

A Woman's Place

By Selma James, 1953

Today, more than ever before, magazines and newspapers are full of articles about women. Some just discuss what the society women are doing and who of the upper class is getting married. Others discuss the fact that there is a high divorce rate and try to give some answer to all this. Or they discuss millions of women going into industry or the restlessness of housewives. These articles don't show what this restlessness means and can only try to make women feel that they are better off than they have ever been. They plead with women to be happy.

None of these articles, none, points out that if women are in any way better off than ever before, that it is women who have made this change themselves. They don't point out that women want a change now and it is they who will make this change.

The method that these writers have in avoiding woman's role in making history is to avoid the daily lives of millions of women, what they do and what they think.

It is the day-to-day lives of women that show what women want and what they do not want. Many of the writers of these articles are women, but career women who are not a part of the working women and house-wives of this country. These writers realize that if they stated the facts, it would be a weapon for women in their struggle for a new life for themselves and their families.

So they don't take up the daily pressures that women face. They don't take up the fact that women, dealing with these pressures in their own way, realize the strength of themselves and of other women. They avoid saying that women, feeling their own strength and doing away with the old relations, are preparing themselves and their husbands for a new and better relationship.

The co-authors of this booklet have seen this in their own lives and in the lives of the women they know. They have written this down as a beginning of the expression of what the average woman feels, thinks and lives.

The Single Woman

A lot of women work before they get married and find that they are well able to take care of themselves. They are very independent as compared to single girls twenty years ago. They want to get married but they say their marriages will be different. They say they will not let themselves be the household drudges their mothers were. A friend of mine says that she is different from her mother because she wants more from marriage. "She didn't expect it. I'm different. I expect it."

Women want a part in the decisions that have to be made and very often they don't want to struggle along on one pay check. They prefer to continue work even if just for a while after they are married so that they can at least begin to have some of the things that they want and need.

One of the greatest problems a young, single woman has to face aside from how to support herself, is what her attitude to morals she has been taught is going to be. In the process of working this out, single girls have started a whole new set of morals. Even though many girls have not thought about their actions in this way, they have gone against the whole code of morals that they were taught to live by. Many women have affairs before they are married and are not looked upon as fallen women or bad women. It is not the same as one woman years ago, going with a man and keeping it within herself. One girl told me that all of her friends had had sex relations with their boy friends and that they discussed it openly. They feel that they are entitled to this and are willing to go against the school authorities, their parents, and even those men who will not accept them. Whether or not society approves, they do what their friends are doing and insist upon approval by the force of the number who feel and act the same way.

"Hey, You're Scaring Me"

A single woman thinks twice about getting married and giving up the freedom that she has had before marriage. Before, she went out as she pleased and bought clothes as she needed them. She never had the freedom that men have but she was on her own. One young woman of twenty that I work with says that she almost got married twice and she is certainly glad that she didn't. She told me, "I know how well off I am when I hear the married women talk about their husbands, I do what I want to do now." When she hears the married women talk, she says, "Hey, you're scaring me. You'll make me an old maid."

But all women want a home and family. This same girl is always talking about having children and about her boyfriends. Young women nowadays feel that their good times and the closeness that they have with their boyfriends should not end with marriage but should make their marriage into a real experience. It is clear that these girls don't reject men or marriage, but they reject what marriage is today.

The Married Woman

As soon as a woman gets married she finds that she must settle down and accept responsibility, something women have always been trained to do. She realizes that she has the job of making the house that she and her husband live in a place where they can invite their friends and where they can relax after a hard day's work. And even though a woman works, it is assumed from the very beginning that the main responsibility of the house is the woman's and the main job of support is the man's. The husband is to go out and support you and the children. You are to make sure that the house is clean, the children are cared for, meals are cooked, laundry is done, etc. This seems to be the fair way of doing things. But soon you find that the job of staying home and taking care of the house is not as it is painted in the movies. Housework is a never-ending job that is monotonous and repetitious. After a while doing things in the house such as ironing or getting up early to make lunches or breakfast is not something that you want to do. It becomes something that you have to do.

The Children

Some couples try to get away from this division of the work at the beginning. For instance, when a woman works, the man will share the work when they get home. The husband of one woman did more of the housework than she did, before they had children.

But any idea of sharing the work disappears when children come. When there are children the whole set-up of a man working outside and a woman working inside is shown for what it is - an inhuman setup. The whole load of children, house, everything, becomes the woman's. As soon as a woman quits work to have children, a man doesn't feel he has to help her with anything. What was a division in their marriage when they first got married is now a split. Instead of the children uniting them, children divide a marriage and stick the woman in the house and glue the man to his job. But very often for a woman who works and looks forward to quitting when she has children, the coming of children makes working out of the home a life sentence. After a month or two, she is back working again.

Few men take an interest in the details of taking care of the baby. They feel it is not their job to diaper and bathe the children. Some men even feel that, though their wives have to stay home with the children, there is no reason for them to stay home with her. So they go out and do as they please, if their wives let them, knowing that their wives are stuck at home constantly taking care of their children. If a man goes out with his friends, a woman usually fights for the right to go out with hers. One woman told me that she was pregnant and that she was sorry since she had a four-month-old baby. She said her husband was glad. She said that he knew that if she was stuck with a child he could go out as he pleased. Fewer and fewer women take this nonsense from their husbands. Women fight tooth and nail against being shouldered with the whole responsibility of the house and the children. They refuse to stay home and be tied to the house while their husbands continue life as though nothing had happened. If women are going to stay home their husbands are going to stay home with them.

The Family is Divided

Women are trying to break down the division that has been made between the father and the children and between the mother and the father. The privilege that society has given the man, women are not allowing him. It is a privilege that he suffers by as well as she. Men know little about their children, are not close to them, and don't know what giving time and work to a child gives back to you. It is this giving that a woman does that makes her so much closer to her children than a father ever can be. Men feel that supporting a child is all they have to do to get the love of their child and the respect of their wife. They feel that nothing else should be asked of them-but the less that is asked of them the less they get in return.

It is not an easy thing for a woman to get used to being a mother. For one thing you know that you are responsible for this child completely. If your husband stops supporting him then you have to. You have to raise him. No one else will. Whatever kind of person he grows up to he will be mainly your doing. As soon as you have a child you have to make your marriage work. Now it is not only you but another person who didn't ask to be born who will suffer if your marriage goes on the rocks. A lot of marriages that would ordinarily break up are held together by the woman in order to save her child from a broken home.

A woman's whole life revolves around her children. She thinks of them first. She finds that these are the only people in her life who really need her. If she has nothing more, she lives for them. She organizes her work so she can give them the best care. The schedule that she lives on shows that her time is not her own but belongs to her children. She must often go without things so that they will have what they need. She must try to live in a house that is safe enough and roomy

enough for them. Sometimes she even has to fight with her husband for something that she feels they need and he is not willing for them to have. She plans her life according to their age.

It is easy for a man to say it is his child but for the real worry when they are sick or misbehave, how they are eating and how much they sleep. These things are on the women's shoulders. How a child's shoes fit him, where his clothes are kept, even things like this most fathers don't know anything about. This doesn't mean that fathers like it this way. It's just that even if they didn't there is very little that they can do about it. When they go away in the morning, the kids are usually asleep and when they get home at night they are near their bed time. Their whole lives are concerned with making a living, and the problems involved in that. Because they are not around their children enough, they have very little idea about what children need, not only in the way of physical needs, but in terms of discipline and love and security. The division that is made between home and factory creates a division between the father and his children. It is obvious that when the father and mother lead separate lives, the children as well are going to suffer. They are often used by each parent as weapons against the other. The children seldom know where they stand and try as soon as possible to get away from it all. They refuse to be a part of this constant family war and just disassociate themselves from it as soon as they are old enough.

Then the Kids Come Home

The work that is part of having a child destroys much of the pleasure of having them for the one that has to do the work. To be with the children day in and day out, week in and week out, to clean up after them, and to keep them clean, to worry about whether they are going in the street or are catching a cold is not only a terrible strain, but it becomes the only thing that you see in your child - the work and the worry involved. You begin to see in the child only the work and none of the pleasure. You feel that every stage of his growing up means, not just a developing child but more work for you to do. You see a child as a hindrance to your getting your other work done and to your having free time. He seems to be "in your way" rather than part of your life. Just about the time that you think you're finished cleaning the house, the kids come home and the whole routine starts all over again, finger marks on the wall, muddy shoes and scattered toys. You don't ever realize how much of a barrier the work of raising a child creates until he finally gets into his teens. He is less work to you and you have more time and more of a chance to appreciate him as a person. But then it is too late. He has grown away from you and you can't really see him and know him and appreciate him.

If a woman can't make her husband understand this (and since a man doesn't go through it, it is very hard for him to understand), she must literally force out of him some free time away from the children for herself. This doesn't solve anything but it relieves the tension for a while.

Sometimes men don't want their wives to have any freedom at all. They don't trust them or have some old-fashioned idea that they don't need it or shouldn't have it. The only people you can turn to in those situations are your neighbors. Very often, they are the only people who understand since they are women too and have the same problems. For a small amount of money or for an exchange of care they may be willing to take care of your child for an afternoon. Even then you are not really free. When you are away you may worry about whether the children are being taken good care of. Sometimes you even feel guilty about having left them at all. No one ever lets you forget that you should be home with your children. You can

never really be free of them if you are a mother. Nor can you be free when you are with them. A woman finds out early that what she wanted from having children she cannot have. Her situation, her husband's and the children's, put the children in immediate conflict with her.

When a woman has children, she is tied down to the house and to these same children that are so important to her. You never know what it is to be a housewife until you have children.

The House

Everything a housewife does, she does alone. All the work in the house is for you to do by yourself. The only time you are with other people is when you have visitors or go visiting yourself. People think sometimes that when women go visiting they are just wasting time. But if they didn't go visiting occasionally, they would go mad from boredom and the feeling of not having anyone to talk to. It's so good to get out among people. The work is the same, day in and day out. "Even if you died the house would still be there in the morning." ← Sometimes you get so bored that you have to do something. One woman used to change the furniture around about every two weeks. Other women buy something new for the house or for themselves. There are a million schemes to break the monotony. The daytime radio serials help to pass the time away but nothing changes the isolation and the boredom.

The terrible thing that is always there when you are doing housework is the feeling that you're never finished. When a man works in a factory, he may work hard and long hours. But at a certain time, he punches out and for that day at least, he is finished. Come Friday or Saturday night he is through for one or two days. In the house you are never finished. Not only is there always something to be done, but there is always someone to mess up almost before you are finished. After four or six hours of a thorough housecleaning, the kids will come home and in five minutes the house will be a shambles. Or your husband will dirty all the ashtrays there are in the house. Or it will rain right after you wash the windows. You may be able to control your children or get your husband to be more careful, but that doesn't solve much. The way that the house is set up, neither the husband nor the children have any idea how much effort and real hard work and time have gone into cleaning the house. The way that the house is set up you have no control over the hours of work, the kind of work that you will have to do, and how much work you do. These are what women want to control.

The rest of the family is no part of the house. They just live there. You make the home what it is—a place where they can relax. You make it livable. You make it attractive. You make it comfortable. You keep it clean. And you are the only one who can never completely enjoy it. You always have your eye out for what has to be done. And picking up after people seems to be a never-ending job. You can never relax where you spend most of your time, energy and ability.

Most women don't even make the real decisions where the house is concerned. Even though they can use their own judgment on many small things. The really big things are either decided outright by the husband or he makes sure that his pressure is felt. Women feel that they must have a say in the house. They participate in the decisions of the house more than ever today. But they have had to put up a long fight to get this recognition.

"Your own boss"

They say a woman is her own boss. That is, no one tells her how fast to work. No one tells her how much to do. And nobody stands over her all day. She can sit down when she wants to and smoke a cigarette or eat when she gets hungry. A housewife has an entirely different kind of a boss. Her first boss is her husband's work. Everything a woman has to do is dependent on the job her husband has. Whatever her husband makes, that is what the family has to live on. How much clothes she buys, or whether she has to make them, whether clothes go to the laundromat or are washed by hand, whether they live in a crowded apartment or in a house with enough room for the family. Whether she has a washing machine or does clothes by hand, all of these things are decided by the kind of job her husband has.

The hours that her husband works determines her whole schedule and how she will live, and when she will do her work. One big problem for a woman is having a husband who works nights. Then there is no schedule. By the time that the housework is done, her husband gets up and the house is messed again. If there are children then there are two schedules to be met. The children have to be kept quiet during the day, which is almost impossible with children.

Whether her husband has a comparatively easy job or a hard one affects her life, too. A man who works very hard is not going to help her with any of the work around the house. He is going to come home a lot grouchier and harder to live with. The woman has to learn to keep her temper a lot more if there is to be any peace. And the children have to be kept in line more, too.

Even where she lives is decided by her husband's work. The part of town that makes going to work the easiest is the part of town that you live in. And if there are no jobs in the town that are in your husband's line of work then you have to forget all your friends and all the ties of Family and you go to where he can find work.

The children and the demands of taking care of them is the next decider of how a woman is to spend her life. There is, nothing more demanding than an infant. When they want something, they want it at that moment and not a moment later.

But the most ruthless boss and the one that really keeps a woman going is the work itself. The work does not look on you as being a human being. It is there no matter how you feel or what you want to do. It dominates every spare moment that you have, either in the house or away from it. You are constantly trying to finish work that has no end. You want to do all that you have to do in the least possible time and have free time for yourself. And after you think you are finished you find that there is something else. Sometimes women will give up and let the house go for a few days or a few hours. But they are the ones who are bothered by it. And then they will work twice as hard trying to make up for lost time. You are always doing what you have to do. What you want to do doesn't count for much.

Most women are very responsible. They feel that, as mothers and wives, they want to do the best possible jobs. They want to be proud of their homes and children. There is no other place where they can show what they can do. If a woman is a good manager she has the respect of other women and that is important to any woman.

So there is really no need of a foreman or lead girl at home. It is the way a woman lives and the work that she must do that keeps her toeing the mark. It is this way of life also that teaches her discipline. She learns when to say something and when to keep quiet. She learns to do things on her own. If there is something that has to be done and her husband won't do it, she does it herself. One woman with four children painted the whole outside of her house. She said that she didn't want to wait another five years for her husband to do it.

It Takes Experience

Every time a woman's husband gets a raise she says to herself, now I will catch up. That extra few dollars will change things. But by the time the time he gets that raise, prices have jumped to make up for it, or he has been sick and lost a day's pay, or there has been an "extra". And even if things have gone along fairly smoothly, you go and buy the things that you have needed all along but just weren't able to afford before. So you are right back where you started from. Almost all workers' families live from day to day. There is very little chance to put something away for an emergency. If a family missed just one paycheck it may set them back for weeks. In all that time the housewife must manage somehow. The same thing happens when the workingman goes out on strike. For weeks and sometimes months she must manage on practically nothing. The miners' wives have a system of storing food and clothes away when their husbands are working steady. In that way, when there is a strike they can live for a while at least on what they have saved up in the way of food and clothes. It takes a lot of experience and training to learn all the tricks and the woman is the only one in a position to learn these "tricks". Corners can be cut in an emergency that you never thought could be cut and you somehow manage.

A woman has to get along on what her husband makes. It doesn't matter how much or how little he brings home. She must decide when to make clothes and when she can afford to buy them. She finds recipes for making economical meals that at the same time look and taste good. The way the family lives, whether there are bill collectors at the door, or food on the table, is dependent on how much money her husband gives her and how she manages it. Although most husbands realize that prices are high, they don't really know how much it takes to keep a family going. It is only the woman who has to live on impossibly little who knows about how to manage finances.

All of this experience prepares a woman to manage when she is on her own. The woman whose husband runs out on her has a pretty tough job on her hands, especially if she has children. If she has relatives who will help her at the beginning then she is considered lucky. But on the whole she has to be both mother and a father to the children. She has no choice about working. She assumes the responsibility of both a man and woman. She supports her family on what she makes, which is usually much less than a man makes. She has less time with her children and sometimes has to be separated from them in order to be able to work. Yet these women manage to bring up their children and start new lives for themselves. They don't sit home and weep. My friend has a neighbor whose husband ran out on her and left her with a child and all the bills. This woman sold all the furniture and with the money took a trip to Puerto Rico to see her mother. It was something to meet her. If she cried, you didn't know about it. She just said that she wasn't going to wait around like a damn fool. She had never done anything like that before but when the time came, she knew just what to do.

They Just Lead Separate Lives

A woman stays at home alone all day. She waits for her husband to come home to tell him of the things that have happened during the day, something that the kids have done or said that shows what wonderful kids they are, or what a hard day she had. She wants to hear what he has gone through and what he thinks about buying this or that for the house. But his life is not in the house. When a man comes home from work, he wants to do nothing. Sometimes he doesn't even want to do any talking. You wait all day for someone to talk to, and then when your husband comes home he picks up the paper and acts as if he doesn't even know you exist. When a woman is home all day, she wants to go out to a show or for a drive on Sunday afternoon. But during the week your husband comes home exhausted and even on weekends he sometimes wants to stay home and relax. He has been away from the house most of his waking hours. Now is his chance to sit around. Women have needs of companionship and understanding that men know nothing about. If there is not that understanding between men and women about their work and human needs. It is not surprising that many marriages can't make a go of their sex lives, the most delicate phase of their relationship. Their husbands, the people they should be closest to, often are furthest away from. They just lead separate lives.

Women Know Each Other

If women can't turn to their husbands, then they turn to other women. Because of the fact that women lead such similar lives, they know and understand each other. In the neighborhood some women will get very close to others. These women in a court or a street will help each other out if they need help and make the time of day go faster. They talk of things they would not dream of talking to their husbands about even if their husbands would listen. Who can tell a man how they want to fix up a house or what they want to buy for the children. Things like problems with your husband or financial problems are common property". The women discuss all the things that affect their lives--whether or not to have children and how many to have, how to save money on clothes, housewares and food, which stores have lower prices, the best method of birth control, sex problems, going to work. In the discussions many things are resolved. Women get new attitudes as a result of hearing other women talk. The women will exclude someone from their group because she is not doing what is expected of her. A mother who neglects her child or does not take care of the house and has no excuse for it will not have the time or confidence of the other women.

Some people call this gossiping but it's much more than that. Women are breaking down the isolation of the home by creating strong ties with other women. It is the only group life a housewife can have and she makes the most of it. The very existence of these ties with other housewives is condemnation of the relations a woman has with her husband, with her work, and with the rest of society. The women come together, talk together, and, in a way, live together. There is no one else they can turn to but themselves. There is one place where they can decide whom they will be with, where they will be, and what they will do. There is no one who will stand in the way.

The best time of the week in my court is Friday. Everybody cleans house on Friday so they will have less to do on the weekend. After they are finished, in the afternoon, someone will run out for beer and we will sit around and talk and relax and compare notes. The sociability is at its highest and we all feel most relaxed when the work is done. There is a feeling of closeness and

kidding around that you can't get anywhere else except with these people that know you and accept you on your own terms.

This is how women are organized. With the experience they have in managing things and with the aid of the other women in their group. They know what to do when they want to take action. The women in a housing project in San Francisco got together to halt the rise in prices. They saw the government wasn't doing anything so they took matters into their own hands. They held meetings and demonstrations and distributed leaflets. No one person organized it. After living with their neighbors in a housing project for so long they knew each other intimately; each other's weaknesses and strengths, The women made price lists up of every store in town and bought at only those stores that had the lowest prices. The whole city knew about "Mama's OPA" and the papers had many articles on it.¹

There are many times that the housewives take actions that never reach the papers. Women will barricade streets so that their children will have a place to play. The police with tear gas bombs cannot drive them away. Women will pass the word along to other women that on a certain day no woman is to buy meat. They would just walk up to strange women and say "Don't buy meat on such a day". Women know each other so well that they can talk to a perfect stranger and be sure of being understood. The miners' wives went out on strike to protest the Company selling their homes and again to protest the dust in the air of the mining towns. They got the support of their husbands in both cases. Their husbands refused to cross their picket lines.

Women act as a group because they are treated like one. They live the same way on the whole, no matter how different the individual situation may be.

A New Relationship

The most universal organization of women is the action that women take in their own homes. Each woman in her own home is making a revolution. There are some women who don't say much to their husbands or to other women Yet when it comes to a showdowns, they just go ahead and do what they know is right. Other women argue with their husbands for the things they feel they should have. These arguments mean something to a woman. She is not just arguing with her husband. She is showing him and even more important, herself, that she has ideas and desires of her own. Women are constantly telling men, however they can, that they can't go on in the old way. It is this spirit of independence and self-respect that men admire in women, even when it is directed against themselves. They admire a woman who can stand on her own two feet and doesn't let her husband walk all over her. A woman who doesn't take it from her husband has the respect of other women and she has the respect of her husband as well. Women are more and more refusing to be just machines for raising children and getting their husbands off to work. They demand more of their husbands in the way of a relationship. If a man cannot change, they will break up the marriage rather than go on living with a stranger. Divorce nowadays is accepted because women have made it acceptable. It is clear that it is not the individual man who is involved. There are too many divorces for that. When a woman gets divorced, although it takes the form of a struggle with an individual man, it is an act opposing the whole way of life men and women must lead in our day. Women fight the role that men play in the home. This has nothing to do with how much a husband helps his wife or how good he is to the children. No matter how much a husband tries to understand the woman's problems, no

matter how well they get along, women fight the way they are forced to live and want to establish a new way of life.

The Working Woman

One of the ways that women show their rejection of their role in society is by going out to work. Many women work today who have never worked before. By going out to work, women have changed their relations with their husbands and children. Along with this they have given themselves new problems to solve and have found new ways to solve them.

Women have expanded their experiences so that they know what large groups of people are thinking and doing. Fewer and fewer women today are housewives only. Most women at one time or another go to work. Some women go out to work only a few months a year. Some work steady. In any case, they have a picture of the world that they never had before.

Some women that I have worked with say that they work because they can't get along on what their husbands make. This is true especially in the family where the man has no trade and his wages are small. But it is more and more true of everyone. Besides the high cost of living, there is another reason why it is hard to get along on one paycheck today. Women demand much more than they used to. They don't want to go through the awful feeling of being broke that they went through during the depression. They don't want to wash clothes by hand when, with a little extra, they can have the most modern equipment in their homes. Everything now is modern and women want the most modern appliances to work with. About the only thing you can do on one paycheck is exist.

When you are living on a small budget, it is the woman who must bear the brunt of it. She must go long distances to shop. When it becomes necessary to do without, she is usually the first person to forget her own needs.

One of the biggest financial needs that a woman has is some financial independence. They don't want to ask their husbands before they spend any money. They want to have money of their own. To be able to afford new drapes when the old ones are still good but you are tired of looking at them, is a luxury that most women can't afford but all women want. The paycheck that your husband gives you, although you work as hard for it as he does, is never really your own, even though it may be handed to you for the needs of the family. Those needs that women have can never be satisfied on the money the working man alone brings home.

A woman who goes to work in a factory has a feeling of independence not only about the money that is spent but about the decisions that are made in the house. If you are helping to support the family, you have more right to decide not only what is to be done with the family money but you now want to have more of a part in other questions that come up in the family which your husband has always decided before. One particular man was surprised with the rights his wife took since she started to work that he told her to stay home. They got along better that way he said.

It is not only decisions that a woman feels more independent about. When a woman works she knows that she doesn't have to put up with a lot of things from her husband. If he steps out of

line by drinking or going out with other women then she will up and leave him faster than before. She figures that now, if she has to, she can always support herself.

One of the things that drives women to get jobs is the boredom and loneliness that they would have to live with if they stayed home. Women want to be with other people. As compared to her husband, a woman leads an isolated life in the house by herself. The only company that she has while she is home is the radio and the telephone. In the factory you at least work with other people and get away from the boredom and loneliness that is home life.

The thing that a woman regrets most when she goes out to work is leaving her children. It is true that you want to get away from them for a while, but you don't like to leave them with just anybody. Most of the time you don't know much about how they are being taken care of. If they are older, you don't know who they go around with and what they do with their time. If your child is in a nursery school, you can ask the teacher how the child is doing. Most of the time she will say, "Fine". But that's all. You really don't know how they are being treated or what kind of care they are getting. You always hope the child is doing the right thing but when you work, you are never sure.

There is also the problem of where to leave the child when you work. Many women who are separated from their husbands and have young children, have to board them out. They miss their children who seem to grow up without them. They don't have much say in the way their children are brought up. Other women prefer to depend on neighbors whom they know rather than a nursery school that they know little or nothing about. The reason that a lot of women don't go to work at all is because they have no one reliable to take care of their children.

Wherever She Wants to Be

Women want to be able to decide whether or not to work. If a man tells a woman to work she usually won't. For one thing she feels that if she works when he tells her to then he gets used to it, and sometimes stops working regularly himself. He thinks that she should support him. One woman I know had to stop working because her husband thought that he could go out gambling with the money that she was making. On the other hand, if her husband tells her not to work, that doesn't mean that she will stay home. When a woman goes out to work it is not always with the approval of her husband. Many men resent their wives working. They use as an excuse the fact that the children should stay with their mother. They also say that they are not able to help their wives with the children and with the house and shopping. Others will make it so unbearable by putting the entire burden on their wives that finally the wives will be forced to quit.

Women have to fight those men who believe that a woman's place is in the home, and that is where they should stay. These are the men who don't want their wives to have any independence at all, and who want to be the only ones who bring in a check so they are the only ones with a say in their homes. When a woman goes out to work, they know that she becomes much more of a person in her own right. Women have shown these men that a woman's place is wherever she wants to be.

Those women who want to go on working and whose husbands don't want them to, don't tell their husbands about how hard it is to work. They keep all of that to themselves. One woman on our line at work has to fight to keep working. She has a fourteen year-old daughter and she says there is nothing to keep her home. Yet her husband, a professional who makes good money is constantly asking her to quit. She never shows how tired she is when she gets home and she can't afford to ask him for help or lie will make her quit. There is quite a difference in the feeling toward women working between those women who have to work and those who work because they want to. If a woman works because she wants to, she doesn't have to take as much from the company and she can tell the boss to go to hell with his job as my neighbor puts it. When she gets tired of working she knows she can quit, and even if she doesn't quit the very fact that she can makes her more independent of the company .

Those women who have to work the single women who are supporting themselves and sometimes their parents or the divorced women who are supporting their children, must stick to their jobs no matter how they feel or what they feel like doing. When these women get tired of working, they just go right on working. They have no choice. The company usually takes full advantage of this and knows it can depend on these women for Saturday work and overtime. When you are paying ten or fifteen dollars a week for nursery school alone, every penny counts.

Factory work for women is sometimes easy work-that is, it is not hard physically. But, like all factory work, it is dull and monotonous. In certain industries, it is hard physically. You feel in every muscle that you have put in a day's work. The important thing, no matter what kind of work you do, is the people you work with. If the work is easy but dull, then it is the other women who make the day pass at all. If it is hard work, the only thing that keeps you going is the other women who are doing the same thing you are and going through it with you. It is not the work that is so important to you and that makes factory life bearable. It is the people with whom you work that you care about.

There is always something going on in the plant. Either someone is cracking a joke or clowning or you are having a fight with the foreman or lead girl. There is always a discussion going on about something, and everything is talked about. Sex problems or their current affairs, housework and how to manage the children, new dance steps and the latest styles, price control and housing, ways of gaining and losing weight. No matter what you want to talk about, there is someone to talk to. The girls consider each other's feelings and interests.

Unlike the company, the girls care about each other. When one person is out, she is missed and someone usually calls to find out what is the matter. If something is seriously wrong with a particular girl. Though her immediate group of friends start a collection to buy her something or to give her money to pay the extra bills. The girls give freely of their time and their money. If a girl is not feeling well a certain day, then the other girls or some special friends will work twice as fast to make up for her work so that she doesn't have to miss time from work. The company never worries about the individual person. They expect, come hell or high water, the same amount of work every day. The girls are the only ones who care about each other and will help you out when you need it.

We - From Now On

When a woman comes home from work at night, there is quite a difference from when a man comes home from work. As soon as she comes home she starts working all over again. A married woman, especially if she has children, can never have the luxury of sitting down and doing nothing. There is dinner to get on the table. The dishes to be washed, the children to be bathed and gotten to bed. She has two jobs. She is a part-time mother and housewife and a full-time wage earner. The weekend which a man takes to relax, for her belongs to the house. And all the things that have been left undone during the week have to be done then. It's a hard grind. Working and having a family. No matter how much your husband helps you or how considerate he is, the main burden of the house is still on the woman's shoulders. Just because a woman goes out to work, it doesn't mean she stops being a housewife.

A woman has a lot more in common with her husband when she works than when she stays home. There is more to talk to him about than there was before. The main barrier is still there however, and it is still easier to talk to other women than it is to talk to your husband. Yet, things are definitely changed for a couple. For the first time, a woman says you are not supporting this house. We are. And things will have to be we from now on .

Union and Company Women

The union and the company try to appear 'air by putting tip women for supervisory jobs. The shop stewards and the union officials are often women. The lead girls of the company and the foreladies are often taken from the line in plants. But as soon as these girls are taken off the line they forget the rest of the girls and become agents of the union or the company, very often against the girls. The lead girls usually eat together and go out together and consider themselves better than the rest. They act just like the men supervisors. But they use the fact that they are women to try to win the confidence of the other girls in order to get more production and to keep the girls in line.

One of the lead girls in my plant was asked by the supervisor to get out double production. She said she would never do that to the girls and cried like a baby for days. It never dawned on her that the only way she could get the supervisor to stop pressing her was to get the girls to protest. She handled it herself and in a few days was demanding that the girls produce, using the excuse that she had been pressured into it. Most women feel that when a woman gets to be boss, she is worse than a man. The women who get in as bosses constantly use the fact that they are women to whip the girls into line. The women union officials are the same way. Men workers talk about how the union is separated from the men. If this is true of the men's unions, it is doubly true of the women's. To many women it seems that the only thing that they do is collect dues and try to keep the girls in line for the company. The initiation fees are way out of proportion to the amounts that the women make and the dues are just as high. In some shops nobody knows who the shop steward is and very few of the girls care. Yet the girls will defend the union if the company attacks it. They know, however, that if anything is to be done, they will have to do it themselves.

Most women look at work as six of one and half a dozen of the other. If iris a choice of staying home in the monotony of the house, then they feel that it is worthwhile working. Some women look forward to the day when they can afford to stay home. When that day comes. They leave the plant only to conic right back most of the time. After you have worked out, even for a little

while, it is hard to go back into the home. This is what happened to a lot of women during the war, who worked in defense plants. After the war, many were laid off, but some stayed. Those who were laid off and many, many more women who have never worked before are becoming working women. A woman's place is becoming wherever she wants to be.

It is not that women enjoy work. They like the work in neither the home nor the factory. But as compared to being "just a housewife" most women feel that even factory work is preferable. My neighbor went out to work for Christmas money, and because she wanted to get away from the house for a while, but Christmas money was her excuse to her husband. Her three-year-old boy stays with his godparents so her husband has no complaint about her working. Every once in a while, she says she is quitting but she just can't get herself to do it.

Every Woman Knows

More and more today, women are showing by their every action that they can't go on in the old way. They have no confidence any more that what is supposed to work really will, or what is supposed to be their lives should be. Their husbands, their children, their work, all are in conflict with them. Everything they do, every decision they make, they feel may work. Marriage, children, home, none of these things are women sure of any more.

Housewives who have never worked before are waiting until their children are old enough so they can get a job. Women who have always worked are looking forward to the day when they can finally quit. Marriages that have lasted for twenty years are breaking up. Young couples after six months of marriage decide that they'd better end it now before they have children who will suffer. Young women getting out of high school instead of running to get married, get a job and an apartment of their own and live independently.

It is not that women don't want to be wives and mothers. They want and need men to share their lives with and every woman wants children. But they feel that if they can't have a human relationship they will have no relationship at all. Women go from being married to being divorced, from being housewives to working out, but nowhere do women see the kind of life that they want for themselves and their families.

Women are finding more and more that there is no way out but a complete change. But one thing is already clear. Things can't go on the way they are. Every woman knows that.

Selma James

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