women into relationships for reasons other than personal compatibility.

Living on what another person chooses to give you is to live at his mercy and let him define your worth. If all society recognized your worth and paid you accordingly, you would have more economic equality, and all children would have more equality of opportunity regardless of their parents' status.

2. If a woman is a housewife she feels guilty anytime she spends money. This is because she is made to feel she neither earned nor deserves it. Actually all the money a woman spends is part of the job she is doing - maintaining the home, husband and children. She is acting in the capacity of a buying agent for the household. These functions are a necessary part of her job, and are not done for her own pleasure. Even when a woman buys clothing or cosmetics for herself, it's to please her husband and to help him to maintain his image.

The wife, children and house are considered by society to be an extension of the husband, a reflection of his worth. If a wife spends money she sometimes waits until her husband is in a good mood before "confessing" to him how much she spent. Confessing is for sins and that's the attitude her husband takes. He may say something like "I worked hard to make this money and you spend it like it's nothing." or "Don't you do anything but spend my money?" Compare this with the attitude toward a man who works as a buyer for a store or a restaurant. When he reports what he has bought, he's treated as a responsible adult with mature judgement, and paid for what he is doing.

3. The relationship of houseworker to husband or welfare department, puts the houseworker in a degrading position.



It's degrading to be dependent on others who don't recognize your contribution to society. The work of houseworkers, which is the maintenance of life, is of primary importance in any culture. A husband's attitude toward his wife often reflects her degraded status, and shows up in many ways. Husbands often abuse their wives physically and/or verbally. The reason they can get away with humiliating and embarrassing them is because they are secure in their belief that their wives are dependent on them and have no recourse.

When husbands think of themselves as protectors, they are put at a psychological advantage. The one that is being protected is considered weak and dependent, and this weakness can be, and is, used against them. It reinforces a sense of insecurity in women and makes them actually feel unable to defend and protect themselves - whether this is the case or not. One of the reasons is that they are deprived of economic independence.

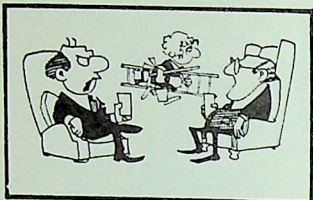
4. Society implies that houseworkers live a parasitical existence. But anyone that has maintained a home or raised children knows what hard work it is. Until society provides better alternatives this work should be as respected as any other kind of work. In fact, no better alternatives will be created until society recognizes and pays for this work.

Right now if a housewife complains of her husband or situation, she's rarely taken seriously.

*"Though women do not complain of the power of husbands, each complains of her own husband, or of the husbands of her friends. It is the same in all cases of servitude; at least in the commencement of the emancipatory movement. The serfs did not at first complain of the power of the lords, but only of their tyranny."*

John Stuart Mill

## THE LOCKHORNS



"Loretta was offered a good job last week, but believe me no wife of mine is going to work."

If she stays with a husband who beats or abuses her, she's considered stupid or even masochistic. This is plain anti-woman feeling if you compare it to the reaction people would have if a man complained about his job. In the instance of a man we would realize that, 1) he might not be able to get a better job, 2) he might be unskilled, 3) he might not have the means to support himself until he finds another job. In the instance of a housewife, however, there are even harder obstacles to overcome of a psychological and emotional nature. Looking at the man, we

would think his boss was at fault, not him. We would consider his complaints seriously, as valid statements of unfair conditions.

The word "housewife" has degrading connotations for many people in this society, and many women are ashamed to be classified as such. This has to be changed to allow women to become equal and independent human beings, and have others share their work regardless of sex. Only when housework becomes dignified will this be possible.

Women must start demanding childcare centers in their communities. We must also demand adequate compensation for the work we're doing until better alternatives can be found for the isolation and degradation that is now a part of housework.

Betsy Warrior -1969

"Whether the institution to be defended is slavery, political absolutism, or the absolutism of the head of a family, we are always expected to judge of it from its best instances; and we are presented with pictures of loving exercise of authority on one side, loving submission to it on the other - superior wisdom ordering all things for the greatest good of the dependents, and surrounded by their smiles and benedictions. All this would be very much to the purpose if any one pretended that there are no such things as good men. Who doubts that there may be great goodness, and great happiness, and great affection, under the absolute government of a good man? Meanwhile, laws and institutions require to be adapted, not to good men, but to bad. Marriage is not an institution designed for a select few. Men are not required, as a preliminary to the marriage ceremony, to prove by testimonials that they are fit to be trusted with the exercise of absolute power. The tie of affection and obligation to a wife and children is very strong with those whose general social feelings are strong, and with many who are little sensible to any other social ties; but there are all degrees of sensibility and insensibility to it, as there are all grades of goodness and wickedness in men, down to those whom no ties will bind, and on whom society has no action but through its *ultima ratio*, the penalties of the law. In every grade of this descending scale are men to whom are committed all the legal powers of a husband. The vilest malefactor has some wretched woman tied to him, against whom he can commit any atrocity except killing her, and if tolerably cautious, can do that without much danger of the legal penalty. And how many thousands are there ...in every country, who, without being in a legal sense malefactors in any other respect, because in every other quarter their aggressions meet with resistance, indulge the utmost habitual excesses of bodily violence towards the unhappy wife, who alone, at least of grown persons, can neither repel nor escape from their brutality; and towards whom the excess of dependence inspires their mean and savage natures, not with a generous forbearance, and a point of honour to behave well to one whose lot in life is trusted entirely to their kindness, but on the contrary with a notion that the law has delivered her to them as their thing, to be used at their pleasure, and that they are not expected to practice the consideration towards her which is required from them towards everybody else. The law, which till lately left even these atrocious extremes of domestic oppression practically unpunished, has within these few years made some feeble attempts to repress them. But its attempts have done little, and

cannot be expected to do much, because it is contrary to reason and experience to suppose that there can be any real check to brutality, consistent with leaving the victim still in the power of the executioner...."

"When we consider how vast is the number of men, in any great country, who are little higher than brutes, and that this never prevents them from being able, through the law of marriage, to obtain a victim, the breadth and depth of human misery caused in this shape alone by the abuse of the institution swells to something appalling."

"Absolute fiends are as rare as angels, perhaps rarer: ferocious savages, with occasional touches of humanity, are however very frequent: and in the wide interval which separates these from any worthy representatives of the human species, how many are the forms and gradations of animalism and selfishness, often under an outward varnish of civilization and even cultivation, living at peace with the law, maintaining a creditable appearance to all who are not under their power, yet sufficient often to make the lives of all who are so, a torment and a burthen to them! It would be tiresome to repeat the commonplaces about the unfitness of men in general for power, which, after the political discussions of centuries, every one knows by heart, were it not that hardly any one thinks of applying these maxims to the case in which above all others they are applicable, that of power, not placed in the hands of a man here and there, but offered to every adult male, down to the basest and most ferocious."

"Even the commonest men reserve the violent, the sulky, the undisguisedly selfish side of their character for those who have no power to withstand it. The relation of superiors to dependents is the nursery of these vices of character, which, wherever else they exist, are an overflowing from that source. A man who is morose or violent to his equals, is sure to be one who has lived among inferiors, whom he could frighten or worry into submission. If the family in its best forms is, as it is often said to be, a school of sympathy, tenderness, and loving forgetfulness of self, it is still oftener, as respects its chief, a school of wilfulness, overbearingness, unbounded self-indulgence, and a double-dyed and idealized selfishness, of which sacrifice itself is only a particular form: the care for the wife and children being only care for them as parts of the man's own interests and belongings, and their individual happiness being immolated in every shape to his smallest preferences. What better is to be looked for under the existing form of the institution?"

Now, gentle reader, I hear you protest, "These things all happened in the misty past, when we were still half-savage barbarians!" The past you mention, isn't all that distant, though. It's a mere eye-blink away in the evolution of the human species.

And have you had a chance to see all that goes on in the present, innocent reader; of those human interactions that take place hidden well within the bosom of the family? Maybe you, because of your delicate sensibilities, have been protected from this knowledge; and those who are most oppressed in these interactions won't tell you of their pain, because they are afraid you will be shocked, or worse still, condemning - condemning them for not finding escapes, alternatives, in a society that offers them neither. Unfortunately, I've had a chance to see some of these interactions, and I once took it for granted that this was the normal order of things.

But now, peaceful reader, reflect on the present, and ask yourself how and why these situations exist. What is it about the family that fosters this unseemly conduct, this atavistic barbarism?

Is it a common practice that bosses beat their secretaries or employers their stock-boys? No, but husbands beat their wives, commonly and contemporarily:

"- Pat is in her mid-twenties, pretty, intelligent, articulate, and six months pregnant. She is also blind in one eye. Her husband is kind and considerate five days a week. On Friday and Saturday nights, he goes drinking and beats her. Pat's blindness is a result of one of those beatings.

- May is also pregnant. The man she lived with had locked her and her small daughter in the bedroom every morning before he left for work. He took away their clothes and wired the door handle with electricity in case May and the child considered escaping naked into the street. He also beat her every night when he came home for "screwing the dozens of men" he was convinced were with her in the room.

- Myrtle isn't pregnant, nor will she ever be. Her uterus was removed after she contracted venereal disease for the fourth time from

her battering husband. The hospital had finally told her, this time, what the recurring gynecological problem was. They hadn't before, because they didn't think it was "their place" to inform her of the nature of the disease.

- Sharon was beaten badly enough by her husband to need hospital treatment on 27 occasions. She didn't bother about the straightforward black eyes and cut lips, but she remembers the time he split her head open with his boot, and the occasion he tried to strangle her with a telephone wire, but the details become a little vague because she passed out...

Hundreds of such cases have been dealt with over the past two years by Women's Aid, a voluntary organization in London....

Before the new coat of paint had dried on the cracked walls of the center, the first woman and her children arrived. They came, not for immediate advice, but for refuge....It was like the first small break in the dam, and the floodgates opened. As word got around, battered women continued to arrive. They came first from Chiswick area, then from all over London, and finally, from all over the country.

Letters poured in. "My husband's been beating me for twenty [or twenty-five or thirty] years. He'd kill me if he knew I'd written to you - he's a prominent barrister [or company director or college lecturer], and everyone else thinks he's a wonderful man - that's why I've never mentioned it to anyone before." There was no point in mentioning it before because no one wanted to know - not the police, not the welfare people, not the neighbors, no one.

"It astonishes me," says Erin Pizzey, "how women who've been beaten for years manage to hide the fact even from people very close to them. For one thing, the skilled wife-beater doesn't usually go for the places that show - he goes for the breasts, the stomach, the base of the spine. If a man does beat his wife's face in a deliberate attempt to disfigure her, then she just stays in the house until the bruises have faded. The sense of shame, among middle-class women in particular, is still very strong."

Rosemary is a schoolteacher from Windsor. "I felt so bitterly ashamed the first time my husband hit me. I thought being hit was terribly slummy - the sort of thing workingclass men do on a Friday night after they've had a few drinks; the sort of thing that just didn't happen to people like me!"

But it does happen to people like Rosemary all the time. They arrive at Women's Aid, physically battered, emotionally stunned...."



"...the more crushed a woman becomes, the more aggressive her husband becomes, and the more convinced he is that he is inviolate, above the law."

"...If the wife brings charges for assault, the case may not come up in court for three or four months, during which time the wife almost invariably has to live at home with her husband - the man she's taking to court but on whom she is financially dependent."

"...at the center they sleep with half a dozen other women on mattresses on the floor. Their children are in the next room, also on floor mattresses. The sense of relief at being away from the constant fear of violence is overwhelming. One night last summer, there were 30 women and children sleeping head to tail, like sardines in a can, in the four small rooms..."

"When a woman arrives and finds a roomful of women who have all been through exactly what she's been through, she realizes that she isn't the only woman in the world whose husband beats her, and that perhaps she isn't as unlovable, as inadequate, as culpable as she's come to believe."

"A center in every city in every country would help more, but it's like putting a Band-Aid on a cancer. What's really needed is legal and societal recognition of the problem. Perhaps the awareness among the victims themselves that they are not alone is a first step."

Gay Search

"London: Battered Wives"

MS. June, 1974

#### *Interval House - Glasgow, Scotland*

*"Interval House, the name given to the group, opened its doors two months ago. It is a three bedroom, kitchen and bathroom, corporation flat in an old tenement property..."*

*At one stage we had ten women and thirty-one children in it, and they were sleeping everywhere except in the bath. Because of the demand we have applied for at least three more houses...*

*Eventually we would like to keep it open twenty-four hours, because there are many women and girls who drift around Glasgow at night with nowhere to go...*

*The home is run by the women resident in it. They decided who to take in although they usually take anyone in when they have room.*

The only rule imposed is no men, but nobody ever quibbles with this as they are usually relieved to get away from their men and into a place where they feel safe. One woman came in with strangulation marks, two had badly bruised faces and another had a fractured jaw. All perpetrated on them by their lovers.

There are very few places you can go in Glasgow with children, especially if you leave your husband. The family is still the sacred cow here. Unfortunately, when you have made the decision to leave home (or in most cases have been forced out of it) the battle really begins. Almost 90% of the housing in Glasgow is corporation owned. The Housing Department tenancy policy openly discriminates against women...

The man can still occupy the home even though his wife and children have been forced by his conduct to leave. He may be charged with wife assault, but usually the courts are lenient or will fine him a small amount. So he can occupy a house while the woman and children have to walk the streets, or seek accomodation in a hostel or like institution...

Most private landlords won't take a woman on her own with children, especially if she's on welfare. So much for a society that purports to be concerned about the welfare of children..."

Maura Butterly  
Interval House  
April 15, 1974

"Governments, at times, manifest an interest in human suffering; but their cold sympathy and tardy efforts seldom avail the sufferer until it is too late..."

The Government of this country, in common with all others, has never recognized or attempted to protect women as persons possessing the rights of humanity. They have been recognized and protected as appendages to men without independent rights or political existence, unknown to the law except as victims of its caprice and tyranny. This government, having therefore exercised powers underived from the consent of the governed, and having signally failed to secure the end for which all just government is instituted, should be immediately altered, or abolished...

In conclusion, we appeal to our sisters...to arise from the lethargy of ages; to assert their rights as independent human beings... We urge you by your self-respect, by every consideration for the human race, to arise and take possession of your birthright to freedom and equality. Take it not as the gracious boon tendered by the chivalry of superiors, but as your right, on every principle of justice and equality..."

Jane Elizabeth Jones Address to the Women of Ohio  
1850

## THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS: THE SUICIDE OF MARRIED WOMEN?

"At present we need only concern ourselves with the relations of divorce and suicide. From this point of view we shall say: The only way to reduce the number of suicides due to conjugal anomy is to make marriage more indissoluble.

What makes the problem especially disturbing and lends it an almost dramatic interest is that the suicides of husbands cannot be diminished in this way without increasing those of wives. Must one of the sexes necessarily be sacrificed, and is this the solution only to choose the lesser of two evils? Nothing else seems possible as long as the latter requires above all, liberty, and the former, discipline, the institution of matrimony cannot be of equal benefit to both. But this antagonism which just now makes the solution impossible is not without remedy, and it may be hoped that it will disappear.

It originates in fact because the two sexes do not share equally in social life. Man is actively involved in it, while woman does little more than look on from a distance."

Emile Durkheim  
Suicide (1897)

*"For what man can honestly deny that he has not a secret feeling that where his pleasure and woman's seem to conflict, the woman must be sacrificed; and what is worse, woman herself has come to think so too..."*

Elizabeth Cady Stanton  
A letter to Lucy Stone  
1856

HOMELESS AND SPENDTHRIFT

by

H o d e e

Filled with enthusiasm,  
And richer than most,  
I went to life's bargain counter,  
Seeking provisions.

Greedy,  
I spent everything,  
Loading my shopping bags.

The walk home is long;  
Heavy, the purchases.  
I stop from time to time  
And rest a while -  
But home is not here.  
I must go on.

Now, I think perhaps  
Home  
May be in the next block.  
Or maybe -  
That is just mirage,  
And I am doomed  
To plod on,  
Bearing - myself -  
The burdens I have bought,  
With nothing  
Left to spend  
And nowhere to put away  
My provisions.

## SOME EUROPEANS' COMMENTS ON HOUSEWORK

### WOMEN'S IDEAS ON HOUSEWORK IN FRANCE...

"We who have raised our children, and tried to make persons of them, we don't have the right to a salary. We are allocated family allowances...always well behind the cost of living and when the children grow up, when they continue their studies without scholarships (for here again there are two categories of French people) these mothers again work miracles to make it through. But our services are not recognized...It is urgent to react, for many mothers seek some kind of employment to make ends meet, often at the expense of their health. But where will be the retirement that would be so useful to them and a right for them, for they, too, have worked, in raising children.

...I hope that my letter won't be thrown out, for it reflects the opinion of many mothers."

Letter from the mother of a family to  
"Familles de France", February 1974

### SOCIAL SALARY OR MATERNAL SALARY?

The example of Lille

The word salary shocks a bit at first, associated with maternal. But when speaking of salary, one speaks of work; therefore, to give a maternal salary is to recognize the work of the mother.

...This salary would be, in our opinion, indexed with the guaranteed minimum wage, without criteria of resources, but subject to the income tax. It would provide the direct and personal right of every worker to medical insurance and to retirement.

...To be a houseworker is a very hard job when it's done in others' homes!...Why shouldn't it be recognized when it is done in one's own home?

In addition, the mother of the family: educator, guardian, nurse, cook, etc. economizes for the society hundreds of days of nursery schools, child-care centers, hospitals, thousands of canteen meals, in occupying herself with the children in her own home; this

savings should be recognized.

#### TOMORROW A LAW...

Women have the heavy task, on the one hand to enliven and direct the life of the home, on the other hand to bring into the world, and to assume the most important part, at least during the first years, in the education of children. For this work that they accomplish, they are but very feebly remunerated by insufficient family loans.

A great number of them, sometimes in the interest of their profession, but most often for purely economic reasons, are driven to work. They thereby assume a heavy task, always tiring, at times exhausting.

To recognize the primary importance of the function of education, to permit mothers of families to choose freely to exercise, at least during the periods of intense maternal activity this function of education or on the contrary to continue a professional activity, seems like a duty of justice.

On the other hand, the woman mother of the family should be considered as a complete adult, and her social salary shouldn't depend on that of her husband.

Charged with studying this problem, the Consulting Committee on the Family has proposed to publish a social statute for the mother of the family foreseeing especially:

- the granting of a social salary to mothers of families who consecrate themselves in their homes to the education of their children and this for the durations and according to modalities to be defined;

- the acknowledgement to mothers of families staying in the home to their own right to social security, especially in so far as retirement is concerned.

"Familles de France"  
February, 1974

#### IN ENGLAND...

*"For the past several years, the women's movement in both Italy and England has dealt with these questions. In England it has acted in response to attempts by the government to alter the Family Allowance Plan, a form of subsidy which provides payment to each family*

according to the number of children within it. The women's movement has viewed this money as a form of compensation for women's labor, whereby the women rightfully deserve remuneration. But the government is trying to change the priorities by replacing Family Allowance with a tax credit which is tied to the wage packet; a benefit which can easily disappear if the tax rate is changed, and which is not given to families on the basis of need or right - families headed by women receiving no outside wage not benefitting from it at all."

Lisa Leghorn  
"Where are we going?"  
December 1973

"During my life, especially my married life, I have been made to see that the life of all women, single or married, is conditioned by the identification of women as housewives. Women's lives are basically affected by the social status of housewives. Thus the fight of all women has to be related to the situation of housewives, in fact it is always so, because it questions the "female role".

By demanding wages for housework, we point out the contradiction between the present necessity for housework and the situation of women. Housework at the moment is a necessary work for the functioning of society and is tied with the sexual role of women. But the fact is that when women do the housework, they are selling their labour and their life as when working in an office or factory or anywhere else. There is no unavoidable, fatal, biological destiny that makes women housewives.

...Moreover, housewives by not being able to have economic independence, are cowed into believing that their situation is natural. Fatalism has always been a feature of oppressed people who do not see a way out of their oppression!"

H. Colombe  
"WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK AND  
WOMEN ON THEIR OWN"  
from WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK  
Power of Women Collective  
London, England

"The demand of wages for housework is steadily gathering momentum in the women's movement internationally. Perhaps its most passionate exponents are among those women who have spent years of their lives privately taking care of the physical needs of others, cooking and washing up for them, cleaning up their messes, nursing

the sick ones, keeping all on their schedules, servicing them sexually and/or, psychologically. They represent the hundreds of millions of women who are isolated in dreary, repetitive tasks, doing heavy as well as boring labour -- with or without machines to help - and on top of this are taken for granted.

In the last four or five years many studies have been done to measure and evaluate the unwaged work of the housewife, whose labours have never been computed into the GNP. Different estimates have been published of the number of hours of work and the money value they represent. The greatest significance of these studies (and one function of the demand itself) is that through them all of us come to recognize that housework is work. Not a duty and service of love, but work on which the whole economy rests. We learn that housewives are not doing "nothing", that they are not "only housewives" (with a suggestion that they are parasites on people who "work"), but that they are working. And some of them damned hard.

But there are other aspects to a demand, however popularly it may speak to the needs and the rage of the oppressed and exploited housewife. An objection that is sometimes expressed against our movement's articulating the demand of wages for housework, against assisting its concretisation, or against even supporting it when others raise it is that such a demand would "institutionalize" housework.

It is hard to think of a species of work which is more institutionalized than housework already is. It is even more institutionalized than factory work. For girls are trained from the cradle to fill the role of housewife, to create an identity on the basis of this fate, so that their submersion into housework will appear as the natural and inevitable outcome of their lives.

...  
But then they say, housework is not only deadly; it is inefficient, badly organized, a waste of human labour. It would be uneconomic, even immoral, to support such a waste by paying it a wage. What we must do is technologize and socialize housework.

The reason housework is "economically wasteful" is precisely because it is unwaged. The system does not care how long it takes the housewife to finish her tasks -- she can work 24 hours a day for it -- because it is not paying her a wage. If it were paying, there would then be some concern about the "inefficiency" of housework."

Priscilla Allen      June, 1973  
Preface to WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK  
Power of Women Collective  
London, England



NINE HOURS A DAY !!!

All thro' this good old land of ours  
Commotion there has been  
And in the poor man's working hours  
Great changes we have seen;  
But while they struggled for their rights  
And to improve their lot,  
Our female slaves are left at home  
Neglected and forgot.

CHORUS:

Then help all the women, boys;  
They're the pride of our land we all say.  
Then why should our women work  
More than Nine hours a day?

"What can a woman have to do?"  
The men will often say;  
"They only have to cook and stew  
And pleasant pass the day."  
But let a man just take her place  
When baby begins to roar;  
He'll find himself in such a mess  
He'd never try no more.

You would first the children have to dress  
And breakfast get, you know;  
There's Tommy standing on his head,  
While Jack upsets the Po;  
There's Sally at the water  
With firewood setting sail,  
While Bobby makes an awful noise  
By twisting Pussy's tail.

At one o'clock the 'Hotter' goes,  
The men come home to dine,  
And if it's not ready done  
Look out then for a shine.  
At five o'clock he's done his job  
And then do the grand:  
While you are slaving like a dog  
He's singing 'Happy land.'

You factory girls of England now  
You get such little pay  
The roses from your blooming cheeks  
Hard work has driven away.  
Oft-times to please your masters  
You are working past your time,  
But if you are late they will shut the gate  
And make you pay a fine.

Young women then, take my advice;  
When courting your young man:  
Tell him when the knot is tied  
That this will be your plan--  
Eight hours for work, eight hours for sleep,  
And then eight hours for play;  
Sundays must be all your own,  
And 'night work' double pay.

--A street song from the 1880's  
reprinted from WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK  
Power of Women Collective  
London, England

#### AND IN ITALY...

"We assume that all women are housewives and even those who work outside the home continue to be housewives. That is, on a world level, it is precisely what is particular to domestic work, not only measured as number of hours and nature of work, but as quality of life and quality of relationships which it generates, that determines a woman's place wherever she is and to whichever class she belongs."

"...to the extent that she must *in isolation* procreate, raise and be responsible for children, a high mechanization of domestic chores doesn't free any time for the woman. She is always on duty, for the machine doesn't exist that makes and minds children. A higher productivity of domestic work through mechanization, then, can be related only to specific services, for example, cooking, washing, cleaning. Her workday is unending not because she has no machines, but because she is isolated.

With the advent of the capitalist mode of production, then, wo-

men were relegated to a condition of isolation, enclosed within the family cell, dependent in every aspect on men. The new autonomy of the free wage slave was denied her, and she remained in a pre-capitalist stage of personal dependence, but this time more brutalized because in contrast to the large-scale highly socialized production which now prevails. Woman's apparent incapacity to do certain things, to understand certain things, originated in her history, which is a history very similar in certain respects to that of "backward" children in special ESN classes. To the extent that women were cut off from direct socialized production and isolated in the home, all possibilities of social life outside the neighborhood were denied them, and hence they were deprived of social knowledge and social education. When women are deprived of wide experience of organizing and planning collectively industrial and other mass struggles, they are denied a basic source of education, the experience of social revolt. And this experience is primarily the experience of learning your own capacities, that is, your power, and the capacities, the power, of your class. Thus the isolation from which women have suffered has confirmed to society and to themselves the myth of female incapacity.

It is this myth which has hidden, firstly, that to the degree that the working class has been able to organize mass struggles in the community, rent strikes, struggles against inflation generally, the basis has always been the unceasing informal organization of women there; secondly, that in struggles in the cycle of direct production women's support and organization, formal and informal, has been decisive. At critical moments this unceasing network of women surfaces and develops through the talents, energies and strength of the "incapable female". But the myth does not die. Where women could together with men claim the victory - to survive (during unemployment) or to survive and win (during strikes) - the spoils of the victor belonged to the class "in general". Women rarely if ever got anything specifically for themselves; rarely if ever did the struggle have as an objective in any way altering the power structure of the home and its relation to the factory. Strike or unemployment, a woman's work is never done."

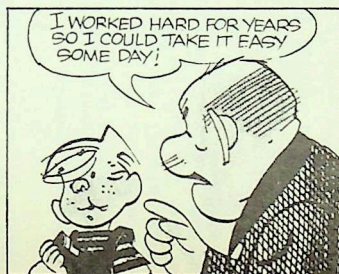
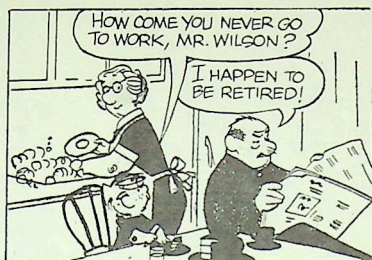
"But it does not automatically follow that to be cut off from socialized production is to be cut off from socialized struggle: struggle, however, demands time away from housework, and at the same time it offers an alternative identity to the woman who before found it only at the level of the domestic ghetto. In the sociality of struggle women discover and exercise a power that effectively gives them a new identity. *The new identity is and can only be a new degree of social power.*"

cont'd on page 41

# Dennis Menace

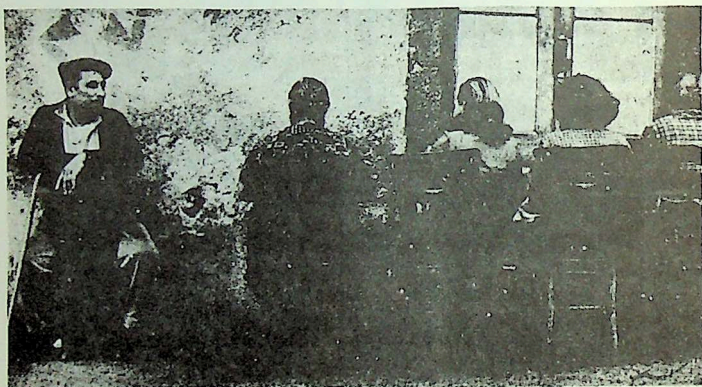
the

by Hank Ketchum



"However, the woman's role in the family is not only that of hidden supplier of social services who does not receive a wage. As we said at the beginning, to imprison women in purely complementary functions and subordinate them to men within the nuclear family has as its premise the stunting of their physical integrity. In Italy, with the successful help of the Catholic Church which has always defined her as an inferior being, a woman is compelled before marriage into sexual abstinence and after marriage into a repressed sexuality destined only to bear children, obliging her to bear children. It has created a female image of "heroic mother and happy wife" whose sexual identity is pure sublimation, whose function is essentially that of receptacle for other people's emotional expression, who is the cushion of the familial antagonism. What has been defined, then, as female frigidity has to be redefined as an imposed passive receptivity in the sexual function as well."

Now this passivity of the woman in the family is itself "productive". Firstly it makes her the outlet for all the oppressions that men suffer in the world outside the home and at the same time the object on whom the man can exercise a hunger for power..."



**MALE JEALOUSY DICTATES THAT WOMEN OF SICILY FACE THE WALL WHILE SEWING.**

So when we say that women must overthrow the relation of domestic-work-time to non-domestic-time and must begin to move out of the home, we mean that their point of departure must be precisely this willingness to destroy the role of housewife, in order to begin to come together with other women, not only as neighbors and friends but as workmates and anti-workmates; thus breaking the tradition of privatized female, with all its rivalry, and reconstructing a real

solidarity among women: not solidarity to defend the status quo, but solidarity for the attack."

"Every opportunity is a good one: housewives of families threatened with eviction can object that their housework has more than covered the rent of the months they didn't pay. On the outskirts of Milan, many families have already taken up this form of struggle."

"Hence we must refuse housework as women's work, as work imposed on us, which we never invented, which has never been paid for, in which they have forced us to cope with absurd hours, 12 and 13 a day, in order to force us to stay at home."

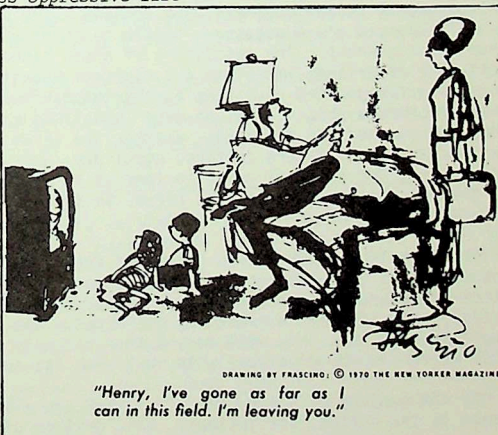
Mariarosa Dalla Costa  
29 December 1971  
"Women and the Subversion of  
the Community"  
THE POWER OF WOMEN AND THE  
SUBVERSION OF THE COMMUNITY

IN JAPAN.....

*"A recent court ruling in a child custody case declared that mothers who were not wives and full-time, stay-at-home babysitters, were not fit. Another recent ruling which upheld discrimination against women in the work place underscores the government's determination to keep less oppressive life options outside the home closed to women."*

From: AMPO  
Summer 1973  
Box 5250  
Tokyo International, Japan

Pamphlet by: Selma James  
and Mariarosa Dalla Costa  
Falling Wall Press  
79 Richmond Road  
Bristol 6, England



## SLAVERY OR A LABOR OF LOVE?

In recent years there has been an increasing awareness and sensitivity among women to their own oppression. This awareness has manifested itself in the formation of hundreds of women's groups across the country and around the world. The goals of these groups are the eradication of the injustices done to females. They serve to expose the many faces of male supremacy, and attack it where it has gone unnoticed before.

The results of this agitation have had far-reaching effects. Even women who've had no direct contact with feminist groups and don't consider themselves part of the movement, nevertheless, find themselves becoming more intolerant of certain aspects of male supremacy. These women are gaining a few benefits, of the order of wearing pants to the office, that have been conceded as the result of feminist pressure.

The agitation for and sometimes gaining of concessions from the male establishment has brought about the more generalized effect of making large numbers of women conscious of their inferior treatment and position in society. These two most obvious effects of the resurgent feminist movement are interdependent and necessary to the growth of the movement. The actions taken around various specific issues are a necessary tactic to bring about this generalized consciousness. The resolution of these issues must, in theory at least, offer some immediate and concrete benefits to hold the interest of women and give them further encouragement. Only with a broad program that touches on many injustices will the mass of women be reached and awakened. Whether the issue is abortion, self-defense, child-care centers, equal pay, wearing pants or something else, the issue is valid as long as it represents an aspect of the oppression of women, and serves as the beginning of a deeper analysis.

These small changes can be the first steps to equality for women only if they are recognized as just that, "first steps". These steps are a necessary prelude to any radical change in society only if they increase the awareness women have of their oppression so that they will demand that not only the symptoms of this oppression be done away with, but also its source.

If the demands of women stop after they are allowed to wear pants to the office, for instance, this gesture of concession

could turn out to be less of a reform, and more in the way of an accommodation. Wearing pants to the office won't get females out of the steno pool and into the more interesting and lucrative jobs in the company and in the world. Indeed, the steno pool might be more comfortable for women in pants, but men will still be "wearing the pants" that matter.

This has certainly happened to the women's movement before. Although some of the earlier feminists did have a fairly comprehensive analysis of the oppression of women, the great majority expended their energy and fastened their hopes on issues that were the secondary effects and symptoms of an oppression that was embedded much deeper in the culture. The denial of the vote to women was but one manifestation of the denial to give women the full rights accorded to free human beings.

After getting the vote, the women's movement virtually came to a standstill, deluded by the belief that they had made a great leap forward. This tremendous expenditure of energy had actually gained very little in terms of concrete progress for women. In this respect, granting the vote to women\*, because it stopped there, turned out to be a powerful propaganda tool for the enemy. Now men could say, "Well, we gave them the chance, but they wouldn't take it. This proves what we said all along. Women aren't capable of being our equals." Or as Germaine Greer put it, "The cage door was opened, but the canary refused to fly out." Indeed, how could she be expected to fly out when her wings were clipped, and her foot was chained to the perch! That this apparent freedom was an illusion can be bitterly attested to by today's feminists and the strength and energy of the present women's movement.

The great promise of the early feminist movement had failed to realize the goal of liberation for women. And its greatest achievement turned out to be, in retrospect, an accommodation that robbed the movement of its cutting edge.

---

\* I speak of men giving us the vote and allowing us to wear pants, because as long as they hold all the power, men will be on the giving, and we will be on the receiving end. This is in no way meant to make light of the courageous struggles and sacrifices women sustained for every concession they got. But the concessions were only given when men thought it was in their interest to give them, and when they believed that they had some advantage to gain thereby. The majority of women didn't actively fight for these concessions, and though they derived benefits from them, they only used them when they thought they could do so without the disapproval of men.

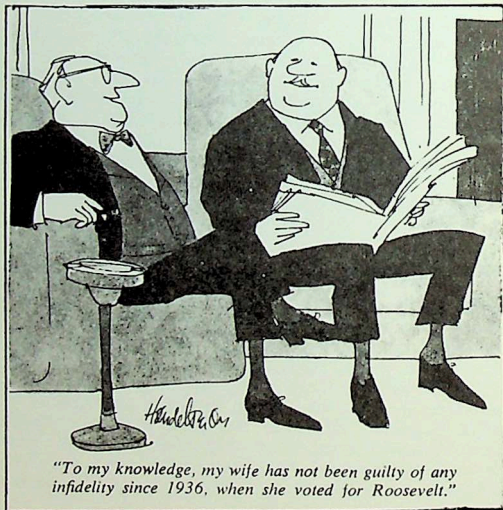


NOW THAT WOMEN HAVE THE VOTE.....

"...it would be observed that, in the usual case, the place and style of living accord with the preferences and needs of that member of the family who makes the money - in short, the husband. Thus the title, 'head of household'....

One notices, at this point, an interesting convergence of economics with politics. It has long been recognized that women are kept on a political leash primarily by their commitment to the family. In the economic, ethnic, foreign, military, or other interests of the family, the husband is usually paramount. And if the wife accepts this, she votes as her husband does. Not having any residual menace or reward for politicians that reflects their interest as a sex, these women are powerless and can be so dismissed."

John Kenneth Galbraith, *Ms. May*, 1974  
"How the Economy Hangs on Her Apronstrings"



The efforts and gains of the first feminist movement in this country were by no means confined to the getting of the vote. Like today's movement it agitated around many issues that were overt examples of women's subjugation. These issues were diverse enough to encompass women's right to education, equality in marriage, property rights, the right to hold office, to enlist in the army, to practice medicine and law, to wear the type of clothing they felt most comfortable in, and many other rights that were withheld them in a male supremacist society. Many of these rights were "given" in writing, but they weren't worth the paper they were written on, because the conditions that were necessary for women to take advantage of these rights didn't exist. This is the reason women are still fighting to attain many of these same rights today.

The failure of the earlier feminists to achieve their ultimate goal can't be attributed to lack of diversity; although the gaining of the vote was often an overriding concern that put other issues in the background. Neither was the failure due to lack of energy, courage or strength on the part of the earlier feminist cadres. The failure of the past movement seems to hinge more on a lack of qualitative diversity than quantitative diversity. So that although many issues were attacked, primary ones that laid the basis and provided the rationalizations for women's subjugation were left relatively unmolested.

Today's movement doesn't seem to be as much a one-issue movement, and its strength is at least equal to that of the latter-day movement. But will today's struggle have any more chance of success than the previous movement? We must learn from past ex-



perience to insure that it does! It seems that today's movement displays the same weakness as the former movement in that it doesn't focus enough analysis, energy and attention on the primary and unique function of woman as houseworker and mother. Unless this weakness is overcome, the situation that is a prerequisite in woman's struggle for equality will be lacking.

After centuries of subjugation, the cause of the oppression of women has become entangled and confused with the effects of this subjugation. That women weren't allowed to vote, get an equal education etc., isn't the reason that they are oppressed - it is because they are oppressed that they were denied these rights. The popular attitudes held about women, and the manifestations of these attitudes in the laws of a country are the result of women's enslavement and not the cause of it, although they serve to perpetuate, hide and reinforce it.

Because women as a category are oppressed, we must identify those functions of woman that are unique to her sex. It is only through the primary function of woman that differentiates her from the male sex that we can account for her differences in all other areas. This function is woman's role as houseworker and mother. As such, women are the only group in society who work as unpaid laborers (slaves) providing services and commodities that in turn create value. This is the primary oppression of women, from which all others spring.

This can be more clearly seen in the instance of blacks. Being denied the right to vote, to learn to read and write, didn't result in the enslavement of blacks, but rather the enslavement of blacks resulted in the effective denial of these rights by the enslaver. All of the discrimination against blacks is the result of their primary enslavement as unpaid laborers. In the south, slaves were "the means of production" and as such, they were owned by the ruling class (whites). To try to improve the situation of blacks without changing their status as unpaid laborers would have been to attempt to adjust them to their slavery, rather than doing away with it.

In the case of females this subjugation is twofold: first, the female works as an unpaid laborer providing the services that are necessary to the maintenance of production, the preparation of labor power for the market - housework. Secondly, she re-creates the means of production through her labor (the source of all labor) of reproduction. The term "labor" when used in referring to reproduction also has a twofold meaning: the primary labor of the mother in producing and caring for the child, and the creation of new labor value through the child. In both these

ways women are "the means of production" and as such, they are owned by the ruling class (men).

Housework (like other slave-labor was in this country) is a function that certain people are slated for from birth, because they possess certain physical characteristics. This is one of the factors that has made it easier to oppress both women and blacks. The oppressors are able to identify both of these groups visually, so that under any circumstances they can be reduced to their function by color or sex, and anything this implies to the oppressor. There is no escape from the social role by trying to "pass". Although both groups have traditionally been given room and board, this in no way mitigates the fact of their slavery, and is no more than any shrewd (or even dumb) owner would do for the upkeep of his livestock.

*"In England women are still occasionally used instead of horses for hauling canal boats, because the labor required to produce horses and machines is an accurately known quantity, while that required to maintain the women of the surplus population is below all calculation."* Carlos Marx *-Capital, p.394 -1867*



The myth of the contented housewife and the contented slave persist because of the master's desire to hold onto his position of power, and to assuage his feelings of guilt by fabricating the incredible lie that he is not only *not* a vicious oppressor, but is in fact, a kindly benefactor. This perverse bit of rationalization would not gain the least bit of credence if it wasn't for the secondary effects of being oppressed that results in the cruel psychological damage done to those who are enslaved. By robbing the oppressed of their self-respect, confidence and means for equality, the oppressor enforces the acceptance of his propaganda. Women would no more

feel bound to the home than slaves in this country felt bound to the plantation and picking cotton, if they felt they had the right to choose freely to do otherwise.

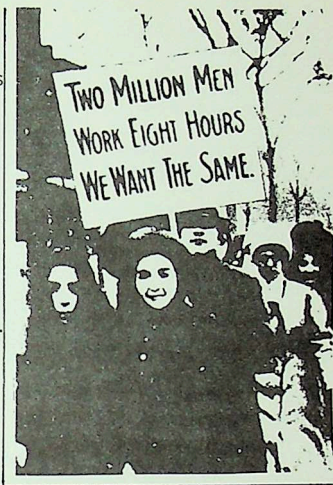
Some of the enslaved finally believe that the role that the master has allotted them is the only one they're fitted for and in fact believe that they're lucky to have even that! Many women are unfitted for independence in a world that has accustomed and prepared them only to psychological dependence. This psychological dependence in no way corresponds with things as they truly are. Women are not only able to take care of themselves, but have the whole burden of producing and caring for every new human being. On top of this, they perform almost 100% of all domestic services that are required for the maintenance of life. But because the oppressed often become resigned to a situation that has gone on for a long time and shows no hope of real change, they become unable to think of themselves in any other terms than the ones society has placed them in. Thus the situation of slavery creates the psychological dependence, resignation, self-hatred and inability to assert oneself in one's own behalf that serves to perpetuate the slavery, and is labelled as "contentment" by the gloating master.

It is not enough that the oppressor has the bodies of those he enslaves and the services and products these bodies render. He must also believe he's won the hearts and minds (it's euphemistically called love) of the enslaved to insure the rendering of these free services and products in the future. Because man has had so many centuries in which to perfect his techniques of exploitation on women, he has won the hearts and minds of many. When he gives us "equal" pay and legal abortions I'm sure he will win a few more hearts and minds while leaving our slavery intact and his power unthreatened. That women are enslaved to the point that they appear contented in no way justifies the slavery. This in fact, only indicates that the slavery has been incredibly destructive.

Only when the function of domestic slavery, and the form that contains it, the family, has been abolished, will women be free to think of themselves as human beings with potentials and capacities that they never dared believe they had before (let alone try to assert) and their hearts, minds and bodies can once again belong to them.

\*\*\*\*\*

In every period of labor reform, the lot of the houseworker has lain outside the sphere of interest of reformers and radicals alike, and has remained untouched by any improvements accruing to those workers whose jobs are outside the home. This continues to be the case today. Energy is being directed at improving the conditions of the migrant worker, minority groups in the labor force, and even women if they happen to be in the "outside" labor force, i.e., in work situations analogous to male workers. No such energy is being directed at the situation of the household worker. The oppression of females who work outside the home is more easily recognizable, because general standards that are accepted for male workers can theoretically be applied here, to females also. Thus their inequality in relation to male workers can be exposed. There are no such standards for houseworkers nor has the labor they perform ever been recognized as such.



The most obvious reason that no attention has been given to the situation of the houseworker is simply the fact that men aren't engaged in this work. As this position is unique to women, men don't see any direct benefit to themselves in the improvement of it. Therefore, it remains unchanged. In this respect, as in many others, men constitute an upper caste who have a monopoly on economic and political power, and will only use it when it is directly in their interest. Females on the other hand, although they would benefit from improvements in this area, are relatively powerless and so unable to implement the necessary changes. The failure of men to use their power to improve the situation of the houseworker is also due to the fact that they rightly feel that any major changes in this area would undermine male supremacy. Men now have their domestic work done for them for free. If a change occurred in this area, it might mean that men would have to share this now low-prestige work and/or pay to have someone else do it.

It has been suggested that women will gain equality only when they are all employed in the "public" labor force, and that this

step will by some magic free them from the status of unpaid domestic slaves. The solution to this dilemma can't lie in the hope that all women will leave the home and join the outside paid labor force. First of all, women working outside the home receive the lowest wages, and fill the lowest positions in the paid labor force. Secondly, even in times of economic expansion, when new jobs are created, there aren't enough jobs to go around.



Besides these two factors that deprive women of incentive to join the "outside" labor force, there are other deterrents. One of the main deterrents is the fact that there are no facilities set up by society for child care or home maintenance in the event that a woman decides to work outside the home. What few facilities do exist can't even be considered by the majority of women because of their prohibitive cost and their inability to accommodate more than a tiny percentage of those who might have use for them. Someone will have to perform the vast amount of labor entailed in raising children and maintaining living quarters. This labor continues to devolve on women, even when they have jobs outside the home. Doubly burdened, women are unable to devote their full attention to either job, and are effectively kept at the lowest levels of the paid labor force, while being used as scapegoats for every ill of society, because they're unable to give full attention to the roles of mother, wife and housekeeper.

*"It is a melancholy fact that the vast majority of our children are reared and trained by domestic servants, - generally their mothers, to be sure, but domestic servants by trade. To become a producer, a factor in the economic activities of the world, must perforce interfere with woman's present status as a private servant."*

*"We are quite familiar with this result, but we have not so far accurately located the cause. We have had our glimmering perception that woman had something to do with it; and she has been treated accordingly, by many simple races, to her further injury, and to that of the*

whole people. What we need to see is that it is not woman as a sex who is responsible for this mis-mothered world, but the economic position of woman which makes her what she is. If men were so placed, it would have the same effect. Not the sex relation, but the economic relation of the sexes, has so tangled the skein of human life."

Charlotte Perkins Gilman  
Women and Economics 1898

There are other equally discouraging deterrents of a psychological nature, such as the belief that it is the duty of a woman to be solely a wife and mother and that she can't overstep these limits except at the risk of losing her "true" identity. Also a woman's education isn't geared to facilitate a successful or fulfilling career outside the home. Indoctrination and tracking helps take care of this. If in spite of this, a woman decides to work outside the home, it can be taken for granted that some of the psychological deterrents have been at least partially overcome. But having decided to work outside the home she comes up against other obstacles that are impossible to remove by a mere change of thinking.

This brings us back to the problem of child care and housework. In other countries attempts have been made to improve the status of women and release them from their unpaid drudgery by drawing them into the paid labor force. These attempts failed and were doomed to failure from the outset because no adequate provisions were made for housework or the caring of children. Because of the reformist nature of the changes in the role of women in these societies, the very basis of woman's oppression remained untouched.

\*\*\*\*\*

"The reorganization of ordinary home maintenance service is long overdue. Household workers have, historically, been low paid, without standards of hours and working conditions, without collective bargaining, without most of the protections accorded by legislation and accepted as normal by other workers, and without means and opportunity adequately to maintain their homes."

from: AMERICAN WOMEN (1963-1968)  
REPORT ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE

This quote from The Report on the Status of Women gives an understated and inaccurate account of the situation of houseworkers; in fact it is only meant to apply to the tiny minority of houseworkers

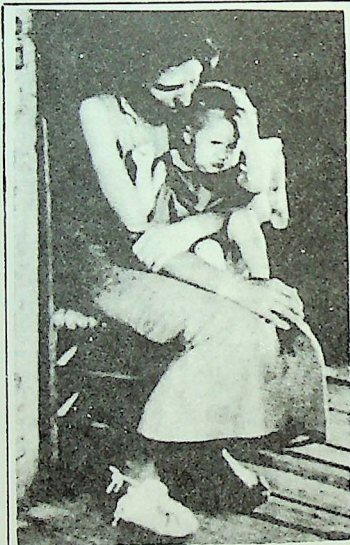


who actually do get paid ! To say that a segment of the labor force is low-paid has quite a different meaning from stating that roughly half of the labor force is unpaid - the half that produces and maintains all labor power. Also the quote doesn't recognize that this situation will exist by necessity under the present economy and a real change can only be effected in concert with a complete change in the sex-role system. The situation of the paid houseworker is indelibly tainted by the economic status of the majority of unpaid houseworkers. How much remuneration is society willing to give for a service that is usually provided for free?

In another pamphlet put out by the Woman's Bureau of the U.S. Dept. of Labor this question is posed, "What is Equal Pay?". It goes on to explain that "Equal pay means payment of "rate for the job" without regard to sex - in the factory - in the office - in the school - in the store - and in all other places where men and women perform work of a comparable character."

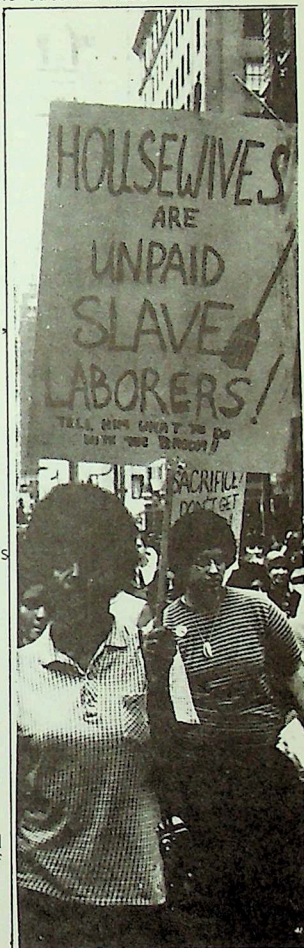
In other pamphlets put out by the U.S. Dept. of Labor it is cited that women on an average work anywhere between 36 and 99.6 hours a week in the home. This is a job that all women are employed at, one time or another in their lives if not all their lives. But there is no mention of "rate for the job" for this work and this oversight holds true for socialist publications as well. The socialist analyses, including ones by women, state that woman's oppression arises at the point of production. What production? They mean, of course, the production that men are engaged in - the production of the "public" sector of the economy! The maddening persistence of this oversight lies in the male orientation of all this literature that doesn't recognize labor except "where men and women perform work of a comparable character."

The phrase "comparable character" betrays the pseudo-equality offered by these analyses. The main function of woman, which she is confined to because



of sex and which distinguishes her from the male is just what is responsible for her inferior status in the outside labor force and everywhere. This function is in no way comparable to anything done by males. To offer the illusion that women will be equal by receiving equal pay for work that is also done by males, is a conscious effort to keep women's slavery intact. Women are not just laborers in the male-defined sense of the word. Women are the source of all labor in that they are the producers of all laborers. This is the basic means of production (reproduction) in any society. It creates the first commodity, female and male laborers, that in turn creates all other commodities and products. Men as the ruling class profit from this commodity through its labor. These profits come in two sizes; king-size and super. The individual man who is king of his castle (the patrilineal family) has his labor power produced, prepared and maintained for him free. When he sells his labor power on the market he's selling a commodity he owns but did not produce thereby profiting from the slave labor that went into the making of this product. The male capitalist class makes a super-profit when he buys this labor power and then receives the surplus value of its "outside" economy production.

It is clear to me that women won't be freed of their sexual status (slavery) by being given equal opportunity in the "outside" labor force (it has been tried already and has failed) rather they will be given the basis for equal opportunity by being freed from their function of domestic slavery and its form - the patrilineal family. If we attempt to "improve" the situation of the houseworker without attacking the economy and sex-role attitudes which make this situation possible,



then in effect, we will be trying to make the slavery of women more palatable.

As it's not possible to make any improvements in the institution of slavery and this is the only accurate counterpart we can find for housework, we must take housework out of the realm of slavery and thereby change its very nature and social meaning. This means in effect, the abolition of "housework" and "domestic" service in the sense that it is now known. Once this work has to be paid for it will be incorporated into the "public" economy. This means that the work that was formerly done in separate, duplicated, single units will be collectivized, shared on a larger, cooperative basis with a more efficient use of both time and labor and without the waste, alienation and duplication now involved in child care and home maintenance. Only when this is accomplished will women be able to fight for their equality on a more nearly equal footing with men.

betsy warrior  
1971



## WOMAN'S IDENTITY AS SLAVE LABORER

*"In terms of activity, sex role assigns domestic service and attendance upon infants to the female, the rest of human achievement, interest and ambition, to the male. The limited role allotted the female tends to arrest her at the level of biological experience. Therefore, nearly all that can be described as distinctly human rather than animal activity...is largely reserved for the male."*

*Kate Millett*  
*Sexual Politics*

### A MAN'S HOME IS HIS CASTLE

One of the reasons the idea of wages for housework comes as such a shock is that one often thinks of this work as an unfortunate but necessary part of private human upkeep, an intimately integral part of the normal everyday process of getting up, washing, eating breakfast, etc., and thereby inherently unworthy of remuneration. Because the husband is off to work in a rush, setting out heroically to tackle that dog-eat-dog world so that his sweet wife and children (if there are any) can rest contentedly at home, well assured that their welfare is being taken care of -- it really seems the least they can do, to prepare his breakfast so he won't be late, be sure he'll have a clean shirt for tomorrow, a warm dinner to welcome him home, and clean sheets to sleep in. This "poor dear" male attitude is so deeply ingrained in all of us that we feel foolish even stopping to consider its basic premises.

But let's take a second look at it.

First of all, our society, in general, is terrified that if we didn't rigidly define and differentiate between the characteristics of the two sexes in all our activities and institutions, we'd all swiftly melt into one lumpy, completely homogeneous sex. Men, above all, are horror stricken at the possibility of ever being mistaken for a member of the not-quite-human sex. So whether or not they were married, men would continue to participate in the nine to five mad-house so as not to risk being labelled anything other than a fully contributing member of our (male goal-oriented) society.

If there were really no advantage for men in getting married, surely they wouldn't need to succumb to this most horrible of fates

for their financial upkeep or their health.

No --- contrary to popular opinion, men want to get married.

"Thus, the presumption of coercion in marriage is, in part at least, a public fiction. Beneath the pose of the put-upon male, and obscured by it, is a generalized readiness to get married, a readiness based principally on the recognition of marriage as a rite through which one passes into a man's estate. For the young, never-married male, to get married is to become a man."

*Tally's Corner*  
Elliot Liebow

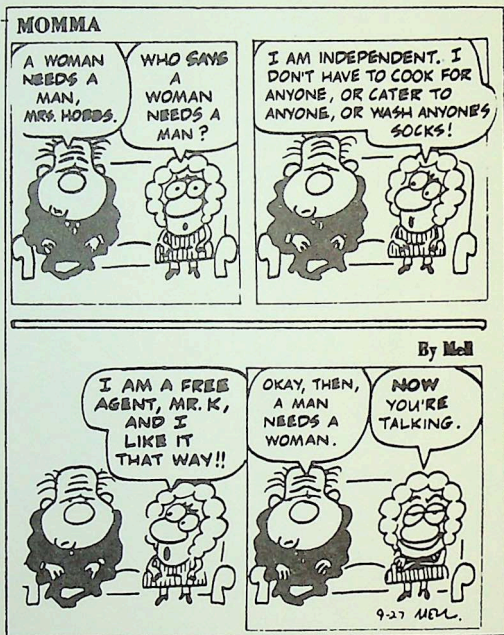
"A man's home is his castle" but not unless this home has at least one (and hopefully many more little ones) servant who bows self-effacingly before his

authority. A true king must be able to rule over someone, and the less his kingship is recognized in the society at large, the more important it is that he have many subjects - the meeker the better - at his command in the home.

Surely this isn't the only advantage to having a wife and a family. How much otherwise socially and morally unacceptable behavior have men gotten away with in the name of their sacrifices and/or obligations to their families?

#### THE MYTH OF THE MARRIAGE PARTNERSHIP

The question of housework as a legitimate social contribution is



a more subtle one. What exactly *is* housework, why does it deserve to be paid, and what effect will that payment have on women's role in society?

One must first differentiate between private maintenance and housework. If a single woman or man scrubs their kitchen floor or does their laundry, why shouldn't they be paid for it? Isn't that, too, contributing to the maintenance of themselves as workers and therefore deserve remuneration?

The point we are making here is that if one human being does this work of private upkeep for another (adult or child), they are performing a service that deserves to be paid for.

*"Although not producers of wealth, women serve in the final processes of preparation and distribution. Their labor in the household has a genuine economic value.*

*For a certain percentage of persons to serve other persons, in order that the ones so served may produce more, is a contribution not to be overlooked. The labor of women in the house, certainly, enables men to produce more wealth than they otherwise could; and in this way women are economic factors in society."*

*Charlotte Perkins Gilman*  
*Women and Economics 1898*

To do this for oneself is a part of living, be it personal hygiene, nutrition or whatever. Every adult human must maintain themselves. If another does it for them, be they a part of the family or a stranger, it is a service which should be paid for, as are all other services.

The only exception to that rule is when these services are shared by all persons living together. Joe will cook tonight, and Mary tomorrow night; Ken will do the laundry this week and Mark the next week. This arrangement can only work if it's made out of a free choice, by all parties involved.

Some people may think that today's marriage agreement, whereby the man brings in the money and the woman maintains the home, is a good example of such sharing. (But a majority of women, at some point in their lives, work outside the home, *in addition to* doing all the housework as well.) Yet how free is this choice when our life's education has taught us this is the way things must be, and

the consequences to any individual who dares to try to live a different way are so grave?

Secondly, there is nothing equitable or reciprocal in such a division of labor.

*"If a man plus a valet can perform more useful service than he could minus a valet, then the valet is performing useful service. But, if the valet is the property of the man, is obliged to perform this service, and is not paid for it, he is not economically independent.*

*The labor which the wife performs in the household is given as part of her functional duty, not as employment. The wife of the poor man, who works hard in a small house, doing all the work for the family, or the wife of the rich man, who wisely and gracefully manages a large house and administers its functions, each is entitled to fair pay for services rendered.*

*To take this ground and hold it honestly, wives, as earners through domestic service, are entitled to the wages of cooks, housemaids, nursemaids, seamstresses, or housekeepers,..."*

*Charlotte Perkins Gilman  
Ibid.*

All the societal recognition of necessary work done is given to the male, as well as a paycheck which only he is free to ultimately decide how to spend. He works a specified number of hours a week, is paid for overtime, and receives specified time and days off. The quality of the upkeep of the home, despite the fact that it's the product of *woman's* labor, is considered to be another feather in the cap of this king; he did well to choose such a good little mistress.

*"What a circus act we women perform every day of our lives. It puts the trapeze artist to shame. Look at us. We run a tight-rope daily balancing a pile of books on the head. Baby-carriage, parasol, kitchen chair, still under control.*

***"I make all the noises  
and my wife does all the work"***

Whereas the woman works hard all day every day (and often nights), has no control over most decisions governing her own life, and is thanked for her dutiful devotion to her work by a scornful society which considers

Steady now!

*This is not the life of simplicity but the life of multiplicity that the wise men warn us of. It leads not to unification but to fragmentation. It does not bring grace; it destroys the soul. And this is not only true of my life, I am forced to conclude; it is the life of millions of women in America."*

Anne Morrow Lindberg  
Gift from the Sea

her a dependent being, unworthy of any other status or position in the society at large. Worse still, she has essentially no bargaining power due to the fact that her only choice for following through a severe disagreement with her husband is to leave, and have to face alone (or with several children to support) a world for which she is untrained in any capacity other than that of houseworker.

This means that she must also perform a variety of services other than maintenance in order to please her husband (just as the secretary must, for example, to please her

boss, or else...). If he's down, she must try to boost his ego. If he wants to go to bed and she doesn't feel like it, she feels compelled to anyway. She certainly isn't in a position to ask for an emotional pep-up when she's feeling low, or pleasure for herself in bed if he doesn't meet those needs either. So she becomes more than just a crazy combination of nursemaid, housekeeper, cook, etc. -- she becomes, basically, an emotional and physical prostitute as well. Furthermore, because the woman depends totally on her man for favors as well as food, she of necessity develops a covert form of making her will known or felt. This form of manipulation is her only recourse; yet its demeaning character further erodes what bit of self-respect she may have retained.

*"The dependence of women on the personal favor of men has produced an exceeding cleverness in the adaptation of the dependent one to the source of her supplies. Under the necessity of pleasing, whether she wished or no,..."the vices of the slave" have been forever maintained in this housemaid of the world."*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman  
*Ibid.*

## THE NECESSITY OF WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK

At this point in time, a wage has become a necessary condition of physical and psychic survival for women. As long as women are tied to men for their and their childrens' next meal, they won't be able



to afford the open-mindedness required to reconsider what they want out of life. Even if they recognized that their lives fall far short of their hidden aspirations, society's condemnation of them as inherently dependent and passive beings is so deeply ingrained that they wouldn't believe they had the right to demand more.

Payment made to all those persons who perform maintenance services for others would recognize housework as a legitimate social function. The relation of houseworker to person serviced would abolish the now so demeaning relation of dependent/slave to master. Women, as respected workers, would be economically independent, permitting them to choose at what point the conditions of their employment become unacceptable to them.

Rather than further enslaving women in their present role, a wage would open up the world for them as they became recognized full time members of the labor force. It would make housework more a matter of willful choice by affording dignity to this particular form of employment; thereby saying that housework is a respected form of social contribution, performed by responsible people who have chosen in this way to share in the meeting of society's needs. As it stands now, housework is felt to be the obligation of every self-respecting woman - the only way that she (as a sex) is capable of contributing to society and expressing her "true" (basically dependent) nature.

This attitude, and society's conviction that housework should and can be properly performed only by women, will be fundamentally shaken as women are recognized as mature, hard-working, independent members of society, capable of participating in every way in society's work. As houseworking becomes a less wasteful, more respected occupation, it will be entered into by people of all ages, colors and sexes.

Obviously, just as factory workers shouldn't be content merely with an occasional pay raise (as the bosses take all the profits from their labor) and should continuously work towards humane working conditions, the replacement of wasteful human labor by machines or more efficient organization, and a share in the ownership of production - houseworkers' struggle towards full and democratic participation in society will not end with a wage. Housework still remains a grossly underdeveloped and inefficient waste of labor. Only when the government is paying for it will it acknowledge this and be willing to fund research and planning towards its better organization and technologization.

Hopefully, some day, all workers - and society in general - will be freed from the inhuman wage and money system which binds us all to a quality and pace of life which denies our most basic human impulses. In the meantime - given the present standards of respect, recognition and remuneration - the payment of a wage to all those who perform housework must be the first step to their establishment into full personhood.

*Lisa Leghorn May, 1974*

## THE SOURCE OF LEISURE TIME

If one looks back from the present surroundings of modern woman with its heated houses, kitchen appliances, and modern gadgets of all types, and compares this to the distant past when woman's only environment was a cave with an open cooking fire before it, and a few simple tools of her own design to aid her in her work; it would seem that the change in women's lives has been tremendous.

But in looking a little closer at this picture, and especially at the woman, we realize that although her surroundings have changed, the nature of her work and her role, have not. She still attends to the hundred and one physical and psychological details that go into living, and making life comfortable for those around her. The preparation of food, the care of clothing, the cleaning of the house and tending of children are still the occupations that engage the majority of women, most of the time.

(In speaking of the majority of women, I deliberately don't concern myself with the upper middle and upper class women whose situation might be different, and who are certainly a minority among women. The situation of these women has been dealt with at great length, and often with the subtle implication that their lives are typical of all women's lives. This is hardly the case, but from popular literature, movies, and social analyses by male academics, one gets the overwhelming impression that everyone in the United States is upper middle class. In my opinion, this mistaken impression doesn't completely stem from the near-sightedness of authors, academics, etc., who can't see beyond their own position on the social scale, and so take their position to be the universal one. This impression that they tend to create is probably just as much a calculated effect that arises from a desire to portray the situation of women as unoppressive, improved (you've come a long way, baby) and not in need of any change. But anyway, I'm tired of hearing about the lives of the affluent minority, and popular conceptions aside, it's highly questionable that the middle class woman leads the free and unencumbered existence that's attributed to her.)

*"The reform-oriented groups and activites are comprised mostly of white 'career' women (as opposed to the majority of women who take on a second job outside the home only out of economic necessity) and tend not to deal with conflicts and issues that*

*don't touch on these women's lives. Most of these women (or their husbands) earn enough money that they can pay others to do what is their primary job as women - to maintain the home and the people living in it. They can afford to pay for babysitters or childcare centers, and sometimes, even for a housekeeper. They are thereby freed from the most oppressive ties to their role as women, as unpaid houseworkers."*

*Lisa Leghorn, "Where are We Going?" Dec. 1973*

On the surface, it appears that for the majority of women, their traditional tasks have become much lighter and require much less time to accomplish because of the use of modern appliances (for those who can afford them all). This view, I believe, is another mistaken assumption that prefers to ignore the fuller picture of the kinds of changes that have taken place in women's lives. Although it's true women have many household gadgets now, social custom has demanded additional tasks from women, for which these appliances were designed.

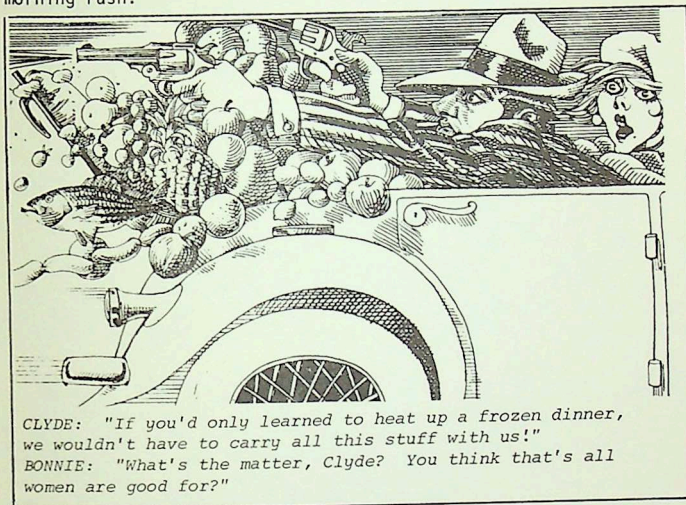


*HE: "Where'll I put it - the icebox?"*

*SHE: "Take it back to the glacier. The Oggs have cancelled out on dinner."*

No cave woman was ever depicted bending over an ironing board, iron in hand, for hours on end. Yet it's a task that consumes many hours of modern woman's time. It might be a labor that is unnecessary to the basic welfare of human beings, but men, who don't have a woman to do ironing for them, will often pay to have this task done for them; thereby indicating that they believe it to be a necessary requirement of modern life. When a woman prepared

skins for clothing, or sewed by hand, she never had a button to sew on, socks to darn, or ironing to do. Neither did she have: windows to wash, curtains to hang, or lunches to make before the morning rush.



CLYDE: "If you'd only learned to heat up a frozen dinner, we wouldn't have to carry all this stuff with us!"

BONNIE: "What's the matter, Clyde? You think that's all women are good for?"

Even though the necessity for some tasks no longer prevails, new necessities have arisen to replace the old ones, and woman's tasks have often been multiplied to meet new social requirements. In more complex cultures, the standards for cleanliness, nutrition and child-care have become much harder to maintain. Throughout all social and technological changes, the nature of woman's work has remained basically the same. Through her performance of this work, woman has freed the hands and minds of others from the necessary and tiring tasks that are required for day-to-day survival and for some degree of living comfort.

In freeing others from the hum-drum necessities of life, women have placed at the disposal of men and children - leisure time - a wealth of leisure time to be spent with some choice, beyond the hammering necessities of everyday existence.

The amount of time woman has saved for others, to be spent by others, has been paid for at great expense to herself. Historically, women, both as a sex and as individuals, have paid dearly for

this time they've lavished so freely on others.

*"Every person, especially every woman, should be alone sometime during the year, some part of each week, and each day. How revolutionary that sounds and how impossible of attainment. To many women such a program seems quite out of reach. They have no extra income to spend on a vacation for themselves; no time left over from the weekly drudgery of housework for a day off; no energy after the daily cooking, cleaning and washing for even an hour of creative solitude.*

*Is this then only an economic problem? I do not think so. Every paid worker, no matter where in the economic scale, expects a day off a week and a vacation a year. By and large, mothers and housewives are the only workers who do not have regular time off. They are the great vacationless class. They rarely even complain of their lack, apparently not considering occasional time to themselves as a justifiable need.*

*Herein lies one key to the problem. If women were convinced that a day off or an hour of solitude was a reasonable ambition, they would find a way of attaining it. As it is, they feel so unjustified in their demand that they rarely make the attempt."*

*Anne Morrow Lindberg     Gift From the Sea*

Women have paid for this leisure time for others with hard labor and sacrifice, and this product of their labor has been used by men and children as if it were their natural right.

Women have paid for this leisure time, not only with their labor, but at the cost of the advancement of their sex, on both a personal and collective level. While time was used by men and children for personal growth, education, socializing and planning beyond immediate needs, women were chained to the demands of the physical requirements of life.

What this has meant is that men have been given the time to pursue politics, governance, invention, war and genius. As the popular expression goes, "Behind every great man, stands a woman." It's little wonder there are so few recognized women geniuses, etc.

That time (a product of woman's labor) is a very valuable possession, should be self-evident, especially in this society where

"time is money". As some man, who had the time to think about it, once said, "Time is the absolute gift in life." Often it's a gift though, that's paid for dearly, by someone other than the user.

So time then, is a product of woman's labor - a product often more valuable than money; depending on how it's spent, and that's up to the spender. In accumulating it for others, women have spent their own lifetimes, even without realizing their loss. Time is life.

"TO LOVE AND OBEY FROM THIS DAY FORWARD TILL DEATH DO US PART"

*"What the working man sells is not directly his labor, but his laboring power, the temporary disposal of which he makes over to the capitalist. This is so much the case that I do not know whether by the English laws, but certainly by some continental laws, the maximum time is fixed for which a man is allowed to sell his laboring power. If allowed to do so for any indefinite period whatever, slavery would be immediately restored. Such a sale, if it comprised his lifetime, for example, would make him at once the lifelong slave of his employer."*

Karl Marx Value Price and Profit 1865

Time is often an intangible element that can't easily be measured, even by clocks, calendars or money; for though clocks go on, one's lifetime doesn't - one never knows how much one has. When the time of one's life is given to others, the giver's creative lifetime is shortened, and the receiver of "free" time's life is lengthened. This time is then invested in projects that those who possess the time choose. Time is a birthright we're all given. But women give up much of this birthright to men. In every field, men have profited from this in direct proportion to what women have lost.

It's been argued that women don't produce anything by their work. As economists would say, "It creates no surplus value that others profit by." When we look at the time women have given to others though, we can see how false this idea is. Out of this time, freed by women from the menial demands of life, has come every conceivable type of accomplishment. Though it is woman who creates the time that is used by man as the initial investment, it is man who takes complete credit for the capital gains (in the form of accomplishment) of this investment. Women have paid for these gains with their very lives.

Such is the product of woman's labor.

Betsy Warrior -1974

"...a poor child in England has little more hope than had the son of an Athenian slave to be emancipated into that intellectual freedom of which great writings are born.' That is it. Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time."

Virginia Woolf A Room of One's Own

"With a new awareness, both painful and humorous, I begin to understand why the saints were rarely married women. I am convinced it has nothing inherently to do, as I once supposed, with chastity or children. It has to do primarily with distractions. The bearing, rearing, feeding and educating of children; the running of a house with its thousand details; human relationships with their myriad pulls - woman's normal occupations in general run counter to creative life, or contemplative life, or saintly life." Anne Morrow Lindberg Gift From The Sea

In a roundabout sort of way this book is dedicated to me because it is dedicated to my wife, who is dedicated to me.

"Had Tolstoy lived at the Priory in seclusion with a married lady 'cut off from what is called the world', however edifying the moral lesson, he could scarcely, I thought, have written War and Peace." Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own

The artist, genius, ruler, etc., locked in his study, away from the everyday cares of life, usually has a body servant and maid, in the person of his wife, that makes this undisturbed seclusion possible. While he's concerned with the lofty view of life, above the daily cares of mundane necessity, his wife makes sure he eats, sleeps, keeps warm and that the children are quiet. She busily attends to all these details to allow his mind to soar unfettered above survival level. Meanwhile, her mind is divided and distracted among scores of details; absorbed by the physical and emotional demands of those around her.

betsy warrior

EXCERPTS FROM "THE THEORY OF THE LEISURE CLASS"  
BY THORSTEIN VEBLEN 1899

"Virtually the whole range of industrial employments is an out-growth of what is classed as woman's work in the primitive barbarian community.

The work of the men in the lower barbarian culture is no less indispensable to the life of the group than the work done by the women. It may even be that the men's work contributes as much to the food supply and the other necessary consumption of the group. Indeed, so obvious is this "productive" character of the men's work that in the conventional economic writings the hunter's work is taken as the type of primitive industry. But such is not the barbarian's sense of the matter. In his own eyes he is not a labourer, and he is not to be classed with women in this respect; nor is his effort to be classed with woman's drudgery, as labour or industry, in such a sense as to admit of its being confounded with the latter. There is in all barbarian communities a profound sense of the disparity between man's and woman's work. His work may conduce to the maintenance of the group, but it is felt that it does so through an excellence and an efficacy of a kind that cannot without derogation be compared with the uneventful diligence of the woman."

"But this lower barbarism shows the usages, motives, and circumstances out of which the institution of a leisure class has arisen, and indicates the steps of its early growth....The tribes belonging on this economic level have carried the economic differentiation to the point at which a marked distinction is made between the occupations of men and women, and this distinction is of an invidious character. In nearly all these tribes the women are, by prescriptive custom, held to those employments out of which the industrial occupations proper develop at the next advance. The men are exempt from these vulgar employments and are reserved for war, hunting, sports and devout observances. A very nice discrimination is ordinarily shown in this matter.

This division of labor coincides with the distinction between the working and the leisure class as it appears in the higher barbarian culture."

"Manual labor, industry, whatever has to do directly with the



everyday work of getting a livelihood, is the exclusive occupation of the inferior class. This inferior class includes slaves and other dependents, and ordinarily also all the women. If there are several grades of aristocracy, the women of high rank are commonly exempt from industrial employment, or at least from the more vulgar kinds of manual labour. The men of the upper classes are not only exempt, but by prescriptive custom they are debarred from all industrial occupations. The range of employment open to them is rigidly defined. As on the higher plane already spoken of, these employments are government, warfare, religious observances, and sports."

"In (such) a predatory group of hunters it comes to be the able-bodied men's office to fight and hunt. The women do what other work there is to do - other members who are unfit for man's work being for this purpose classed with women. But the man's hunting and fighting are both of the same general character. Both are of a predatory nature; the warrior and the hunter alike reap where they have not sown. Their aggressive assertion of force and sagacity differs obviously from the woman's assiduous and uneventful shaping of materials; it is not to be counted productive labour, but rather an acquisition of substance by seizure. Such being the barbarian man's work in its best development and widest divergence from woman's work, any effort that does not involve an assertion of prowess comes to be unworthy of the man. As the tradition gains consistency, the common sense of the community erects it into a canon of conduct; so that no employment and no acquisition is morally possible to the self-respecting man at this cultural stage, except as proceeds on the basis of prowess - force or fraud. When the predatory habit of life has been settled on the group by long habituation, it becomes the able-bodied man's accredited office in the social economy to kill, to destroy such competitors in the struggle for existence as attempt to elude him, to overcome and reduce to subservience those alien forces that assert themselves refractorily in the environment. So tenaciously and with such nicety is this theoretical distinction between exploit and drudgery adhered to that in many hunting tribes the man must not bring home the game which he has killed, but must send his woman to perform that baser office.

As has already been indicated, the distinction between exploit and drudgery is an invidious distinction between employments. Those employments which are to be classed as exploit are worthy, honorable, noble; other employments, which do not contain this element of exploit, and especially those which imply subservience or submission, are unworthy, debasing, ignoble. The concept of dignity, worth, or honor, as applied to either persons or conduct, is of first rate consequence in the development of classes and of class distinctions."

"The institution of a leisure class is the outgrowth of an early discrimination between employments, according to which some employments are worthy and others unworthy. Under this ancient distinction the worthy employments are those which may be classed as exploit; unworthy are those everyday employments into which no appreciable element of exploit enters.

This distinction has but little obvious significance in a modern industrial community, and it has, therefore, received but slight attention at the hands of economic writers. When viewed in the light of modern common sense which has guided economic discussion, it seems formal and insubstantial. But it persists with great tenacity as a commonplace preconception even in modern life, as is shown, for instance, by our habitual aversion to menial employments. It is a distinction of a personal kind - of superiority and inferiority."

"...and this modern distinction is a transmuted form of the barbarian distinction between exploit and drudgery."

"The distinction between exploit and drudgery coincides with a difference between the sexes."

"The performance of productive work, or employment in personal service, falls under the same odium for the same reason. An invidious distinction in this way arises between exploit and acquisition by seizure on the one hand and industrial employment on the other hand. Labour acquires a character of irksomeness by virtue of the indignity imputed to it."

"The early differentiation out of which the distinction between a leisure and a working class arises is a division maintained between men's and women's work in the lower stages of barbarism. Likewise the earliest form of ownership is an ownership of women by the able-bodied men of the community. The facts may be expressed in more general terms, and truer to the import of the barbarian theory of life, by saying that it is an ownership of the woman by the man."

"This was followed by an extension of slavery to other captives and inferiors, besides women, and by an extension of ownership-marriage to other women than those seized from the enemy."

"From the ownership of women the concept of ownership extends

itself to include the products of their industry, and so there arises the ownership of things as well as persons."

"As has been indicated in an earlier chapter, there is reason to believe that the institution of ownership has begun with the ownership of persons, primarily women. The incentives to acquiring such property have apparently been: (1) a propensity for dominance and coercion; (2) the utility of these persons as evidence of the prowess of their owner; (3) the utility of their services.

Personal service holds a peculiar place in the economic development. During the stage of quasi-peaceable industry, and especially during the earlier development of industry within the limits of this general stage, the utility of their services seems to be commonly the dominant motive to the acquisition of property in persons. Servants are valued for their service.

...there need be little question but that the basis of the industrial system is chattel slavery and that the women are commonly slaves. The great, pervading human relationship in such a system is that of master and servant."

"We have a realizing sense of ceremonial uncleanness attaching in an especial degree to the occupations which are associated in our habits of thought with menial service. It is felt by all persons of refined taste that a spiritual contamination is inseparable from certain offices that are conventionally required of servants."

"Domestic service might be said to be a spiritual rather than a mechanical function."

"The servant or wife should not only perform certain offices and show a servile disposition, but it is quite as imperative that they should show an acquired facility in the tactics of subservience - a trained conformity to the canons of effectual and conspicuous subservience. Even today it is this aptitude and acquired skill in the formal manifestation of the servile relation that constitutes the chief element of utility in our highly paid servants, as well as one of the chief ornaments of the well-bred housewife."

"It is of course sufficiently plain, to anyone who cares to see, that our bearing towards menials and other pecuniarily dependent inferiors is the bearing of the superior member in a relationship of

status, though its manifestation is often greatly modified and softened from the original expression of crude dominance."

FRANCE:

## The Gourmet Murderer

Noël Carriou likes his roast beef just so - not too well done and not too rare. Back in 1956, the Paris night watchman became enraged when his wife cooked the roast too rare - and he kicked her out of bed in the middle of the night. She broke her neck and died, and Carriou was given twelve years at hard labor. A model prisoner, he was released after seven years and promptly took a new wife - Clémence. She, unfortunately, did not measure up to Carriou's culinary standards either, and one day when she pulled a thoroughly overdone roast from the oven, his exasperation knew no bounds. "You cook like a Nazi," he exploded. With that, the irate Frenchman picked up a kitchen knife and stabbed his second wife to death. In Paris, a jury showed some sympathy for Carriou's *crime passionnel* and recommended leniency. But the court gave the 54 year old Carriou eight more years behind bars, and this week he begins his second term in prison.

Newsweek

More Slain Girls  
a Woman to Manhandle

---

## Beats His Wife to Death With a Chain

---

*"To have a whole human creature consecrated to his direct personal service, to pleasing and satisfying him in every way possible, - this has kept man selfish beyond the degree incidental to our stage of social growth....Pride, cruelty, and selfishness are the vices of the master; and these have been kept strong in the bosom of the family through the false position of woman."*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman  
Women and Economics 1898

## PROGRESS ?

In Mankind's march from cave to metropolis,  
He seems to have left out half of the populace.  
With a babe in her arm  
And a pot in her hand,  
Alone as an unwaged worker  
Today woman stands.

While he brags of technological progress galore,  
Sophisticated weapons to play soldiers and more -  
Oh, much more.  
The blow to our earth might be terminal,  
But yet his insistence is firm in all  
cases woman must not rove,  
She must crouch by the fire,  
Stand by the stove.

Oh yes, he's responsible for all these advances,  
To hydrogen bombs from silly war dances.  
He does it for her - is his explanation;  
While she's kept enslaved - poor justification !

But mounting within her is great indignation,  
And when it explodes to his consternation  
She'll emerge from her cave mouth  
Walk out her door,  
And the Battle of Sexes from undeclared war  
Will ring to the treetops and down the mean streets,  
And from her first triumphs she'll learn victory's sweet.  
So sisters, don't hesitate - When, where shall we meet ?

Together we'll go, black, white, brown and red,  
We'll turn from directions that men had once tread.  
With our banner of Feminism proudly unfurled,  
We will march out united and create a new world !

betsy warrior  
November 1973



Art by Steig ©1963  
New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

Steig

*"When I speak of mankind, one thing I don't mean is womankind."*

## NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION

"Kropotkin had great faith in the possibilities of machines, not only to increase production, but also to perform the tasks which, even in an ideal society, nobody would want to perform. "If there is still work which is really disagreeable in itself, it is only because our scientific men have never cared to consider the means of rendering it less so," he wrote, and he was excited because a Mrs. Cochrane in Illinois had invented a washing machine."

James Joll  
The Anarchists

It is clear that the reasons why "our scientific men" never cared to provide the inventions to render the disagreeable tasks of housework less so, was because as men they would never be subjected to performing this work. Such inventions in no way further their self-interests but definitely undermine them. One, by making the status of "their" women as house slaves a bit less secure, and two, by possibly giving women some free time, which in a capitalist society would place a few women in the position of competing with "our scientific men" for educational resources, research grants and jobs.

It's to the Mrs. Cochranes of the world that devolves the task of inventing devices that will make housework more efficient. We, as women, are the ones who perform it. Historically it has always been only those who were subjected to a particular oppression that invented, worked, fought and schemed to overcome that oppression.

Man's history has conspired to keep the authoresship of these inventions from us or deliberately credit them to men. In this way we are robbed of the knowledge of our past accomplishments and confidence in our potential and capabilities for the future. We are led to believe that our freedom will be handed to us as a gift from men, their patented invention. When in fact, men, now and in the past, have no more interest in seeing women free than they have had motivation for inventing a washing machine.

betsy warrior

*'Breathe there a woman with soul so dead,  
who actually enjoys cleaning the head?'*  
anon.

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE ?

*"Let us deliberately set ourselves to imagine, by sheer muscular effort as it were, a better kind of motherhood than that of the private nursery governess, a better way to feed and clean and clothe the world than by the private house servant.*

*Here is felt the need of our second premise; for we enjoy things as they are (that is, some of us do, sometimes, and the rest of us think that we do). We love, admire, and reverence them; and it is "natural" to have them so. If it can be shown that human progress is better served by other methods, then other methods will be proven right; and we must grow to enjoy and honor them as fast as we can, and in due course of time we shall find them natural. If it can be shown that our babies would be better off if part of their time was passed in other care than their mothers', then such other care would be right; and it would be the duty of motherhood to provide it. If it can be shown that we could all be better provided for in our personal needs of nutrition, cleanliness, warmth, shelter, privacy, by some other method than that which requires the labor of one woman or more to each family, then it would be the duty of womanhood to find such method and to practice it."*

*Charlotte Perkins Gilman  
Women and Economics 1898*

Part of the motivation in examining here so thoroughly the duties of the housewife is to point out the necessity for the organization of social institutions to perform these same labors. This would provide an alternative for families whose mothers choose to work full time outside the home and whose fathers don't want to assume the houseworker duties. It would aid mothers and fathers who only wanted to devote part of their time to their homes and families, and part of their time to outside work. Even for women or men who choose to be full time houseworkers - these services are necessary for times when they take their daily, weekend and vacation time off, fall sick, or need to do errands.

The kinds of institutions that we visualize forming would provide low-cost services from medical and nursing care, child-care and inexpensive cafeterias or community kitchens, to laundry services and home and property cleaning and maintenance crews. These would be



organized on a community basis. Each of these services would be provided within one's own neighborhood, within walking distance from all residential areas, and would be staffed by people from the neighborhood. Payment for these services would be made by the individuals or groups who used them, although the government would provide a subsidy. The decisions concerning their general policies as well as specific problems would be made by the residents of the community.

The use of all these institutions would be purely voluntary, so as to permit each individual, family or group of individuals to live a life-style in harmony with their needs and desires.

Next the question arises of where the payment would come from for those people who choose to be houseworkers, as well as for all houseworkers until these community facilities could be realized.

This money should not come out of the pockets of the paid working family member, nor could most working people afford it. The amount of this wage should not be determined by the amount that one's spouse earns outside the home. The nature of the work is essentially the same in all economic brackets; and normally, the less money the paid working member receives, the more exhausting and time-consuming the work in the home. (This is not to mention the number of individuals, mostly women, who raise families alone.)

The education of children from the first to the twelfth grade is paid for by the federal, state and town governments. The responsibility of the society to the formal education of children over six is recognized, but why not their informal education in those so vital formative years until age six, and during the after school hours until adulthood? These are the hours and the years when most of the character formation takes place. Shouldn't society as a whole feel concerned with and an obligation towards meeting all its members' emotional, educational, medical and other physical needs? As things stand now only those children from the upper income brackets see their physical needs met, and even most of them, because of the dehumanizing nature of today's family structure, experience violent emotional diseases.

*"Pam Larsen has chosen an alternative form of parenthood. [adoption]."*

*"Five small children keep both the Larsens busy. "We have a very organized household," she said. "We have to. It's really nice that they're all the same age, They play together, they get along well. As they get older, we plan to adopt more, in the same age range."*

"Mrs. Larsen said she and her husband always wanted lots of children. "If we had lived 50 years ago we probably would have produced nine or ten biologically," she said. "If it ever became acceptable to be professional parents, that's what we'd want to be. But we don't think people should be parents if they don't want to be."

"Motherhood: It's not what it used to be"

Boston Globe May 13, 1974  
Diane White, Globe Staff

"Until my wife and I separated, and we made the conscious choice for the children to live with me, I didn't know that it takes a hell of a lot of hard work to be a real parent. (I prefer the word "parent". "Father" reminds me of the old ways of the old days.)"

"Being a parent has helped me learn about me, helped me realize how little I understood about women before, helped me discover the children as people, and helped them really know me."

Harold Pessirilo  
from "The Fathering  
Instinct--Working  
Fathers"

MS. May/1974

Just as society doesn't recognize or fulfill its responsibilities in these domains, neither does it recognize how women's labor in the home makes possible the physical well-being and high energy level of all its workers. If every worker had to do all their own cooking, cleaning, washing and child-care, society's capacity for output would be crippled, as would the individual and collective energy of the workers. Their ability to meet the demands of the full time work week would also be drastically diminished.

This service, too, should be recognized and remunerated by the State. Payment should be subject to the national minimum wage provisions, and houseworkers should receive the benefits of a forty hour work week (or overtime for additional hours), annual vacations and social security and medical benefits. It's understood that if houseworkers are remunerated as are all other workers, that they would pay the same income and FIC withholding taxes.

And when the talk starts about how the government just doesn't have the money to pay for all these individual services, serious

consideration will have to be made, both as to how these services could be more efficiently organized and provided for, and how appropriately our society in general allocates the taxpayers' money. We'll have to start asking ourselves questions like: do we really want to support a gargantuan defense and military budget and outer space research programs to the detriment of the health, well-being and education of all members of society ?

We offer this handbook as a first step towards reconsidering and reorienting this society's priorities. We realize the incredible difficulty for housewives to get together to discuss all these issues. But it would be a good start if women could get together with their neighbors during the days; now that it's Spring, let the children play with each other in someone's backyard or at the nearest basketball court or church lawn while the mothers sit nearby and discuss these things. While the children are napping, women could put together short articles or letters stating their opinions. If they don't have access to facilities to put out newsletters or leaflets to exchange their ideas, they could go to their local women's centers for help in putting these together, or in co-ordinating meetings with other women interested in discussing these same problems. Maybe child-care or community cafeteria petitions could be written up and circulated, or housework petitions: We want recognition of our work -- We want wages for housework !!

This concept is vital to women's physical and spiritual survival. We hope you'll talk it over with your friends and neighbors, arrange meetings to discuss possibilities for acting on decisions made, start making your needs and concerns known, as well as your ideas for solutions to these problems. It's about time that we were recognized as legitimate workers with the right to transform these conditions which oppress us.

Lisa Leghorn  
April, 1974

EXCERPT FROM LOOKING BACKWARD by EDWARD BELLAMY 1888

*Looking Backward is the story of Julian West who goes to sleep on May 30, 1887 to awaken 113 years later in the home of Dr. and Mrs. Leete and their daughter Edith. This excerpt is taken from a discussion of the social changes that have taken place during this time.*

"You spoke of paying for service to take care of your houses," said I. "That suggests a question I have several times been on the point of asking. How have you disposed of the problem of domestic

service? Who are willing to be domestic servants in a community where all are social equals? Our ladies found it hard enough to find such even when there was little pretense of social equality."

"It is precisely because we are all social equals whose equality nothing can compromise, and because service is honorable, in a society whose fundamental principle is that all in turn shall serve the rest, that we could easily provide a corps of domestic servants such as you never dreamed of, if we needed them," replied Doctor Leete. "But we do not need them."

"Who does your housework, then?" I asked.

"There is none to do," said Mrs. Leete, to whom I had addressed this question. "Our washing is all done at public laundries at excessively cheap rates, and our cooking at public kitchens. The making and repairing of all we wear are done outside in public shops. Electricity, of course, takes the place of all fires and lighting. We choose houses no larger than we need, and furnish them so as to involve the minimum of trouble to keep them in order. We have no use for domestic servants."

"The fact," said Doctor Leete, "that you had in the poorer classes a boundless supply of serfs on whom you could impose all sorts of painful and disagreeable tasks, made you indifferent to devices to avoid the necessity for them. But now that we all have to do in turn whatever work is done for society, every individual in the nation has the same interest, and a personal one, in devices for lightening the burden. This fact has given a prodigious impulse to labor-saving inventions in all sorts of industry, of which the combination of the maximum of comfort and minimum of trouble in household arrangements was one of the earliest results."

"In case of special emergencies in the household," pursued Doctor Leete, "such as extensive cleaning or renovation, or sickness in the family, we can always secure assistance from the industrial force."

"But how do you recompense these assistants, since you have no money?"

"We do not pay them, of course, but the nation for them. Their services can be obtained by application at the proper bureau, and their value is pricked off the credit card of the applicant."

"What a paradise for womankind the world must be now!" I exclaimed. "In my day, even wealth and unlimited servants did not enfranchise their possessors from household cares, while the women of the merely well-to-do and poorer classes lived and died martyrs to

them."

"Yes," said Mrs. Leete, "I have read something of that; enough to convince me that, badly off as the men, too, were in your day, they were more fortunate than their mothers and wives."

"The broad shoulders of the nation," said Doctor Leete, "bear now like a feather the burden that broke the backs of the women of your day. Their misery came, with all your other miseries, from that incapacity for cooperation which followed from the individualism on which your social system was founded, from your inability to perceive that you could make ten times more profit out of your fellow men by uniting with them than by contending with them. The wonder is, not that you did not live more comfortably, but that you were able to live together at all, who were confessedly bent on making one another your servants, and securing possession of one another's goods."







**HOUSEWORK : SLAVERY OR A LABOR OF LOVE ?  
A MATTER OF DOLLARS & SENSE**

SISTEMA BIBLIOTECARIO - COMUNE DI PADOVA



SBC000178933