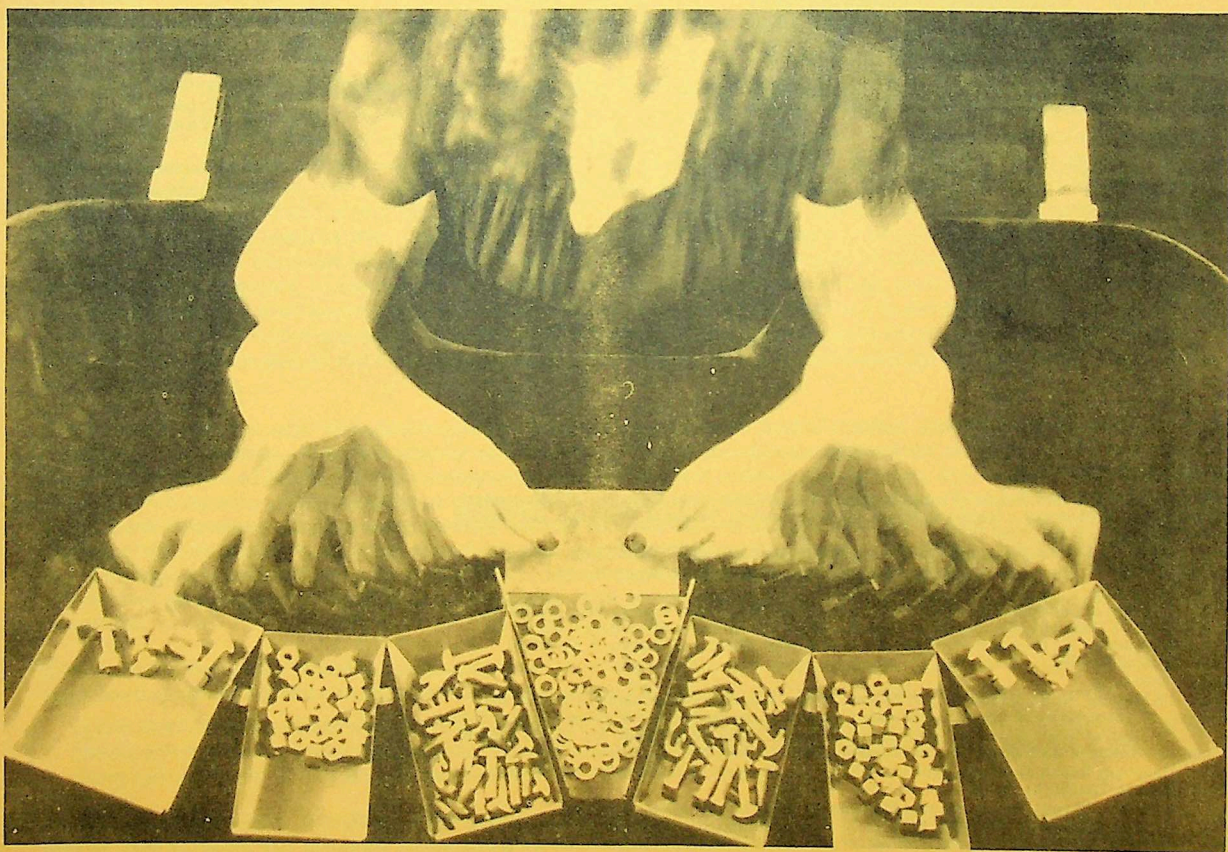


WOMEN WORKERS

157

the forgotten third of the working class



Ilene Winkler

an International Socialists publication

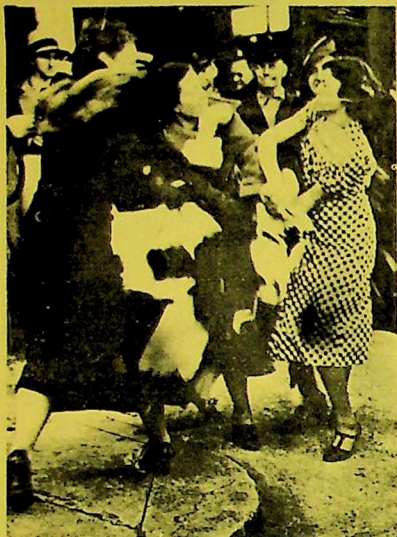
3205.77.157

Comune di Padova
Biblioteche

Cod. Bibl. AV 55

BID RMS 171252

INV 1059233



Women garment workers forcibly stop scab from entering struck dress factory, Memphis

published by: International Socialists
874 Broadway
New York, N.Y. 10003

New England Free Press
791 Tremont St.
Boston, Mass. 02118

20¢

SOURCES FOR CHARTS

- Chart A - US Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: Special Labor Force Report No. 76; Manpower Report of the President and A Report on Manpower Requirements, Resources, Utilization, and Training by the US Dept. of Labor, April 1967.
- Chart B - US Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census: Current Population Reports, P-60, No. 51.
- Chart C - US Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: Special Labor Force Report No. 94.
- Chart D - Same as C.
- Chart E - US Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census: Current Population Reports, P-50, No. 29 for March 1950; US Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: Special Labor Force Report No. 13 for March 1960 and No. 94 for March 1967; and Women's Bureau: 'Women as Workers, A Statistical Guide' for March 1940.
- Chart F - Same as C.
- Chart G - US Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, Welfare Administration, Children's Bureau; and US Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau: 'Child Care Arrangements of the Nation's Working Mothers', 1965.
- Chart H - US Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: Special Labor Force Report No. 76; US Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census: Current Population Reports, P-60, No. 51.
- Chart I - Manpower Report of the President and A Report on Manpower Requirements, Resources, Utilization, and Training by the US Dept. of Labor, April 1967.
- Chart J - US Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: Monthly Labor Review, June 1967.
- Chart K - National Education Association; US Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education; National Science Foundation; and US Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: Occupational Outlook Handbook.
- Chart L - US Dept. of Labor, Monthly Labor Review, August 1947; Manpower Report of the President and A Report on Manpower Requirements, Resources, Utilization, and Training by the US Dept. of Labor, April 1967.
- Chart M - US Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census: Current Population Reports, P-60, Nos. 23, 27, 30, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 47, and 51.
- Chart N - US Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census: Current Population Reports, P-50, No. 29 for March 1950, No. 62 for April 1954, and No. 87 for March 1958; US Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: Special Labor Force Report No. 26 for March 1962 and No. 94 for March 1967.
- Chart O - Same as C.

Charts A, B, H, I, J, K, L, and M are published in 'Underutilization of Women Workers', US Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, August 1967. Charts C, D, E, F, G, N, and O are published in 'Working Women and the Need for Child Care Services', US Dept. of Labor, Wage and Labor Standards Administration, Women's Bureau, June 1968.



INTRODUCTION

With the advent of private property, the subordination of the female to the male became an institutionalized part of human social organization. Property, private and communal, was accumulated primarily through the labors of the male while women were mainly occupied with child rearing. In the course of time, men secured exclusive sexual rights over women, thereby insuring the orderly inheritance of their property to their heirs. Control over women's bodies dictates control over all aspects of her life and women have remained appendages to men throughout class society.

This suppression of the female is intrinsic to Capitalist society and is enforced by the private family structure. Although today women make up one-third of the labor force, they remain defined as wives and mothers — not as workers. Within the labor force they occupy the most menial jobs and are the most insecure group within the working class as a whole. Women are excluded from most skilled and well-paying jobs on the basis of sex and in those areas which do employ women, they are easily fired for such offenses as pregnancy.

The demands of women for their liberation necessitate the dissolution of the private family as the unit of economic subsistence and its enslavement of women. Because these demands cannot be met without a total transformation of society, the potential of a women's movement is a revolutionary one and can only be answered by a democratic socialist revolution.

Just as it is the unity of equality and freedom which defines socialism, similarly it is this unity which will signal the emancipation of women. In addition, since women have never had control over their own lives and bodies, a democratic society is as an essential part of that emancipation as is the dissolution of the private family. Women cannot be given their freedom by an elite group, male or female, no matter how well intentioned, but must gain it through their own struggles. Only in a society that is democratically controlled from below, and not by a totalitarian elite, can women's liberation be assured. Without this control, women will remain a group to be manipulated within and outside of production, according to the needs of the ruling elite. For example, in China the question of women's liberation has now become subordinate to the needs of the state and specifically to the industrialization of China. Although the old family structure has been broken, a new one has been fashioned with rigid rules for marriage, sexual behavior, child rearing and reproduction, as well as an accompanying ideology which defines the role of women in the society. The once dynamic women's movement, which played an important role in freeing Chinese women from the old forms of family tyranny has become a subordinate arm of the State. Chinese women remain defined and controlled by the ruling elite, as free as their Western sisters.

The primary role of women throughout bourgeois class society has been that of mother, including the important role of socialization of children. This definition of women in relation to reproduction rather than production has been basic to her subordination and has assured its continuance. Women who are isolated and atomized in their homes are powerless and unable to develop a consciousness of themselves as a group, and thereby to move in an organized, coherent manner towards self-liberation. Only working women, because of the amassing of significant numbers of women at the workplace and the real power thus gained, have been able to achieve this consciousness. Historically, most reforms won in terms of legal and political rights for women have been won because of the struggles of working women. For this reason we look to women workers as the one group able both to lead and maintain the struggles for the liberation of the female sex.

*Engels, aware that a relationship to production, as well as the dissolution of the bourgeois private family, were essential steps towards liberating the female, wrote in *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*,*

It will then become evident that the first premise for the emancipation of women is the re-introduction of the entire female sex into public industry; and that this again demands that the quality possessed by the individual family of being the economic unit of society be abolished.

Finally, working women, conscious of their oppression both as women and as workers are capable of generalizing the nature of their struggles and demands to the struggles of the working class as a whole, thereby having the potential of setting the entire class in motion. As socialists, we support the demands of women for their liberation and their independent organization toward that end, both because of the legitimacy of the movement itself, and because of its potential to activate the entire working class, thus leading toward a democratic socialist transformation of society.

Reading any history of the American labor movement, including those written by Marxists, one might easily get the impression that the working class is almost exclusively male — occasionally aided in struggle by the heroic sacrifices of their wives and mothers. But the fact is that women have, since the development of modern industry, been a significant part of the working class. The conditions of women workers and their position in the working class cannot be understood without a comprehension of the fundamental nature of woman's role in society, for it is this which accounts for the neglect of woman's role as worker not only by Marxists, but by society as a whole.

Although women throughout history have borne more than their share of work, they have for thousands of years been the victims of a discriminatory division of labor. Before the development of contraceptive methods, woman's frequent pregnancies — and probably also her comparative physical weakness — left her unsuited for many tasks; in primitive societies, for example, men hunt, not women. As society grew more complex, the development of private property by the efforts of man's labor resulted in placing women in economic dependence on men; with the development of monogamy and patriarchal forms of inheritance, woman's subordination was complete. She was excluded from decision-making and political power and from economic independence and relegated to the home and family; within the family, presumably because of man's economic role, man was the dominant figure.*

This exploitative division of labor has continued throughout history, reinforced by the development of classes and an ideological superstructure of male chauvinism — the belief that women are passive, dependent beings whose proper 'feminine' role is the maintenance of the family and the ministrations of her husband's needs, and who are unsuited for the socially important tasks of production and decision-making. In most countries, women did not win the vote or legal rights until the late 19th or 20th centuries, if then. Still, man is defined by his relationship to production, woman, by her physiology, by her relationship to reproduction — man's sphere is work, woman's is the family, and within the family she is in a subordinate position.

Consequently, when women work in productive labor, as they have to varying extents throughout history, they are still considered wives and mothers first, workers only secondarily, whose first responsibility is to their husband and children. In spite of the (theoretical) independence they may gain, women workers are still considered subordinate to their husbands, and are still saddled with the full burden of their traditional role in the home; this has placed serious strains on the traditional family structure, but has not served to destroy it, and has left women workers in a position of being doubly exploited — at the work place and in the home. Furthermore, because of the primary identification of women with the home and family, women have almost always been used as a reserve labor pool: women (and children) were used from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution to displace more highly skilled, higher-paid male workers in industry; women are encouraged to enter production in times of labor shortage, sent back to the home in times of labor surplus, normally relegated to the most marginal, lowest-paying jobs, and as low-paid workers used to drive down the wages and living standards of the working class as a whole.

Socialists have long recognized (although often without acting on their understanding) that women will not be able to play an equal role in society until they are able to play an equal role in production and are liberated from the drudgery and atomization of the private family. In capitalist and Stalinist societies, women often do play a numerically important role in production (when they are needed), but this fact alone has not resulted in significant improvements in their condition. The barriers preventing women from playing an equal role in production must be traced not only to their exploitation at the workplace and to the production relationships of the society, but, at base, to those factors which prevent them from playing an equal role in society as a whole — the private family structure and the ideology of male chauvinism which accompanies it — structures which cause and reinforce the particular exploitation of women as workers.

Because women's oppression in modern societies is so closely tied to the structure of the family, it is worth glancing at the role the family plays in contemporary society. In peasant and rural societies, the private 'nuclear' family played an important productive economic role; this is no longer true in modern industrial societies, and at first glance the private family structure might appear to be an anachronism today. But in fact the nuclear family serves to reinforce reactionary social systems, a fact which is clearly illustrated by the Bolsheviks' willingness to abolish many of the underpinnings of the family — legal abortions, abolishment of illegitimacy, recognition of de facto marriage, simple divorce procedures, and so on — and by the subsequent strengthening of the Russian family under Stalin.**

* The existence of a few matriarchies does little to disprove this basic pattern, especially since virtually no complex societies are organized on matriarchal lines.

** For an excellent description of the family policies of the Stalinists, and its relationship to the reintroduction of classes, see Lewis Coser, 'Sex, Class, and Family in Russia', *Anvil*, Fall 1951.

The nuclear family plays many important functions which aid in the survival of capitalism and other reactionary social systems. The existence of individual family units eliminates the need for society as a whole to assume responsibility for many human needs — the rearing of children, the provision of food and clothing, care of the aged and the sick — and places the responsibility for adequate maintenance of the family members on the individual woman; regardless of the family income, the wife is expected to 'be a good manager' and 'stretch' the income to fit the family's needs, and welfare clients are taught to 'manage better' on their budgets. The small family unit also serves as a conservatizing influence on the society as a whole because of its static nature, its concept of individual rather than society-wide loyalty, and its transmission of hierarchical, authoritarian values — children are taught to 'behave', i.e. to obey their parents in the home and to fit into prescribed forms of conformity and acceptance of authority outside the home. Because of its need for security, the family can act as a drag on the militancy of workers; employers have been known to use housewives to pressure male strikers to return to work. Often, too, the private family can turn into a battleground as the social powerlessness of the husband and the frustration of the wife are pitted against each other instead of against the social system. The family also plays a very important role in the maintenance of classes: for the ruling class, the family preserves the class position of the future generation through inheritance of property and power, through ability to finance education, and so on; in many ways, the bourgeois woman's role is still the same as it was in the earliest patriarchal societies: to bear and rear the inheritors of her husband's property. The children of the exploited classes are similarly limited by their parents' lack of property, position, and limited aspirations. As Engels pointed out in The Origin of the Family, the existence of stable family units is vital to the continued existence of the bourgeoisie; family stability is unnecessary for the proletariat, but the existence of family units has continued because of other functions it serves.

Consequently, because of women's oppression within the nuclear family structure, women will not be able to play a truly equal role in society until the family as we know it is eliminated and until women and men are freed from the strictures of predetermined sexual and class roles. In viewing the situation of women workers in the United States, then, we must keep in mind that while as part of the working class their liberation depends on the abolition of capitalist forms of production, as women their needs reach beyond this and require a fundamental assault on the basic social relationships of capitalist society.

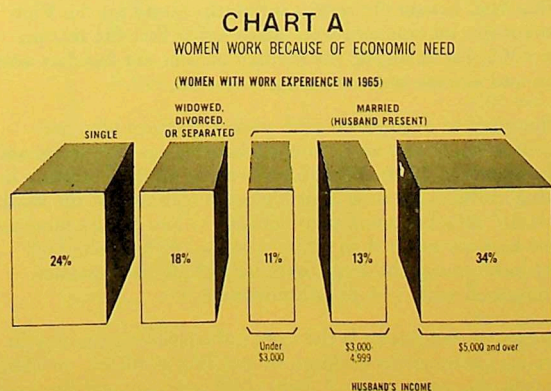
The obviousness of the contradictions between woman's role as worker and her role in the family, and the fact that women at the workplace have the potential for greater cohesiveness and social weight, imply a potential for women workers to become the key force in a movement for the liberation of women. In the past, women workers have often played a militant role in working class struggles, often sparking significant trade union organizing attempts and, of course, precipitating the February revolution in Russia. In the United States today, women comprise a large and essential element of the working class, and it is important for us to understand the particular nature of their position in the class in order to develop a perspective for the building of a working class women's movement. Unfortunately, the literature on the subject is scanty, and much basic research needs to be done. The following is an initial discussion of the position of women workers in the United States today.

THE CHANGING CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN WORKERS

In the last twenty years, millions of American women have entered the working class. At the end of World War II, women were systematically forced out of the high-paid industrial jobs they had worked in during the war and were 'encouraged' to return to the home: in Labor's Giant Step, Art Preis states that four million women lost their jobs in the eight months after V-J Day. But since 1950, women have been returning to work in steadily increasing numbers, so that

the percentage of women workers is now higher than it was at the peak production year of World War II (37% in 1966, as compared with 35% in 1945), and is now the highest of any time in the 20th century.* According to the US Department of Labor, this trend is expected to continue, and it is anticipated that women workers will comprise 40% of the work force by 1980; in New York City, this figure will probably be reached by 1970.

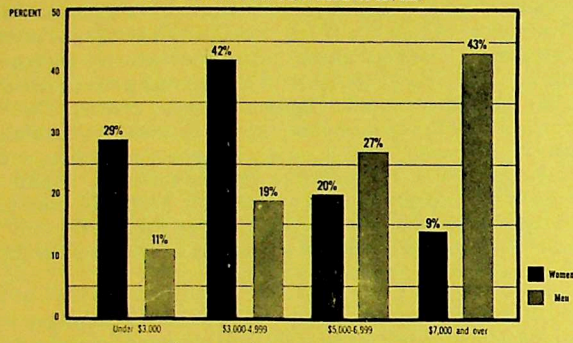
The reason for the tremendous acceleration in the number of women workers is quite different from the traditional reasons for women entering the labor force: women are not being used mainly to displace male workers or to compensate for a shortage of labor, but are working to provide additional income for their families. As pressure on working class living standards has worsened because of recessions in the 1950s and inflation in the 1960s, because of rising taxes and the squeeze caused by



* It is misleading to look at employment statistics much after 1965 or 1966 because of the distortions caused by the large draft for the Vietnam War. In 1968, for example, a larger number of women than men entered the work force, but this was caused by the war, rather than by a continuation of the general trends alone.

CHART B

3 OUT OF 10 WOMEN WHO WORK YEAR ROUND FULL TIME*
RECEIVE LESS THAN \$3,000 A YEAR
(YEAR-ROUND FULL-TIME WORKERS, BY INCOME AND SEX, 1965)



credit buying, millions of married women have gone to work. This fact has provided the necessary differential enabling the working class to avoid decreases in its standard of living and thus provided a buffer against the threat of rising working class militancy. This phenomenon has been grossly underrated by most analysts of recent trends in the labor movement, and must be considered as important in explaining the lack of militancy as the gains achieved in collective bargaining or the bureaucratization of the trade unions.

Until the last twenty years, married women comprised a minority of working women. But now, the vast majority - 62% in 1965 - of all women workers are married with husbands present and working; these women make up 34% of all married women in the United States, as compared with 14% in 1940. The increase in the total number of women workers is almost entirely due to married women, as can be seen from Table I below.

Although many middle class, college educated women work after marriage - the likelihood of a woman's working after marriage tends to rise according to her level of education - it is clear that economic necessity, not career considerations or individual choice, is responsible for the tremendous acceleration in the number of working married women. 75% of all married women workers come from families where their husbands are earning less than \$7,000 per

*Table 1: MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE, 1940-1966*¹
age 14 and over (in thousands)

| Year | FEMALE LABOR FORCE | | | | PERCENT DISTRIBUTION | | |
|------|--------------------|--------|---------|-------|----------------------|---------|-------|
| | Total | Single | Married | Other | Single | Married | Other |
| 1940 | 13,840 | 6,710 | 5,040 | 2,090 | 48.5 | 36.4 | 15.1 |
| 1947 | 16,323 | 6,181 | 7,545 | 2,597 | 37.9 | 46.2 | 15.9 |
| 1950 | 17,795 | 5,621 | 9,273 | 2,901 | 31.6 | 52.1 | 16.3 |
| 1955 | 20,154 | 5,087 | 11,839 | 3,227 | 25.2 | 58.7 | 16.0 |
| 1960 | 22,516 | 5,401 | 13,485 | 3,629 | 24.0 | 59.9 | 16.1 |
| 1966 | 26,820 | 6,106 | 16,676 | 4,038 | 22.7 | 62.2 | 15.1 |

year; the majority, less than \$5,000. The most recent government figures for a 'modest' budget for a family of four is well over \$7,000 per year; in New York City, it is close to \$10,000. Well before the recent inflation caused by the Vietnam War, millions of families were finding it impossible to live on a single income and were discovering that the income earned by a working wife could make the necessary difference; in 1965, for example, the median income for families with only the man working was \$6,592; in families where both the man and woman were working, it was \$8,597.²

Even more illustrative of the change in women's employment is the number of mothers with young children who are working. There has always been a substantial drop in the number of women who work at child-bearing age (approximately 25 to 45) but in recent years the trends have changed here as well. Between 1940 and 1965 there was a 600% increase in the number of women workers with children under 18, and working mothers are now a far higher percentage of the work force than they have been at any time in the 20th century in the U.S.³ Black women who because of low family incomes and the high unemployment rate of black men have always needed to work more than white women - 45% of all black women are working now - are even more likely to work when they have young children: over half of all black women with husbands and children under six were working in 1966, as compared with 37% of white women.⁴

Mothers with young children find severe problems in working, for the United States is the only industrialized country in the world which does not have a system of publicly supported day care centers for children of working mothers: in 1966, only 2% of all children of working mothers were in any kind of public day care center.⁵ Paid child care can cost the working mother as much as half of her income - in New York City, for example, a charge of \$30 per week is not uncommon in

CHART C

ALMOST 2 OUT OF 3 MOTHERS ARE WORKERS

LABOR FORCE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE POPULATION, BY MARITAL STATUS AND PRESENCE OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE, MARCH 1967
(Women 16 Years of Age and Over)

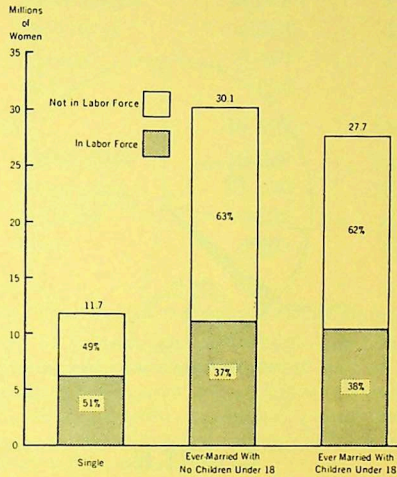


CHART D

MOTHERS WITHOUT HUSBAND PRESENT ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO WORK

LABOR FORCE STATUS OF MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE, BY PRESENCE OF HUSBAND, MARCH 1967
(Mothers 16 Years of Age and Over)

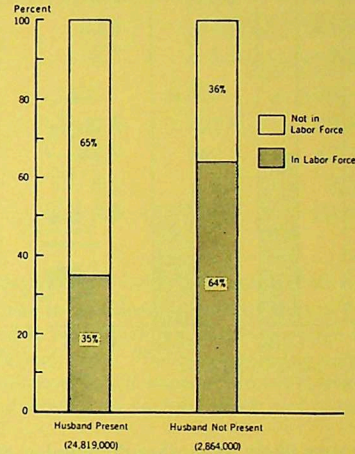
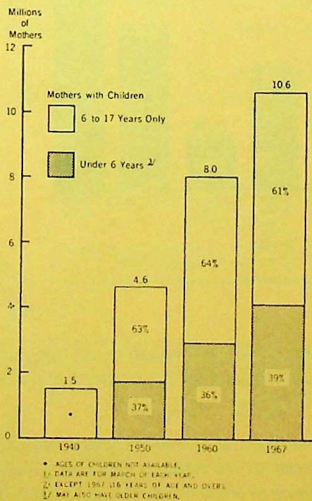


CHART E

MORE MOTHERS WORK TODAY THAN EVER BEFORE

MOTHERS IN THE LABOR FORCE, BY AGE OF CHILDREN, 1940-67^{1,2}

(Mothers 14 Years of Age and Over³)



ghetto neighborhoods – and many women can scarcely afford this care; over one-third of all working mothers with children under six are earning less than \$3,000 per year.⁶ Consequently, most working mothers are forced to arrange makeshift care for their young children, and this often necessitates their taking part-time jobs.

One result of the vast increase in the number of married women workers is that the median age of women workers has risen dramatically from 25 in 1900 to 41 in the mid-1960s; the largest group of women workers, in fact, is now over 45, for the first time in the U.S. This fact has contradictory implications for the possibilities of organizing women workers: on the one hand, it means that many women workers have far fewer illusions about their work, but on the other, it means that there is a larger concentration than ever before of women who have home responsibilities in addition to work. Such women, as Anne Draper pointed out, may well be easier to unionize because of their age and concern with pensions, seniority, and other defensive actions, but harder to organize politically.

The recent trends in employment of women seem to indicate that an end to the Vietnam War will not have a similar effect as the end of World War II in forcing women out of the work force; after the Korean War, in fact, there was no drop in the number of women workers. Furthermore, as will be seen below, the vast majority of women work in quite different jobs than men, and thus would not be especially prone to layoffs because of an end to the war; demobilization will probably have its largest impact on young men, especially blacks. And although women always have a higher unemployment rate than men, even a recession and higher general unemployment would not necessarily force women out of work in favor of men; in the 1950s, the number of women workers grew steadily during the recession of the mid-'50s. If present trends continue and real wages continue to decline, more and more women will re-enter the labor force after marriage and child-bearing in order to maintain their families' living

CHART F

A GREATER PROPORTION OF NONWHITE WORKING MOTHERS HAVE YOUNG CHILDREN

(MOTHERS (HUSBAND PRESENT) IN THE LABOR FORCE, BY AGE OF CHILDREN AND COLOR, MARCH 1967)
(Mothers 16 Years of Age and Over)

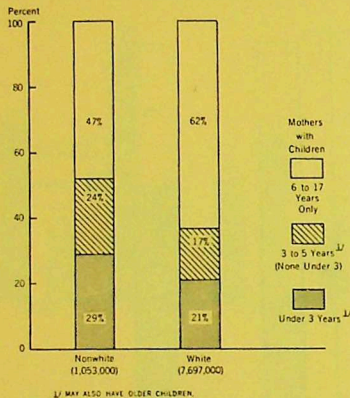
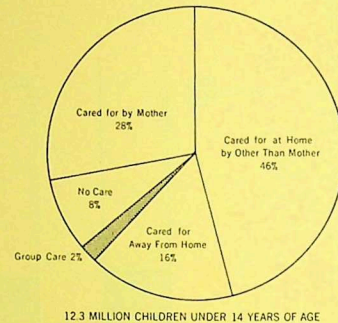


CHART G

TOO MANY CHILDREN OF WORKING MOTHERS LACK GOOD CHILD CARE SERVICES

(CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS OF WORKING MOTHERS, FEBRUARY 1965)



standards. It is very likely, then, that the number of women in the working class will continue to increase in the foreseeable future. This inevitably will provoke further strains on the traditional family structure and could well mean the possibility of a resurgence of militancy among women workers.

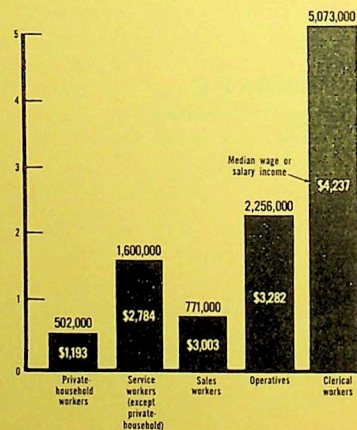
SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL JOBS

With a few exceptions, the escalation in the number of women workers has not been reflected in industrial jobs, but in the rapidly growing white collar and service categories. This is not unusual, really, for women have traditionally been segregated in employment and excluded from many industrial jobs; their presence in basic industry during World War II was an exception which has not been repeated thus far. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, women factory workers have generally been concentrated in the textile industries — far more basic industries in the 19th and early 20th centuries, of course, but still related to the traditional 'woman's work' of providing clothing for her family. In general, women work either in jobs which are related to their 'proper' domestic role or in jobs which are new and thus have not been sex-classified (the only notable exception to the segregation of women workers is the middle levels of civil service). Typing is probably the best example of the latter phenomenon: before the invention of the typewriter, clerical jobs were generally held by men, but typing from the first was classified as a 'female' job; it attracted women because it was easy and women were used to advertise the new product;⁷ since then, clerical work has become more and more a woman's job, so that now 98% of all typists and secretaries are women.⁸

CHART H

MILLIONS OF WOMEN ARE IN LOW-PAID OCCUPATIONS

(YEAR-ROUND FULL-TIME* WOMEN WORKERS, SELECTED OCCUPATIONS AND MEDIAN WAGE OR SALARY INCOME, 1965)



* 50 to 52 weeks a year, 35 hours or more a week.

In the United States today, women are found almost entirely in jobs which can be described as the work-place counterpart to their traditional family role: women secretaries work as assistants to men, while most other women work in jobs involving the socialization of children (teaching), the caring for human needs (nurses and social workers), or the provision of consumer goods and services (sewing machine operators and waitresses). For the most part, such jobs tend to be insecure, non-union, and in general pay far less than jobs held by men with similar education or skill levels.

The following table provides a broad look at the different patterns of employment of men and women:

Table II: EMPLOYMENT BY SEX AND TYPE OF WORK (ages 14 and over; in thousands)⁹

| Sex and work | NUMBER | | | % OF ALL WORKERS OF SEX | | |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|-------------------------|------|------|
| | 1965 | 1950 | 1940 | 1965 | 1950 | 1940 |
| Women | 24,648 | 17,176 | 11,920 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| White collar | 14,066 | 8,858 | 5,380 | 57.1 | 51.6 | 45.1 |
| Blue collar | 4,053 | 3,464 | 2,400 | 16.4 | 20.2 | 20.1 |
| Service | 5,854 | 3,939 | 3,450 | 23.8 | 22.9 | 28.9 |
| Farm | 674 | 916 | 690 | 2.7 | 5.3 | 5.8 |
| Men | 46,422 | 41,492 | 34,180 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| White collar | 18,022 | 13,522 | 9,710 | 38.8 | 32.6 | 28.4 |
| Blue collar | 21,730 | 19,108 | 14,390 | 46.8 | 46.1 | 42.1 |
| Service | 3,208 | 2,757 | 2,160 | 6.9 | 6.6 | 6.3 |
| Farm | 3,463 | 6,104 | 7,920 | 7.5 | 14.7 | 23.2 |

The increases in white collar employment of women have been concentrated in the lower-paid areas of clerical work and sales. Nearly all the new clerical workers since 1950 have been women; the tremendous growth of clerical jobs in recent years, combined with the rapid increase of women workers, have resulted in making clerical work the largest single occupational category for women; about 32% of all women workers are in clerical work. The overwhelming majority - 87% - of clerical workers are white, because of a combination of inferior education of black women and overt discrimination: one of the major uses of the high school diploma requirement for clerical work is to exclude black and Latin (but not white) high school drop-outs.

Although clerical work does require a high school diploma and usually some kind of acquired skills, it is one of the lowest paid of all occupations. In addition, although many women find the work boring and far below their ability, the working conditions are objectively better than those in many other occupations, and clerical work is seen by most working class women as an improvement in status: the job conditions are often proletarianized but the speedup is less intense, the job environment cleaner, the benefits better (the introduction of automation, while vastly increasing productivity, also results in making clerical work significantly easier and less physically tiring - as with the electric typewriter, for example). This factor has traditionally been blamed for the difficulty in unionizing clerical employees; another obstacle is the comparatively high number of young single women in these jobs who are working - they think - only until they are married, and consequently have little consciousness of themselves as workers, tend to have a very high turnover rate, and little interest in job protection. However, it is not clear that unionization is not possible for clerical employees; with the exception of government employees, not much serious effort has gone into organizing clerical employees in recent years. Telephone operators, who are also often young, single, etc., have been unionized successfully.

Along with clerical work, there has also been a great increase in the number of women employed in sales work; since 1950, there has been a 30% increase in the number of women employed in this field, and they now constitute 42% of all sales

workers, 58% of all retail sales workers. Women in sales work tend to be concentrated in salaried jobs, often at minimum wage or below, while the high-commission sales jobs, such as in appliances or autos, are reserved for men; women also make up the vast bulk of cashiers - again, at minimum wage or below with no commissions. Furthermore, over 50% of all women in sales are part-time or temporary workers, a percentage exceeded only by household workers.

Other types of white collar work have not seen a corresponding increase in the proportion of women workers. In professional jobs, there has actually been a decrease in the proportion of women in recent years: women were 40% of all professional workers in 1950, 37% in 1966. Professional and college-educated women are concentrated in a very small number of jobs, being excluded from the majority of executive and managerial positions and often channeled into clerical jobs in spite of their education level. Nearly half - 46% - of all women professionals are

CHART I

WOMEN'S SHARE IN PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL WORK
HAS DECLINED

(WOMEN AS PERCENT OF TOTAL EMPLOYED, ALL OCCUPATIONS AND
PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL WORK, 1940-66)

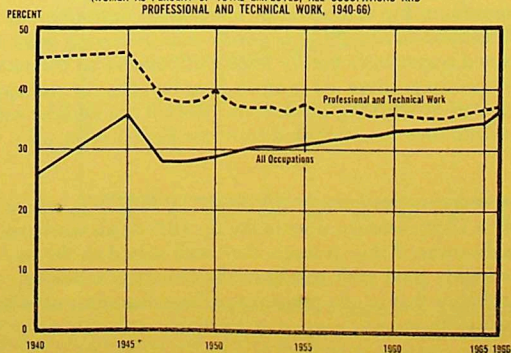


CHART K

WOMEN ARE INADEQUATELY REPRESENTED IN LEADING PROFESSIONS

(WOMEN AS PERCENT OF TOTAL EMPLOYED, SELECTED PROFESSIONS)



* Includes other professional staff.

teachers, making up two-thirds of all teachers below the college level, although many more men are now entering this field and there is now a majority of men teaching in secondary schools. In college teaching, the situation is far different, where women comprise only 22% of college faculty and administration, a fact caused both by discrimination in hiring and by discrimination in admission to graduate schools. In most professions, the presence of a woman is a rarity: women are only 8% of all scientists, 7% of all physicians, 3% of lawyers, 1% of engineers.¹⁰ Although almost as many women as men graduate from high school, women constitute only 38% of the present college enrollment; throughout their education, women are channeled into courses which leave them 'unprepared' for most professional jobs. This discrimination in education and employment has provided much of the impetus for the beginnings of the present women's liberation movement; NOW, the National Organization of Women, is the oldest and largest of the current group of women's organizations – it is a primarily middle class, white, liberal group which fights discrimination against women on a variety of issues, but has little orientation towards the problems of working class or poor women.

The only job category besides clerical work in which women are a majority is service work, which is almost entirely unskilled, very low paying, non-unionized work. Nearly half of these women are found in food trades: 72% of all waiters/waitresses, cooks, and bartenders are women.¹¹ Overall, women constitute 55% of all service workers, 98% of all private household workers. This is a sizeable increase in the proportion of women service workers; in 1940 the proportion was only 40%,¹² reflecting an increase in the number of unskilled women entering the work force, as well as a decline in the number of factory jobs available to women. Black women are found in service jobs to a greater extent than any other work; they constitute 45% of all private household workers (this job category employs 10% of all women workers), and 20% of all other service jobs, a fact which does much to explain their low incomes. Most service jobs are not covered by Federal minimum wage law; New York is one of very few states to include these workers under a separate state minimum wage law.

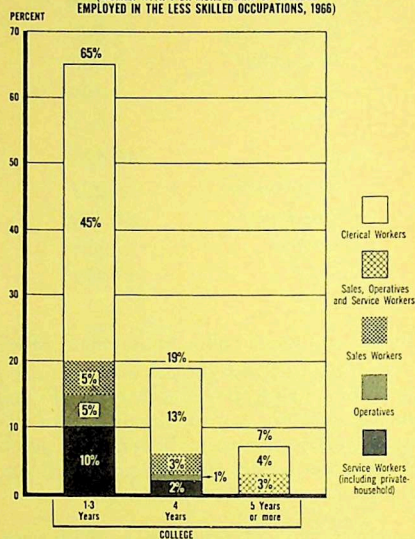
A rather small proportion of women work in factories – only 20% of total factory employment. Two-thirds of women factory workers are found in non-durable manufacturing, primarily in jobs which have long-term layoffs, such as the apparel industry, and which are declining industries, such as textiles and tobacco (these two industries have had a 25% reduction in their work force in recent years; overall, non-durable goods manufacturing is less stable, lower-wage employment than durable goods (steel, for example). One-fourth of the women employed in non-durable goods manufacturing work in the apparel industry - over one million women - where job conditions and wages have hardly improved relative to the rest of the economy since the unions were first organized in the early 20th century; there are months-long layoffs, intense speed-up caused by the retention of the piece-work system, and generally very poor working conditions. Within the apparel industry, women are still concentrated almost entirely in low-paying jobs, while they are excluded from the higher-wage jobs such as cutters, which still are reserved for (white) men.

The only notable recent growth in the employment of women factory workers has been in the electrical industry, where there has been an 82% increase in the number of women employed since 1950; women now make up 48% of all workers in the industry.¹³ This is often attributed to the fact that employers discovered that women were well suited to the intricate, delicate work involved and thus hired women to displace more highly paid male workers; the electrical industry, in fact, has the lowest average wage of any durable goods industry, probably due to the presence of large numbers of women as much as the fact that three separate unions represent electrical workers.

CHART J

MANY WOMEN WORKERS ARE UNDERUTILIZED IN RELATION TO THEIR EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

(WOMEN WITH 1 OR MORE YEARS OF COLLEGE EMPLOYED IN THE LESS SKILLED OCCUPATIONS, 1966)



The relative decline in overall factory employment has particularly affected women, because of their exclusion from many industrial jobs. Consequently, a much lower proportion of young women are entering factory work than any other occupation: only 9% of all single women are factory workers, compared with 17% of married women.¹⁴

Partly as a consequence of the channeling of women into low-paying jobs, partly as a result of unequal pay for the same work, the median income of women is far less than that of men workers. In 1955, the median income of full-time women workers was 64% of men; by 1965, their median income had dropped in relation to men, being slightly under 60%. Black women tend to fare slightly better in relation to black men, but make only two-thirds as much as white women. Table III below indicates the discrepancies.

Furthermore, education has little effect on the relative earnings between men and women, as Table IV indicates. (This table includes part-time workers, while the previous table did not, thus explaining the difference in figures.)

Judging from other statistics, if part-time workers were not included the figures for women would be about \$1,000 higher, but even allowing for this, it is clear that college educated women average far less than men with high school educations alone.

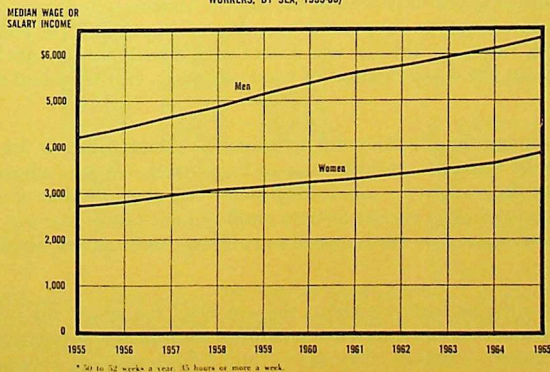
Table III: MEDIAN INCOME OF YEAR ROUND FULL TIME WORKERS BY SEX AND COLOR, 1964*15

| | Men | Women | Women as % of Men |
|----------|---------|---------|-------------------|
| White | \$6,497 | \$3,859 | 59.4 |
| Nonwhite | 4,285 | 2,674 | 62.4 |

This discrepancy in income has its worst effects on families headed by women, about 10% of all families. Women who are heads of families bear the greatest burden of the dual role of mother and wage-earner, and families headed by women are the poorest in the population. 30% of the families headed by white women are below the 'official poverty line', 58% of families headed by black women (22% of all families headed by women), as compared with 8% of families headed by white men and 29% of families headed by black men.¹⁷ The median income for families headed by women in 1965 was \$3,532, for men, \$6,592.¹⁸

CHART M

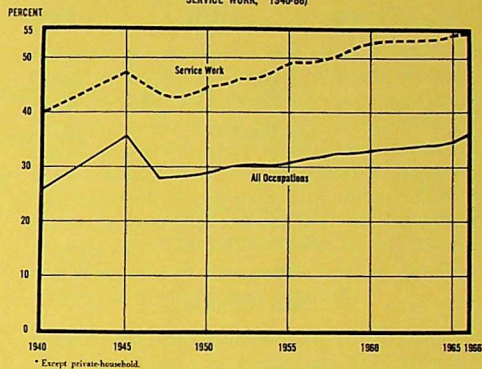
CHART C.—THE EARNINGS GAP BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN REMAINS WIDE
(WAGE OR SALARY INCOME OF YEAR-ROUND FULL-TIME* WORKERS, BY SEX, 1955-65)



* 50 to 52 weeks a year, 35 hours or more a week.

CHART L

CHART G.—WOMEN ARE INCREASING AMONG THOSE IN LESS SKILLED JOBS
(WOMEN AS PERCENT OF TOTAL EMPLOYED, ALL OCCUPATIONS AND SERVICE WORK,* 1940-66)



* Except private-household.

* It will be noted from Table III that white women have a lower median income than black men. This figure has been bandied about by the women's liberation movement, to no good end; the question is hardly which group is most oppressed, but how each group can fight against the ruling class to end its own oppression, and that of others as well.

Table IV: MEDIAN INCOME ACCORDING TO YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED, 1965¹⁶
(for people over 25, with income – includes part-time workers)

| | | 8 years | H.S. grad | College grad | Post-college |
|--------|---------|---------|-----------|--------------|--------------|
| Male | \$5,598 | \$4,210 | \$6,458 | \$8,748 | \$9,613 |
| Female | 1,828 | 1,388 | 2,544 | 4,293 | 5,670 |

Table V: HOURLY EARNINGS OF SELECTED WORKERS, 1966*¹⁹

| Industry | Average hourly earnings | % women employed |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Mining | \$3.05 | 5% |
| Construction | 3.87 | n.a. – very low |
| Manufacturing | 2.71 | 28 |
| Durables | 2.89 | 20 |
| Non-durables | 2.45 | 39 |
| Wholesale Trade | 2.73 | 23 |
| Retail trade | 1.91 | 44 |
| Finance, Insurance, Real Estate | 2.48 | 50 |

Although it is clear, then, that women workers, because of their low wages, serve as a drag on the entire working class, the issue of equal pay or equal work for women has rarely if ever been an issue which the working class as a whole has fought for; just as white workers do not recognize that it's in their interests for blacks to be 'equal' members of the working class because of racism, so male chauvinism – the belief that women's proper role is in the home and that women are 'unequal' to men by nature – has often served to split the working class: women workers have often had to fight their male contemporaries as well as the bosses.

THE REASONS FOR EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN WORKERS

As stated above, the exploitation of women as workers stems fundamentally from the subordinate role they play in society as a whole and from the assumptions about women's role, abilities, etc., which follow from their oppression in the home. The discrimination against women workers manifests itself in a number of ways. In general, the most blatant forms of discrimination are the refusal to hire women for certain jobs because they are women, or the payment of unequal wages for the same work.

Both of these are supposedly illegal. In 1963, an Equal Pay Law was passed by Congress, thus eliminating the blatant advertising of unequal wages still prevalent in Britain. Through an accident, women were covered under the equal employment section of the 1964 Civil Rights Law, when the word 'sex' was included in the bill by Southern Senators in a last-ditch effort the defeat the bill through ridicule; although few Senators supported it, and most opposed it (including the liberals), 'sex' was left in the law. The enforcement agency set up by the law was soon flooded with complaints by women, but the only noticeable effect of the law so far has been the desegregation of want ads and a few sex-blind rulings which have done little to change reality.

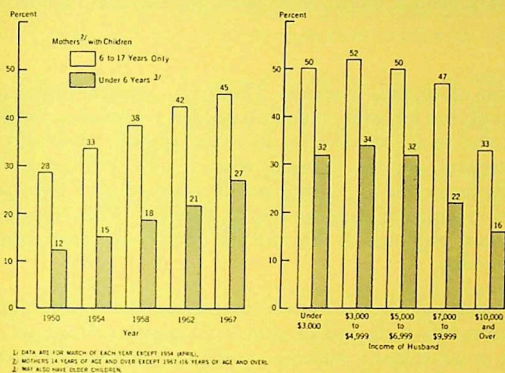
Such laws, even if they were enforced, would obviously not change the fundamental assumptions which result in discrimination against women in a variety of ways. Male chauvinist attitudes exclude women from nearly all jobs where they would be in competition with men and, especially, where they might be supervising men. The attitude that women are inferior to men, and that men are properly heads of their households, carries over to employment: only one out of every twelve supervisors is a woman, and women executives and bosses are stereotyped as ruthless, unfeminine bitches, who get ahead mainly through manipulation of men.

A college educated woman, for example, generally cannot get a job in business unless she can type, for which she is paid far less than her male contemporary who cannot type and is trained for an executive position. In industry, women are excluded from highly paid skilled jobs through many mechanisms: in school, they are excluded from training programs which would prepare them for such jobs and are instead channeled into clerical and service training. On the job, artificial

*This table includes all workers employed in the industry, including office workers.

CHART N

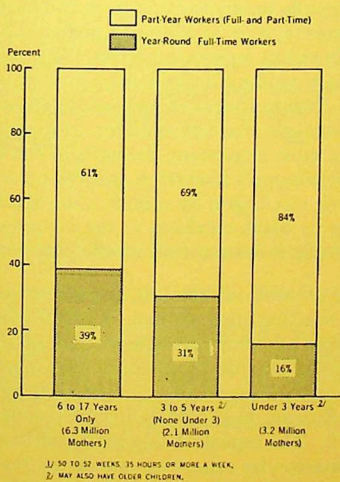
MOTHERS WITH SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN ARE MORE LIKELY TO WORK THAN MOTHERS WITH YOUNGER CHILDREN
 THIS HAS BEEN TRUE FOR MANY YEARS
 THIS IS TRUE AT ALL INCOME LEVELS
 (LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF MOTHERS WITH HUSBAND PRESENT, BY AGE OF CHILDREN, 1950-67)¹
 (LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF MOTHERS WITH HUSBAND PRESENT, BY INCOME OF HUSBAND IN 1966 AND AGE OF CHILDREN, MARCH 1967)²



1. DATA ARE FOR MARCH OF EACH YEAR EXCEPT 1954 (APRIL).
 2. MOTHERS 14 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER EXCEPT 1967 (16 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER).
 3. MAY ALSO HAVE OLDER CHILDREN.

CHART O

ONLY 1 OUT OF 6 MOTHERS (HUSBAND PRESENT) WITH VERY YOUNG CHILDREN WORKS YEAR ROUND FULL TIME^{1/}
 (WORK EXPERIENCE IN 1966 OF MOTHERS WITH HUSBAND PRESENT, BY AGE OF CHILDREN, MARCH 1967)
 (Mothers 16 Years of Age and Over)



1/ 50 TO 52 WEEKS, 35 HOURS OR MORE A WEEK.
 2/ MAY ALSO HAVE OLDER CHILDREN.

barriers are set up by utilizing protective legislation: in many states, women are prevented/protected from taking jobs which require overtime or the lifting of heavy objects, and as a result, many jobs are described as having these characteristics when in fact they do not.

More fundamental, however, is the fact that standards for promotion and work in general are based on the life patterns of men, not women. Consequently, the woman who is married and has children - or the single girl who is expected to marry - is discriminated against in a number of ways because she has children and is assigned the sole responsibility of caring for them. Children are considered the responsibility of the individual woman, not of society as a whole, and the raising of children is not compatible with the profit-making of the individual capitalist.

Because women leave work, often for many years, when they have young children, they accumulate less seniority than men and are thus more subject to layoffs and less eligible for promotions in jobs where they are working alongside men. Young

women are almost never accepted into business training programs or professional schools for this reason. On the job, women accumulate far less seniority than men: in 1963, the median number of years seniority for women was 3, for men, 5.7; for workers over 45, the comparable figures were 7 and 13 years.²⁰ And, of course, many industries still retain the 'illegal' practise of keeping separate seniority lists for women. Discrimination on the basis of seniority might seem logical, except for the fact that men who leave their jobs because they are drafted into the Army are legally guaranteed their jobs back when they return, plus any salary increases and promotions that they would have received in the interim.

A woman with children who attempts to find a job discovers a number of barriers: employers assume that a woman will have a greater rate of absenteeism because of her children, and thus often will hire men instead of women for this reason. In addition, a woman who has been prepared for life as a housewife is often unskilled by an employer's definition, and her experience maintaining a family is not considered 'work experience' when she looks for a job; hence, older married women are often relegated to unskilled jobs or jobs far below those held by men with similar educational levels, and thus provide a ready market for exploitation.

In addition, many women with young children tend to work only part-time because of home responsibilities and lack of child-care facilities: 32% of all women workers have part-time jobs, as compared with 13% of men.²¹ The number of women seeking part-time work has decreased in the 1960s in comparison with the 1950s, presumably because of the increasing pressure on working class living standards.

Women with part-time and temporary jobs are not covered by any social legislation - they almost never have paid sick leave or vacations, are usually not covered by unemployment insurance, often not by minimum wage. Again, part-time work does not qualify as 'work experience' by the standards of most personnel departments.

There has been a rapid growth in the number of temporary clerical job agencies, which orient their advertising almost exclusively to housewives ('earn extra money for the things you want'); women working in these jobs receive far less pay than workers permanently employed by the same company, although their jobs may last for months at a time: in addition to receiving no benefits at all, their wages are reduced by as much as a dollar an hour by the commission taken by the temporary agency.

Many women working part time, however, are not doing so by choice. The kinds of jobs available to unskilled women workers are even more likely to be part time or unsteady than are jobs open to unskilled men; private household workers, for example - 98% women - rarely work a full eight-hour day; much the same is true for other service workers such as waitresses, cooks, etc.

Women, consequently, have a much higher unemployment rate than men. While unemployment statistics are notoriously inaccurate and generally not worth quoting, all the figures indicate that the unemployment rate for women is approximately twice as high as for men: for teenage women, especially blacks, figures have been published as high as 50%.

SUGGESTIONS FOR A PERSPECTIVE

The problem of consciousness is especially difficult in the case of women workers. The long historical definition of women as subordinate to men has resulted, generally, in an acceptance by women as well as men of the socially defined 'place' of women. Women workers today, along with men, tend to see themselves as 'extra' workers, providing additional income for their families, rather than as independent wage earners; as a result, many women view their job as far less important in their definition of themselves than their role in the home. E. P. Thompson alludes to this in The Making of the English Working Class when he describes the tensions caused in working class families in the early 19th century when women became wage earners; he says that women, as much as men, objected to this and felt they were being torn from their rightful place in the home. Much the same thing is still true today.

Because women have, for so long, accepted the primary definition of themselves as housewives, their values, naturally, have been shaped by their desire to perform their roles as housewife well, and by their self-image as consumer, wife, and mother. Furthermore, women have been molded by society to an entirely different mode of behavior than men: aggressiveness in young girls is discouraged, and little girls are taught to be docile, neat, and 'well-behaved'. In times of struggle, women have often fought as militantly as men, but often trade union organizers have encountered great problems with women's lack of consciousness of themselves as workers and with timidity, often caused and reinforced by the attitudes of the husbands. Even attendance at evening meetings can be a problem if the husband refuses to take care of the children.

Consequently, one of the major thrusts of any attempts to form a working class women's movement in this period will have to be the development of the consciousness of the women involved, especially those women in jobs which have no tradition of organized struggle.

The potential for the development of a movement of working class women depends on many factors; in the past, working women's struggles have gained strength from the impetus of various movements, such as women's suffrage and the fight for legal rights, the movement for the abolition of slavery, and early trade union organizing drives. The resurgence of interest in women's liberation at this time can probably be attributed not only to the discrimination against women within the radical movement, but to the example of the black power struggle. Within the working class, black women, stirred by the civil rights movement, have played a strong militant role in the struggles for unionization of hospital employees, most recently in Charleston, South Carolina. In general, probably the most important elements in the development of a working class women's movement will be a cross-class movement for women's liberation and the resurgence of militancy among the working class as a whole. Just as the civil rights movement was begun by middle class blacks in struggle against legal cross-class forms of discrimination and later was taken up by black workers, so the movement for women's liberation among working class women could well be sparked by a strong movement of middle class women.

Socialist women, and men, should thus work to build the women's movement not only on the job, but also among radicals and middle class women, and try to turn these groups in the direction of working class women. Radical women's organizations fighting on issues such as abortion law repeal, sexual freedom, legal equality for women, and equal education, as well as lending support and assistance to struggles of working women as they develop, could have a great effect on the struggles of working class women. A recent example illustrated many of the dangers of a middle class movement without a working class orientation: NOW, supported by the UAW Women's Bureau, has recently begun a campaign to repeal the protective legislation limiting the number of hours women can work. The repeal of this law benefits professional women, but will leave women workers in general further open to exploitation by removing one of the few laws which protects them. A better demand, which was raised by Edie Fox in Detroit, would have been the extension of the protective legislation to men as well - this would have eliminated the discriminatory application of the law against women, but also raised a demand which challenged the ability of capitalism to exploit the whole working class.

In job situations, there are two priorities for the development of a movement of working class women: the development of women's caucuses within unions, and the unionization of the millions of unorganized women, especially the vast number of clerical workers, so that women workers in these jobs learn to struggle collectively, begin to identify with the interests of the working class, and begin to assert their particular needs within the class struggle. Radical women in the shops can also play a tremendously beneficial role in attempting to link up and politicize struggles of the women's movement with struggles of the class as a whole, working towards the development of a movement of women workers which will fight for the interests of women, joining in the struggle of the entire class.

There are a number of specific issues which offer potential for reaching and politicizing women workers, such as the following:

1. Job-related issues: there are a number of job-related issues which can be raised or supported by socialists which could serve to organize women in collective struggle and serve as agitational demands to increase the consciousness of women workers. Among them are the following: day care centers at the workplace controlled by the workers (not the current idea advanced by the Nixon administration of providing day care centers to force mothers off welfare), paid maternity leave with no loss of seniority, equal pay for equal work, equal work itself - an end to discrimination against women in hiring and promotions - and struggles for greater representation of women in union positions such as shop steward.
2. Education: the tracking, segregation, and channeling of women at all levels of education socializes them into playing a sex-determined role and discourages and prevents them from entering many occupations. In New York City, for example, all vocational and most other high schools are segregated by sex, thus drastically limiting the range of courses open to women. A recent suit against the Board of Education has opened Stuyvesant High School to the first girl; the issue of segregating and channeling of girls at the secondary school level may provide a way for teachers and others to reach working class girls. On the college level, as well as high school, the demand for preferential admissions for women as well as blacks can be made part of a universal higher education program, and provide a way to organize college women around their own struggle as well as the struggle of others.
3. Abortions and birth control: the abortion law repeal movement to date has been middle class, often anti-working class in tone, but the abortion law, as everyone recognizes abstractly, is in fact a law which discriminates against poor and working class women who do not have the knowledge and money to finance a safe abortion. Abortion and birth control are essential to women if they are to control their own bodies, which is fundamentally the key to their ability to control their lives. The demand should be raised for free, easily obtainable safe abortions and birth control devices (the latter for men as well), regardless of age or marital status.

As was said earlier, the struggle for women's liberation must be fought on two fronts: against the capitalist nature of production, and against male chauvinism and the private family structure, which objectifies women as sexual beings, and limits their lives by placing the entire burden of bearing and raising children upon them. As Juliet Mitchell points out in 'Women: the Longest Revolution', success, were it possible, on any one issue would not in itself bring about the liberation of women. The struggle for equality of women must be fought on all levels, not just at the workplace.

Thus as socialists we should work actively in struggles against the total oppression of women, as well as participating in and supporting the specific struggles of women on the job. Because the struggle is against male chauvinism as well as against capitalism, the women's movement will necessarily have to be organized separately; our role in that movement should be to link up the struggles of women with those of the whole working class, and to aid in the development of a class-conscious revolutionary movement of working class women. Ultimately, the liberation of women will only come about through a socialist revolution in which women play an active role in ensuring that their own particular needs, as well as those of the entire working class, are met.

FOOTNOTES

1. The US Book of Facts, Statistics and Information (Statistical Abstract), paper back edition for 1968, p. 229.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 336
3. Working Mothers and the Need for Child Care Services, US Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1967, p. 1.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
5. Progress of Women, US Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1965, p. 18.
6. Fact Sheet on the Relative Position of Women and Men Workers in the Economy, US Dept of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1965, p. 3.
7. See Carolyn Bird, 'Born Female'. This book has a great deal of information on the position of middle classwomen.
8. 1965 Handbook on Women Workers, US Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1966, p. 87. This is the single best source for information on women workers, unfortunately now out of print and available only in libraries. Anything which is not footnoted and should have been can be found in this book.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Underutilization of Women Workers, US Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1967, p. 10. Useful charts and graphs.
1. Handbook, p. 87.
2. Underutilization, p. 13.
3. Handbook, p. 92.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
5. Fact Sheet.
6. Handbook, p. 117.
7. Statistical Abstract, p. 339.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 336.
9. compiled from Statistical Abstract, pp. 228 and 230.
10. Handbook, p. 67
1. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

Chart sources listed on
inside front cover.

IS Program in Brief

We stand for socialism: collective ownership and democratic control of the economy through workers' organizations, established by a revolution from below and aimed toward building a classless society. We stand for an internationalist policy, completely opposed to all forms of class exploitation and in solidarity with the struggles of all oppressed peoples.

We believe in socialism from below, not dispensation from above. Our orientation has nothing in common with the various attempts to permeate or reform the ruling classes of the world, or with the idea that socialism will be brought to the masses by an elite. Socialism can only be won and built by the working class and all other oppressed people, in revolutionary struggle.

We oppose capitalism as a system of class exploitation and as a source of racial and imperialist oppression. In the interests of private profit and corporate power, it presents itself in the United States as a liberal/conservative "welfare state," based on a permanent war economy. It promotes unemployment, poverty, and racism; it violently suppresses militant opposition. As an international system of imperialism, U.S. capitalism struggles to contain and absorb the colonial revolution, and continually deepens the underdevelopment of satellite economies.

I.S. is an activist organization which seeks to build a mass revolutionary movement in the United States, to train revolutionary socialists, and to develop socialist theory to advance that movement. We see ourselves, not as the revolutionary leadership, but as part of the process of developing it; we work toward the building of an American revolutionary socialist party—a party, based on the working class, which can provide the leadership necessary for the revolutionary seizure of state power by the working class.

We regard the working class, female and male, black and white, blue collar and white collar, as potentially the leading revolutionary force in society. We see great promise in the new militancy of the labor movement, including the emergence of black workers' organizations.

We support uncompromising struggles by rank and file forces against racism and bureaucratism in the labor movement, and against the subordination of the workers' interests to the demands of the state. In places of work, we fight to build workers' political consciousness, and to link their movement with the struggles of oppressed peoples in this society and internationally. We regard the development of a new radical party based on rank and file workers' organizations as a giant step in the political independence of the working class and in the coordination of all insurgent forces.

Workers, organized as a class, can stop bourgeois society dead in its tracks. More importantly, they can organize society on a new basis, that of revolu-

tionary socialism. In the course of doing so, they will create new instruments of democratic power, just as the workers of Paris created the Commune in 1871, the workers of Russia the Soviets in 1905 and 1917, and the workers of Hungary the Workers' Councils in 1956. Our conception of socialism is bound up with such organizations, which embody workers' control of industry and the state.

We stand together with the struggles of black people and other oppressed minorities for liberation. We support armed self-defense, independent self-organization of the ghetto, and the right of self-determination for the black community. We look to a future coalition of black and white workers; however, blacks cannot allow their struggle today to be subordinated to the present level of consciousness of white workers.

We work to build the movement for women's liberation, both in society at large and within the radical movement. We support the formation of independent women's organizations, in which women will work out the organizational and programmatic forms of their struggles. Within these organizations, we push for an orientation towards organizing working class women.

Women's oppression is bound up with the exploitation of labor in all class societies; thus the struggle for women's liberation can only be won as part of a broader struggle for a socialist society. We do not counterpose women's participation in their own liberation movement to their participation in revolutionary socialist organizations. But women's liberation will not result automatically from socialist revolution; women must build their struggle now, and continue it after a revolution, if they are to be free under socialism. Their struggle, like that of other oppressed peoples, will itself be one of the forces which will begin to shake the capitalist order.

The struggles of students and young people against imperialist wars, and against education and training designed to make them the agents or passive victims of oppression, likewise are shaking society. We participate in these struggles not only for their own sake, but also because they will help bring other sections of the population, including young workers, into motion.

We are part of the international movement against imperialist exploitation and aggression. We support popular revolution against American domination, and fight for the withdrawal of American troops from all foreign lands. In Vietnam, we favor the victory of the NLF over the imperialists—but we believe that the new regime will establish bureaucratic class rule, not a socialist society.

We believe that no existing regime can be called socialist. On a world scale, the "socialist" countries constitute a system of regimes and movements in different stages of development, but with a common ideology and social origin. In place of capitalism,

this system has achieved, and now aims at, not the abolition of class society, but a new type of class system.

In some areas (e.g. France and Indonesia), the official Communist parties—both "Soviet" and "Chinese"—have held back mass energies, in a search for power through maneuvers at the top. Elsewhere, these movements have been able to organize immense popular energies in revolutionary opposition to the capitalist state; but the leadership of these movements does not organize the working class to seize power for itself, nor does it intend to establish a regime in which the masses themselves rule.

The revolutionary struggle expels capitalist imperialism and expropriates the native capitalist class, but the leadership aims at a social system in which that leadership constitutes a ruling class through its control of the state which owns the means of production, and through the repression of independent workers' organizations. Thus, where successful, these movements have placed in power, not the working class, but a self-perpetuating bureaucratic class.

Taking power in backward countries, these regimes have based their attempts to industrialize (successful or unsuccessful) on the crushing exploitation of workers and peasants. In all such cases, popular discontent reappears, but the struggle of the masses cannot be carried forward through the ruling party, but only in revolutionary opposition to it. This system is no less class-ridden, and in its fully developed form (as in the USSR) no less imperialist than capitalism.

In these countries we support and identify with the struggles—sometimes organized, more often not—of rank and file forces for their socialist birthright. We believe that socialism cannot be achieved in these countries without the overthrow of the ruling groups.

In all countries we advocate revolutionary struggles as sparks for the world revolution—it alone offers the solution to the problems of poverty and underdevelopment, which cannot be overcome in the framework of a single country. But this internationalist perspective itself depends on the mass struggles for liberation in individual countries, whether against capitalist or bureaucratic regimes. In the bureaucratic states as under capitalism, socialism means only a revolution in which the working class itself overthrows its exploiters and directly rules the state.

Basing its work on the ongoing worldwide struggles against oppression and the ideas of revolutionary Marxism, I.S. seeks to build a socialist movement which is both revolutionary and democratic, working class and internationalist: an international struggle in which the world's masses can fight for power and win a new world of peace, abundance, and freedom that will be the foundationstone of classless communist society.

