

Woman  
against  
Myth

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**I**S THERE AN INSTANCE in all history of an oppressed class being secured in all their rights without assuming a "belligerent attitude"? Earnestness, determination, true dignity oftentimes require a "belligerent attitude." Just imagine some writer in the old *Boston Gazette*, saying in the height of the Revolution of '76, "I am sorry James Otis, John Adams, Patrick Henry and George Washington are so belligerent. How disgraceful to the memory of the Puritans, for New England men to rush on board a vessel and pitch a whole cargo of tea into the harbor; what spiteful child's play was that! How much better to have petitioned King George and his Parliament in a dignified manner for a 'respectful consideration' of their grievances." . . . When we can get all our women up to the white heat of a "belligerent attitude," we may have some hope of our speedy enfranchisement.—*Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, May, 1873.

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# Woman against Myth

## "THEY'RE HAPPY THAT WAY"

"How did woman first become subject to man, as she now is all over the world? By her nature, her sex, just as the Negro is and always will be to the end of time, inferior to the white race and, therefore, doomed to subjection; but she is happier than she would be in any other condition, just because it is the law of nature. . . ."

When James Gordon Bennett, the Hearst of his day, made these observations in 1852, it was indeed true that woman was subject to man all over the world. In America it had been held to be self-evident that all men were created equal, but only a few female crackpots and a couple of male fellow-travellers made the ridiculous contention that men and women were created equal. It was self-evident to the *Philadelphia Public Ledger and Daily Transcript* in 1848 that "women have enough influence over human affairs without being politicians. . . . A woman is nobody, a wife is everything. A pretty girl is equal to ten thousand men, and a mother is, next to God, all-powerful. The ladies of Philadelphia are resolved to maintain their rights as Wives, Belles, Virgins, and Mothers, and not as Women." To the women readers of the *Transcript* it must have come as a surprise that they had rights in their sexual and family relations with men, for they were being offered at the same time advice similar to that still being given to their daughters by the Reverend Knox-Little of Philadelphia in 1880. To her

husband a wife "owes the duty of unqualified obedience," he said. "There is no crime which a man can commit which justifies his wife leaving him or applying for that monstrous thing, divorce. It is her duty to subject herself to him always. . . . If he be a bad or wicked man, she may gently remonstrate with him, but refuse him never." (Eugene A. Hecker, *A Short History of Women's Rights*.)

But if the Philadelphia ladies were surprised to learn in this roundabout fashion that they had rights, there were still greater surprises in store for them.

For 1848, a year of world-wide revolutionary upheaval, was also the year of the world's first organized gathering for woman's rights, held in Seneca Falls, N. Y. It was at that Woman's Rights Convention that a woman got up in public and for the first time openly demanded the vote for her sex, and that resolutions were passed asserting not only the right to vote and hold public office but making such almost equally revolutionary demands as the right of women to personal and religious freedom, to equality in marriage and the custody of their own children, to equality in education and employment, to testify in court, own property and claim their own wages.

The events that followed were enlivened by great drama, participated in by towering figures, full of meaning for us today. Yet we have all but forgotten this struggle and the people who led it. Who today remembers Elizabeth Cady Stanton or Lucretia Mott? How many students of the history of oppressed peoples remember the mountains of abuse heaped on these women for disputing the "law of nature" which declared woman to be man's property? In short, why does the history of woman's battle for equality no longer seem to have meaning for many of us?

It is true that many of the leaders of this struggle were of

the middle class, and that their memory is claimed today by reactionary women's organizations whose anti-labor outlook leads them to oppose the real interests of the great majority of women. But a Clare Booth Luce bears about as much resemblance to the militant Susan B. Anthony as does a Taft to a Lincoln.

## IS THERE A WOMAN QUESTION?

The only conclusion one can come to is that most of us feel the fight is more or less won. But is it? Should we perhaps turn our attention to other more pressing matters? In general women have the vote; they can hold property and many jobs, make contracts and run businesses (with exceptions); divorce is no longer a calamity and they can usually get custody of their children. Few of these rights were theirs a hundred years ago. Furthermore, women are not lynched—as women. Women are not murdered by the millions in death camps—as women. They have met these violent ends primarily as Negroes, Jews, or anti-fascists (though in Central Asian countries women have been murdered as a direct consequence of their attempt to achieve equality, as symbolized by throwing off the veil). The old legal rule that permitted a husband to beat his wife “within reason,” with a stick no thicker than a man's thumb, has been superseded. In most countries wife-beating is no longer considered good form.

For women there is generally reserved a quieter, more veiled kind of lynching. Many of the thirty-eight million American housewives are doomed to circumscribed, petty lives, to the stultification of whatever abilities and interests, outside of motherhood, they may have had. Especially is this true of women of the working class and farmers' wives, who cannot afford maids and household conveniences. The 15,400,000 women wage-earners are discriminated against in almost every

field of employment, are notoriously paid less than men for the same work, are the first to be laid off. Yet according to a survey conducted by the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, 84 per cent of working women work because they have to in order to support themselves and their dependents.

Legally, many of the discriminations of old British common law against women are still on our statute books and enforced by the states. In eight states the husband controls all the property of the marriage without regard for the contributions of the wife. Women are excluded from jury duty in sixteen states; in six states a married woman is no more allowed to keep her week's wages than was the slave Frederick Douglass, who when he worked in a Baltimore shipyard also had to turn his pay over to his master every Saturday night. Politically, twenty-eight years after the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified there are still only seven women out of 531 in Congress. The Republicans and Democrats make no serious attempt to nominate women in accordance with their abilities, and even in progressive circles there is a tendency on the part of too many to give only lip-service to "the need to bring women forward into full citizenship."

It would require a volume to describe all the economic, legal and political barriers against women. I do not want to multiply examples here because, while this aspect of the woman question is crucial, this pamphlet will deal primarily with such questions as: How does a woman in such a society feel about herself as a woman? She is a majority of the electorate; does the fact that she hasn't yet achieved equality mean that she doesn't really want it after all? Is it true or is it a myth that "women like to be dominated"?

## THE "WIFE-MAN"

It is hardly remarkable that the great majority of women are from earliest childhood convinced—if only subconsciously—of their inferiority to men. Woman's inferiority is embedded in the very language she uses. Take Webster's definition of the word "man" (and the definition occupies twenty lines in the *Collegiate Dictionary*, third edition, as against five for the word "woman"). Man is: "(1) A human being. (2) The human race; mankind. (3) The male human being." Only in the third is man specifically a male. In the first, man is synonymous with "person," in the second with "people." Where does that leave woman? Webster's says woman is: "(1) An adult female person. (2) Womankind." The word is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *Wifmann*, or wife-man. Hence a woman is the wife of a man, a sort of appendage of the human race, or "mankind." In other words, the word "woman" historically occupies the same position in our language as woman has occupied in society.

Further, "he" means "one." ("If anyone wants a copy of this pamphlet, will he see me after the meeting?") It's "men and women," not the other way around. All men are created equal, and they hope to establish Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood. "Sisterhood" not only doesn't include men (assuming that the brotherhood men hope to establish does include women), but it's a fairly comic word in itself. As for the language we use when we get emotional, the choicest insults in the English (and probably every other) language reflect either on the animal kingdom or on women, especially the insultee's mother. A whole psychological study could be written on the fact that among men a four-letter word relating to sex has become one of the most common expressions of anger and aggression, reflecting as it does a society in which the



sexual relationship itself often has exploitive characteristics.

Language changes as society changes—though of course it may lag behind a century or two. What's going to become of the verb "to man," for instance, now that Soviet and Yugoslav ships are being womanned as well as manned? If the trend continues, it will pose us a semantic problem.

Philologists of 2100 A.D. are going to be interested in how we solve such problems. We can see that in the present state of our society it would be all but impossible to eliminate from our language reflections of woman's inequality: and even if it were possible it would, by itself, be futile, for our job is to attack the inequality and the chauvinistic concepts themselves. Then the language will take care of itself.

## WOMAN IN RELIGION

So many factors operate to impress upon women a sense of inferiority that it would be impossible to discuss all of them.

Although religion doesn't have the grip on women's lives it held a hundred years ago, its roots still go deep into our culture, and its conception of woman's place forms a large part of the unconscious thinking even of non-religious people.

All major religions hold woman to be a sort of necessary evil. When God created the world, he made man in his own (male) image, and then created woman as a kind of afterthought from one of man's inconsequential spare parts. Everyone knows that when Eve disobeyed God and bit into the Apple of Knowledge she became responsible for all the ills that have befallen the world, or Man, ever since. (Pandora of mythology in opening that box played a similar dirty trick on the ancient Greeks.) The Bible says: "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." (I Tim. 2:12.) Confucius says: "It is a law of nature that women should be kept under the control of men

and not allowed any will of their own." In the Jewish religion the men pray: "I thank thee, Lord, that thou hast not created me a woman." The Hindu woman who burned herself on the funeral pyre of her husband did so because of her religion. A Turkish woman is held in the harem through religion. In the place of worship orthodox Jewish women are fenced off by a grating; Christian women cover their heads—a relic of the Eastern veil, the symbol of subjection. Women cannot become priests or rabbis. As for the Christian marriage ceremony, only recently has the word "obey" been generally omitted; we still follow the custom of "giving the bride away," which originated at a time when a daughter was a form of property to be given away as the father would dispose of any other form of property; and the twelfth-century Church authority Gratian says, "Women are veiled during the marriage ceremony that they may know they are lowly and in subjection to their husbands." (In fact, he adds that woman must never, under pain of excommunication, cut off her hair, because "God has given it to her as a veil and as a sign of her subjection." He offered no explanation of the fact that men can grow long hair not only from the tops of their heads but from the front of their faces as well, thus beating any shroud God ever gave to a woman.)

Laws, customs, language, religion—they all conspire to keep woman in her place. But by themselves they couldn't do the job. Day-to-day attacks in books, films, radio shows, and magazine articles are called for, since women are more and more coming awake, discovering that their problems are tied up with the great over-all struggle for democracy.

In 1853 the editor of *Harpers' New Monthly Magazine* warned of the "intimate connection [of the woman's rights movement] with all the radical and infidel movements of the day. A strange affinity seems to bind them all together....

This female Socialism presents a peculiar enormity of its own: in some respects more boldly infidel than any kindred measure. . . ."

This commentator put his finger on a remarkable heritage of common struggle. A century ago women's fight against oppression was closely linked with that of labor and, especially, the Negro people. The leaders of the women's movement took part in the struggle against Negro slavery; the Abolitionists gave their support to the women.

In fact, it was at the World Anti-slavery Convention in London in 1840 that Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton first laid plans for the Woman's Rights Convention finally held in 1848. For they were angered by the refusal of the men to allow the woman delegates to take part in the convention: after a heated debate among the men, the women were placed in the balcony behind a heavy curtain, where (as a great concession) they were allowed to hear the proceedings, although not see or participate in them. The opposition was led by English clergymen, who quoted Scripture and declared that it were better that the convention be dissolved than that women be allowed to take part in it. But the greatest Abolition leaders present, William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips, supported them, even going to the balcony to sit with the women in protest at the decision.

The two movements have always been considered dangerous and upsetting to the social structure for much the same reasons. It boils down to this: Negroes can be paid less; women can be paid less. As long as both are not organized on an equal basis with white men and work under equal conditions, they form the most vulnerable sections of labor; they are labor's Achilles' heel. Of course, the exploitation of Negroes in our country is sharper in that they are an oppressed people. All classes of the Negro people thus suffer, and the

great majority of Negro women are triply oppressed as Negroes, women, and workers.

## A LOST SEX?

So that in a general period of assault on labor, women must be attacked relentlessly. It is no accident that in this era of Taft and Hartley there is a crescendo of abuse leveled against them. Gone are the wartime editorials saluting women in industry, the magazine articles praising their new-found mechanical abilities. Today we read about the "foolishness" of women, their "immaturity." Above all, we get a barrage of the familiar propaganda that woman's place is in the home with the children. Paradoxical as it may seem, this is essential to a supply of underpaid women for industry: a favorite employer argument is that women leave their jobs when they get married or have children and therefore they are not as valuable as men, and should be paid less. Hence it is necessary to preserve and reinforce the general opinion that a woman's job is transitory and unimportant and that her only real fulfillment comes as a wife and mother. ("A woman is nobody. A wife is everything.")

The difference is that the authority quoted is no longer God but Freud. Today women are attacked by Ferdinand Lundberg and Dr. Marynia Farnham in *Modern Woman—The Lost Sex* not for attempting to subvert God's will but for unconsciously seeking to deprive the male of his power, to castrate him. They claim that all women who have sought equal rights have "symbolically slain their fathers by verbally consigning all men to perdition as monsters." All political movements throughout history, as a matter of fact, betrayed "vast generalized hostility. . . . What it all came down to was opposition to any and all authority—legal, moral, institutional—and to all established customs."

The authors conclude that almost any work women may

undertake outside the home "involves a response to masculine strivings," results in the "masculinization" of women and leads them to "develop the characteristics of aggression, dominance, independence and power." As a result women are said to be driven "steadily deeper into personal conflict soluble only by psychotherapy." What it all comes down to, of course, is Kaiser Wilhelm's *kirche, kinder, küche*.

This kind of use of Freudian concepts has become a political technique which is increasingly effective among people who are no longer susceptible to religious argument, for it seems to deal "scientifically" with real problems. Women *do* envy men. But they have good cultural reasons for doing so. The majority of women who try to combine running a home and a full-time job find great difficulty in doing either satisfactorily. Economics, religion, customs, taboos impose conflicting roles and wishes on women, who are unable to function fully in society as both mothers and citizens not because of their special biological natures but because every society until the advent of socialism has made it economically and socially impossible for them to do so.

There are few women who do not look forward to marriage and children. And certainly raising a family of happy, useful citizens is an accomplishment of which any woman can be proud. But it is not in any way belittling a mother's hard work and achievement to assert that motherhood no more exhausts a woman's potentialities as a human being than fatherhood does a man's. To him fatherhood is part of a normal, happy life: he does not become a "house-husband."

The day will come, I believe, when it will no longer be necessary for any woman to refer to herself as merely a "housewife." And when that day comes there will open out before women such a future of accomplishment and satisfaction as we can only dream of today.

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Women's attempt to achieve equality with men involves an especially difficult, concealed, and subtle struggle because women are not isolated in ghettos but live in intimate daily relationship with the "superior" sex, a relationship infinitely complex and entangled with biological, economic, and social factors.

Even many otherwise progressive men cling to their vested interest in male superiority, and many women are so committed to the seeming security of their inferior yet "protected" position that they echo the voteless, propertyless, completely dependent women of a century ago who declared to Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony that they already had "all the rights they wanted." In this sense one might say it is true that "women like to be dominated," that they tend to take on the convictions and standards of fathers and husbands, of any men on whom they become dependent. It is an attitude common among people who have found that their security depends on approval of some powerful individual or group. Some women lose no opportunity to attack members of their sex; Dr. Marynia Farnham, who followed *Modern Woman—The Lost Sex* with "The Tragic Failure of America's Women" in the September, 1947, *Coronet* magazine, is no less contemptible in her betrayal of those great women who fought to achieve for her the advantages she enjoys today—such as a medical career—than is Milton Mayer, who as a Jew attacked the Jewish people in the *Saturday Evening Post*, or Warren Brown, a Negro who insulted his people in the *Reader's Digest*.

The assumption of woman's inferiority has too long been accepted by both sexes as a biological fact. The James Gordon Bennetts of the world say that woman is doomed to sub-

jection "because it is the law of nature." Frederick Engels, however, has a different slant on it. In earliest gens society, according to him, there was no place for domination and subjection, either social or sexual. The division of labor was natural: the man waged war, hunted and fished; the woman looked after the house, prepared food, and made clothes. Each was supreme in his own sphere; the man owned his tools—weapons, etc.—and the woman the household equipment. Housekeeping was communal, and whatever was made and used in common was common property of the tribe.

It was the domestication of cattle that led to the undoing of this primitive communism. At first the herds were owned in common, but as they grew and cattle became increasingly an article of exchange, ownership passed from the tribe to the individual heads of families. Prisoners of war were transformed into slaves to provide the labor necessary to this widening field of production, and there arose the first great cleavage of society into two classes: masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited. At the same time a revolution came over the family. It had always been the man's job to procure the means of existence, and the instruments required for this were his property. The herds were the new means of existence; they therefore belonged to him, along with the commodities and slaves taken in exchange for the cattle. The woman had no share in the ownership of this surplus. As Engels puts it in *The Origin of the Family*, "The woman's household work had now dwindled in comparison with the man's labor in procuring the means of existence; the latter was all-important, the former an insignificant adjunct."

Hence with the rise of private property and the master and slave society woman herself became an object of exploitation. Her inferior status has persisted in every society based on the exploitation of one class by another, whether the exploited be slave, serf, or wage-earner. The great major-

ity of women became the vassals of vassals. Cut off from the productive process, they were confined to household drudgery, were uneducated and took no part in public life. Then, much as when Negroes are excluded from education they are then accused of being ignorant, women were declared to have no brains worth mentioning. Marriage based on love—on other than property and prestige considerations—was a rarity. It was not until the beginnings of capitalism, undermining the rigid traditions of feudalism and substituting the concept of free contract for that of inherited right, that the revolutionary concept of marriage based on love began to gain ground. Until that time, a woman was supposed to remain absolutely under the power of father, husband, or guardian, and do nothing without his consent.

## NEW SLAVERY AND NEW FREEDOM

The earthquake that cracked the old prison walls around women was the industrial revolution. The introduction of machinery created a demand for cheap labor—and that meant women (and children). Working fourteen hours a day for two or three dollars a week, women found themselves in a new and more brutal kind of slavery; but at the same time, as they painfully gained economic independence, they laid the groundwork for their freedom. For as Engels says, "*The emancipation of woman first becomes possible when she is able, on an extensive, social scale, to participate in production, and household work claims her attention only to an insignificant extent.*" And this for the first time has been made possible by modern large-scale industry, which not only admits woman's labor over a wide range, but absolutely demands it, and also strives to transform private household work more and more into a public industry." [My italics—B.M.]

This emancipation by no means took place automatically.



Every inch of the gains women have made has had to be fought for. They were fought for on the picketline in 1834 when two thousand factory girls in Lowell, Mass., struck against a wage-cut; when women umbrella-makers went out in 1863 against seventy cents for an eighteen-hour day—conducting their struggles not only against their employers but against the overwhelming prejudice against “un-feminine” women who asserted their rights in any form. They were fought for in legislatures, on the platforms, in the church, in the home. They were fought for within men’s trade unions and within Abolitionist circles.

The greatest leaders of this struggle in the nineteenth century were Susan B. Anthony and her life-long collaborator Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Susan Anthony is at least a remembered name today, although there are few who have any idea of her momentous contributions. But Elizabeth Cady Stanton is truly America’s forgotten woman. Yet when she died in 1902 she was called by some “the greatest woman the world ever produced.” It is hard to accuse her admirers of over-enthusiasm, for Mrs. Stanton did the human race a tremendous service, attacking along the political, economic, and psychological fronts.

From the day in 1848 when, discouraged in such a revolutionary step by all her friends but Frederick Douglass, she demanded the vote for women at the first Woman’s Rights Convention, she brought forward one issue after another—divorce, equal pay, education, sensible clothing—and brilliantly showed their relation to woman’s struggle for equality. She was an ardent Abolitionist. The abuse heaped on her by outraged men and women alike merely made her more militant as the years passed. In her old age she became, though of middle-class background, increasingly pro-labor and attracted to socialist thought, alienating the conservative

younger women for whom suffrage had become "respectable." In addition to bringing up seven children she wrote and spoke—she agitated—continuously throughout her long life. It is an indication of the shameful neglect of the heritage of the woman's rights movement that such a woman can be virtually forgotten today.

Of course, the roll of honor in the women's struggle includes many other names: Mary Wollstonecraft, Lucretia Mott, Wendell Phillips, Frederick Douglass, William H. Sylvis, and Eugene V. Debs, to name only a few. Every woman today who votes, speaks her mind, gains an education, or enters a career owes them an immeasurable debt.

And many women have followed along the path these pioneers marked out to achieve recognition in various fields. The list of women who have realized their potentialities is a long one. But it is not nearly long enough. There are a few women judges where there should be thousands; only 1.3 per cent of the members of Congress are women. One might ask: What is the value of making special efforts to elect women to office when they generally turn out to be about as reactionary as their male counterparts? Do we want more Congresswomen like Clare Booth Luce or more judges like Dorothy Kenyon, who has been carrying the ball for American imperialism in the UN Status of Woman Commission?

The answer is to elect women to office based on their capabilities. Similarly we welcome the election of Negroes, even though some may be conservatives. We cannot wait until all woman candidates acquire an advanced political outlook before demanding that they be nominated and elected on an equal basis with men.

Yes, women are in industry and public life to stay. But still after a century a draftsman (f.) will be turned down in nine shops out of ten solely because she belongs to the wrong

sex; if she's hired she'll be paid less; and if she should have children she might just as well forget the whole thing. For since capitalism's preferred use of woman is as a source of cheap labor it only reluctantly makes use of her higher talents as she develops them, and makes little provision for the mother who must (or wants to) work. For a society that eagerly welcomes woman's entrance into new fields and lays the economic and legal foundations for her full participation, we must turn to socialism and the Soviet Union.

## TANYA VS. "THE LITTLE WOMAN"

It is not a mere matter of expediency that women have been brought into social production in the Soviet Union. True, in a society in which there is no class of profit-makers to stand as a barrier against full production and full employment every mind and pair of hands is welcome; but there are larger issues involved. They can be summed up in Lenin's famous phrase, "Every cook must learn to govern." No Soviet woman is forced to work if she would rather stay home and live on her husband's wages (and many still do); but it is a basic principle of Soviet thought that woman must assume responsibility outside the home if she is to realize all her potentialities as citizen, wife, mother and creative individual.

To this end the Soviet Union has established a network of aids to women, and especially mothers, that is without parallel in other countries. Most notable are the factory and neighborhood nurseries that, staffed by trained specialists, care for the children while their mothers work. (An interesting article by Jessica Smith in the September, 1947, *Soviet Russia Today* describes the contact maintained between the children in the factory nurseries and their mothers at work through the means of visits to the factory, two-way conversations over

a public address system, joint celebrations of holidays, etc.—and also the happy, healthy children this system seems to produce.) The nursery charge is nominal, in some cases nothing. Women get a maternity leave of three months with pay, and another month without, with full job security and seniority rights. In addition they benefit from the free medical care that is the right of all Soviet citizens. The government further grants monthly allowances for each child after the third, continuing until the child in question is five years old.

No job is barred to a Soviet woman on account of her sex. The only limitations are: (1) her physical ability (and the picture changes as rapidly as mechanization progresses and her muscular inferiority becomes irrelevant); (2) her educational and technical qualifications. Soviet women do not yet hold an equal number of skilled jobs or directorial posts, for they are still paying for centuries of ignorance. But that handicap is fast being overcome. Every factory and farm has become an educational center; trade unions offer courses on a variety of subjects right on the spot, and have built up a vast network of factory libraries and study clubs. As a result, women who were 80 per cent illiterate in 1917 already by 1939 formed half the student body in higher institutions of learning. By 1946 women constituted 21 per cent of the deputies in the Supreme Soviet; in the lower Soviets the proportion is much larger. In other fields they have forged ahead even more rapidly: today, for instance, over half of the Soviet Union's doctors are women.

As a consequence a momentous change has taken place in Soviet family life. With women no longer economically dependent on fathers or husbands the groundwork has been laid for completely free marriages based on equality and mutual love. The Soviet family has, after the early upheaval

of the civil war period, been constantly strengthened through the years. At the time of the Nazi attack, prostitution and venereal diseases had been all but wiped out—a revolutionary achievement in itself, done not through jailing prostitutes but primarily through an attack on the economic causes of prostitution. The divorce rate is steadily declining; even when easier divorces were still obtainable they were used less and less frequently. Women have become more intelligent mothers and more interesting companions as wives. As mothers, they not only have learned improved techniques from their contact with the nurseries but because of their activities outside the home they do not fasten themselves upon their children as their only means of fulfillment—to the detriment of the children as well as themselves—and do not end up “ex-mothers,” with no function left to them, once their children have grown—as is often the case in our society. As wives, an indication of the changed attitude was the play *Tanya*, produced in Moscow about ten years ago, in which the heroine gave up her medical studies when she married and stayed home, becoming the “little woman.” As a result she had nothing but trivialities to offer her husband in the way of conversation and he became attracted to another woman who had an interesting job. The happy ending came only when the heroine went back to her career—the Hollywood thesis in reverse.

In America today one out of three marriages ends in divorce, a startling fact which has been the subject of innumerable magazine articles and sermons. But no moral preachments can disguise the fact that it is socialist Russia that is establishing new highs in family stability while capitalist America is witnessing an increasing breakdown in family relationships. The conclusion is unavoidable that the one is a reflection of the co-operative relationships that

permeate the whole of socialist society, while the other mirrors the insecurity and corrosive stresses of our competitive system.

## GIRLS WHO WEAR GLASSES

Freedom, as Engels noted, is the recognition of necessity. When Frederick Douglass as a slave in Baltimore came to understand the basis and meaning of the slave system he was already in a profound sense freer than the man who "owned" him. As we grow in understanding of the historical impulses involved in man-woman relationships we begin to free ourselves of ancient concepts concerning women and begin to see more clearly the path toward equality.

We can see, for instance, that it is the delimiting of women to the role of wife and mother that is responsible for the superficial values thrown at us from every page of women's magazines. After a hundred years of the modern struggle for woman's equality Soviet women are urged in their magazines to educate themselves and grow, to fulfill their production quotas and thus add to the happiness and well-being of the nation; while judging from the number of square feet given over to the subject in every issue of the *Ladies Home Journal*, the highest ideal of American womanhood is smooth, velvety, kissable hands. The emphasis on beauty and seductiveness is only carried to its logical absurdity by the emotional ads of the perfume, cosmetic and brassiere industries: the basis is there in the prevailing conception of woman as an auxiliary, dependent member of the human race whose life can have meaning only if she manages to make an alliance with a member of the superior sex. It goes without saying that all normal women, including Soviet women, want to be as attractive as possible and also to achieve a happy marriage; but the tremendous over-emphasis on

superficial attractiveness in our society results in such a reversal of values that a woman's interests and abilities and achievements become the least important things about her. Not encouraged to think, many a woman's conversation reduces itself to clothes and personal gossip. She supposedly uses emotion and "woman's instinct" rather than reason: if, on the other hand, she thinks logically, then she "thinks like a man."

As women grow in activity and self-confidence, of course, they overcome these pressures. It is only to the degree that woman has been excluded from the productive process and from the larger activities and problems outside the home that she finds difficulties in expressing herself as a human, thinking person. In a society in which every young girl learns that the worst thing she can do is appear more intelligent or better informed than the boy who takes her to the movies it is hardly surprising that those same girls later find difficulties in expressing themselves which no man could ever possibly encounter.

Hence when we talk about the need to bring women into leadership in unions and other organizations we face a double problem. For it is true that women are not today as equipped for leadership as men—for reasons which by now should be clear.

While the Soviet government has a conscious political philosophy and program designed to bring women into equality, ours does not; and it is here that we reach the other aspect of the problem. For it is up to the progressive movement to supply that conscious leadership. Women must continue to be a major force in their own advance, but they can move ahead only in common action with labor. And that means the trade-union organization of millions of women as yet unreached; it means a serious attack on male chauvin-

ism, and its reflection among women; it means the conscious effort to find abilities among women where they are not immediately apparent. It means that a man who does half the household chores after he and his wife have come home from work will not feel that he is doing his wife a favor; for equality cannot be given as a favor but only recognized as a fact.

And it means, finally, struggle together with such organizations as the Congress of American Women for price and rent control, for the rights of the triply-oppressed Negro women, for nurseries, for protective legislation and equal pay—and the mobilization of millions of women for a progressive Third Party victory as a way of arresting the drive of the monopolists toward reaction and war.

This year, as we mark the hundredth anniversary of the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*, we mark also a hundred years of the organized fight for equality of American women that began with the Seneca Falls convention. Those two events are linked by more than a common date. More and more we come to see that it is only the socialism foreshadowed by Marx and Engels, abolishing as it does all forms of exploitation of one human being by another, that can make it possible for women to achieve real equality. That can give substance to the ringing declaration adopted at that woman's convention holding it to be self-evident "that all men and women are created equal."



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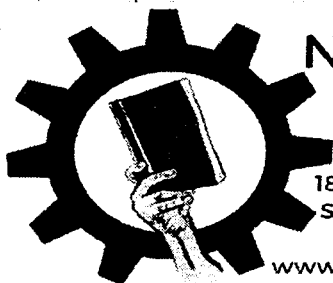
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