

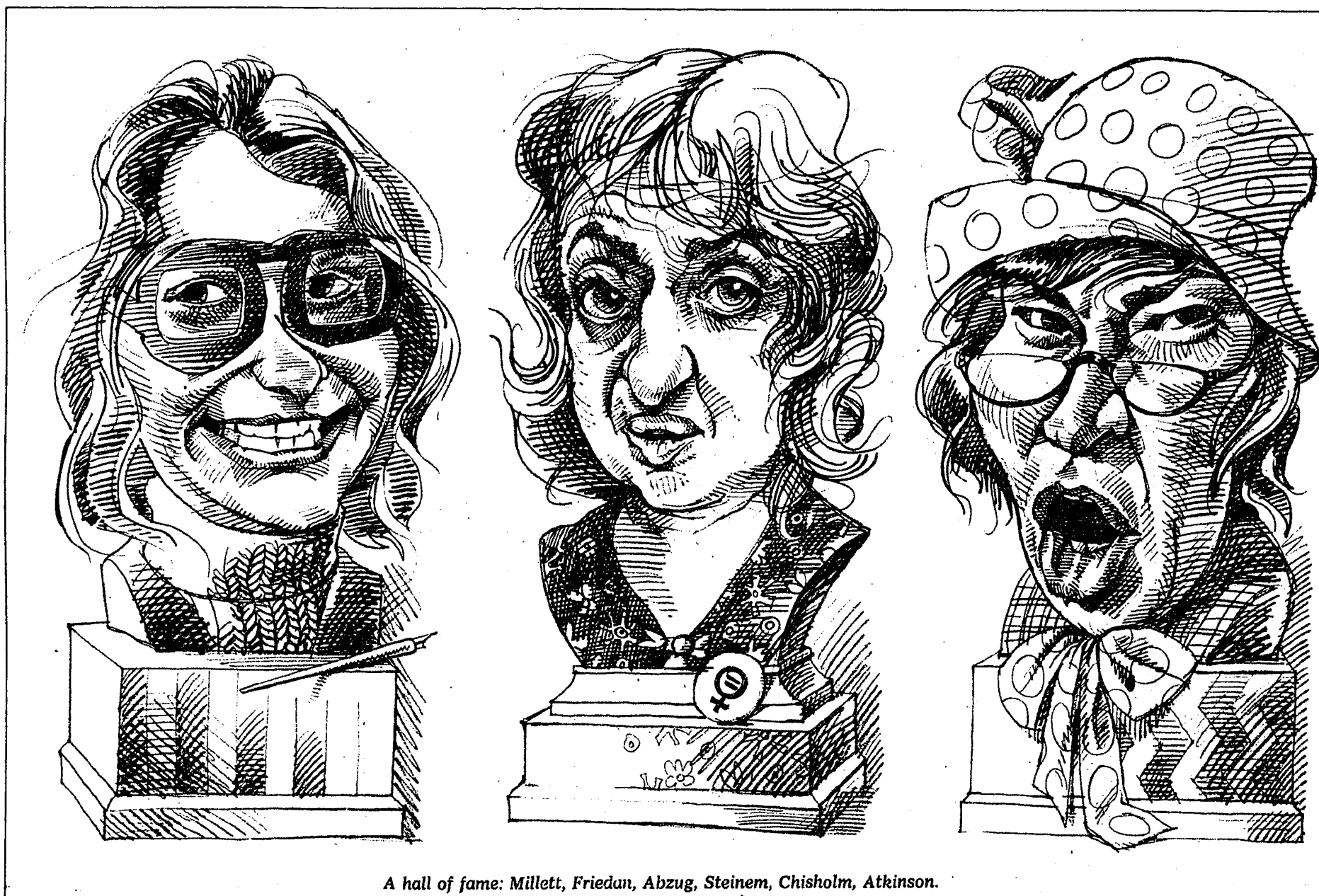
Up from the kitchen floor: Kitchen floor Woman power

By Betty Friedan

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A hall of fame: Millett, Friedan, Abzug, Steinem, Chisholm, Atkinson.

Up from the kitchen floor

By Betty Friedan

It is a decade now since the publication of "The Feminine Mystique," and until I started writing the book, I wasn't even conscious of the woman problem. Locked as we all were then in that mystique, which kept us passive and apart, and kept us even from seeing our real problems and possibilities, I, like other women, thought there was something wrong with me because I didn't have an orgasm waxing the kitchen floor. I was a freak, writing that book—not that I waxed any floor, I must admit, in the throes of finishing it in 1963.

Each of us thought she was a freak 10 years ago if she didn't experience that mysterious orgasmic fulfillment waxing the kitchen floor as the commercials promised. However much we enjoyed being Junior and Janey's or Emily's mother, or B.J.'s wife, if we still had ambitions, ideas about ourselves as people in our own right—well, we were simply freaks, neurotics, and we confessed our sin or neurosis to priest or psychoanalyst, and tried

Betty Friedan wrote "The Feminine Mystique," was the founder and first president of the National Organization for Women, and convened the National Women's Political Caucus.

hard to adjust. We didn't admit to each other if we felt there should be more in life than peanut butter sandwiches with the kids, if throwing powder into the washing machine didn't make us relive our wedding night, if getting the socks or shirts pure white was not exactly a peak experience, even if we did feel guilty about the tattle-tale gray.

Some of us (in 1963, nearly half of all women in the United States) were already committing the unpardonable sin of working outside the home to help pay the mortgage or grocery bill. They felt guilty, too, about betraying their femininity, undermining their husbands' masculinity, and neglecting the children by daring to work for money at all—no matter how much it was needed. They couldn't admit, even to themselves, that they resented being paid half what a man would have been paid for the job, or always being passed over for promotion, or writing the paper for which he got the degree and the raise.

A suburban neighbor of mine named Gertie was having coffee with me when the census taker came as I was writing "The Feminine Mystique." "Occupation?" the census taker asked. "Housewife," I said. Gertie, who had cheered me on in my efforts at writing and selling magazine articles, shook her head sadly: "You should take yourself more seriously," she said. I hesitated, and then said to the census taker, "Actually, I'm a writer." But of

course, I then was, and still am, like all women in America, no matter what else we do between 9 and 5, a housewife.

It seems such a precarious accident that I ever wrote the book at all—and, in another way, of course, my whole life had prepared me to write that book. All the pieces finally came together. In 1957, getting strangely bored with writing articles about breast-feeding and the like for Redbook and the Ladies' Home Journal, I put an unconscionable amount of time into a questionnaire for my fellow Smith graduates of the class of 1942, thinking I was going to disprove the current notion that education had fitted us ill for our role as women. But the questionnaire raised more questions than it answered for me — education had not exactly geared us to the role women were trying to play, it seemed. The suspicion arose: was it the education or the role that was wrong? McCall's commissioned an article based on my Smith alumnae questionnaire, but the then male publisher of McCall's, during that great era of togetherness, turned the piece down in horror, despite underground efforts of female editors. The male McCall's editors said it couldn't be true.

I was next commissioned to do the article for Ladies' Home Journal. This time, I took it back, because they rewrote it to say just the opposite of what, in fact, I was trying to say. I tried it again



for Redbook; each time I was interviewing more women, psychologists, sociologists, marriage counselors and the like, and getting more and more sure I was on the track of something. But what? I needed a name for whatever it was that kept us from using our rights, that made us feel guilty about anything we did, not as our husbands' wives, our children's mothers, but as people ourselves. I needed a name to describe that guilt—like the guilt women used to feel about sexual needs, and the guilt they felt now about needs that didn't fit the sexual definition of women, the mystique of feminine fulfillment—the feminine mystique.

The editor of Redbook told my agent, "Betty has gone off her rocker. She has always done a good job for us but this time only the most neurotic housewife could identify." I opened my agent's letter on the subway taking the kids to the pediatrician. I got off the subway to call my agent and told her, "I'll have to write a book to get this into print." What I was writing threatened the very foundations of the women's magazine world—the feminine mystique.

Giving it a name, I knew that it was not the only possible universe for women at all, but an unnatural confining of our energies and vision. But as I began following leads and clues from women's words and my own feelings, across psychology, sociology and recent history, tracing back—through the pages of the magazines for which I'd written—why and how it happened, what it was really doing to women, their children, even to sex, the implications became apparent and they were fantastic! I was so surprised myself at what I was

writing, where it was leading. After I finished each chapter, a part of me would wonder, am I crazy? But there was also a growing feeling of calm, strong, gut sureness as the clues fitted together, which must be the same kind of feeling a scientist has when he or she zeroes in on a discovery in one of those true scientific detective stories.

Only this was not just abstract and conceptual—it meant that I and every other woman I knew had been living a lie, and all the doctors who treated us and the experts who studied us were perpetuating that lie, and our homes and schools and churches and politics and professions were built around that lie. If women were really people, no more, no less—then all the things that kept them from being full people in our society would have to be changed. And women, once they broke through the feminine mystique and took themselves seriously as people, would see their place on a false pedestal, even their glorification as sexual objects, for the putdown it was.

Yet if I had realized how fantastically fast that would really happen—already in less than 10 years' time—maybe I would have been so scared I might have stopped writing. But during that February, March and April of 1963, when the book first came out, all I felt was a terrible urgency. Psychologist Abraham Maslow, who had spent a whole day explaining to me how his concept of self-actualization did not apply to women, sent me a telegram saying that he had stayed up all night reading "The Feminine Mystique," and had changed his mind. Professor Mary Ellen Chase wrote me from Smith College, likening the book's importance to the pro-

nouncements of the prophets of my Jewish ancestry. However, my publisher had seen fit to print only 3,000 copies.

Then, breaking every rule, both the Ladies' Home Journal and McCall's printed pieces of the book, and The Herald Tribune book section carried a front-page review by Marya Mannes; I began to be treated almost like a writer who had written a big book. (I say "almost" advisedly; more like a housewife who had accidentally written a big book.)

I began to get letters from other women who now saw through the feminine mystique, who wanted to stop doing their children's homework and start doing their own; they were also being told they really weren't capable of doing anything else now but making homemade strawberry jam or helping their children do fourth-grade arithmetic. It wasn't enough just to take yourself seriously as a person. Society had to change, somehow, for women to make it as people. It really wasn't possible to live any longer as "just a housewife." But what other way was there to live?

I remember getting stuck at that point, even when I was writing "The Feminine Mystique." I had to write a last chapter, giving a solution to "the problem that has no name," suggesting new patterns, a way out of the conflicts, whereby women could use their abilities fully in society and find their own existential human identity, sharing its action, decisions and challenges without at the same time renouncing home, children, love, their own sexuality. My mind went blank. You do have to say "no" to the old way before you can begin to find the

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new "yes" you need. But giving a name to the problem that had no name was the necessary first step.

I couldn't operate as a suburban housewife any longer, even if I had wanted to. For one thing, I became a leper in my own suburb. Women in other suburbs were writing me letters as if I were Joan of Arc leading them out of the wilderness, but I practically had to flee my own crabgrass-overgrown yard to keep from being burned at the stake. Although we had been fairly popular, my husband and I were suddenly no longer invited to our neighbors' dinner parties. My kids were kicked out of the car pool for art and dancing classes. We had to move back to the city, where the kids could do their own thing without my chauffeuring and where I could be with them at home during some of the hours I now spent commuting. I couldn't stand being a freak alone in the suburbs any longer.

At first, that strange hostility my book—and later the movement—seemed to elicit from some women amazed and puzzled me. Even in the beginning, there wasn't the hostility I had expected from men. Many men bought "The Feminine Mystique" for their wives and urged them to go back to school or to work. I realized soon enough that there were probably millions of women who had felt as I had, like a freak, absolutely alone, as a suburban housewife. But if you were too afraid you wouldn't really make it, too afraid to face your real feelings about the husband and children you were presumably living for, then someone like me opening up the can of worms was a menace.

I didn't blame women for being scared. I was pretty scared myself. It isn't really possible to make a new pattern of life all by yourself. I've always dreaded being alone more than anything. The anger I had not dared to face in myself during all the years I tried to play the helpless little housewife with my husband — and feeling more helpless the longer I played it—was beginning to erupt now, more and more violently. For fear of being alone, I almost lost my own

self-respect trying to hold on to a marriage, and to what was no longer love, but dependent hate. It was easier for me to start the women's movement which was needed to change society than to change my own personal life.

IT seemed time to start writing that second book, but I couldn't find any new patterns in society beyond the feminine mystique. I could find a few individual women, knocking themselves out to meet Good Housekeeping standards, trying to raise Spockian children while working at a full-time job and feeling guilty about it. And conferences were being held about the availability of continuing education for women because all those aging full-time housewife - mothers, whose babies were now in college, were beginning to be trouble—drinking, taking too many pills, committing suicide. Whole learned journals were devoted to the discussion of "women and their options"—the "stages" of women's lives. Women, we were told, could go to school, work a bit, get married, stay with the children 15 to 20 years, and then go back to school and work—no problem; no need for role conflicts.

The women who were advancing this theory were among the exceptional few to reach top jobs because they somehow had not dropped out for 15 or 20 years. And these same women were advising the women flocking back to their continuing education programs that they couldn't really expect to get real jobs or professional training after 15 years at home; ceramics, or professional volunteer work—that was the realistic adjustment.

Talk, that's all it was, talk. In 1965, the long-awaited report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women detailed the discriminatory wages women were earning (half the average for men), and the declining ratio of women in professional and executive jobs. The commission recommended that women be counseled to use their abilities in society, and suggested that child-care centers and other services be provided to enable women to combine motherhood and work.

The President's Commission report was duly buried in bureaucratic file drawers. That summer of 1965, I got a third of the way through the book I wanted to write about going beyond the feminine mystique; by then I knew that there weren't any new patterns, only new problems that women weren't going to be able to solve unless society changed. And all the talk, and the reports, and the Commission, and the continuing education programs were only examples of tokenism—maybe even an attempt to block a real movement on the part of women themselves to change society.

It seemed to me that something more than talk had to happen. "The only thing that's changed so far is our own consciousness," I wrote, closing that second book which I never finished because the next sentence read, "What we need is a political movement, a social movement like that of the blacks." I had to take action. On the plane to Washington, pondering what to do, I saw a student reading a book, "The First Step to Revolution Is Consciousness," and it was like an omen.

I went to Washington because a law had been passed, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, banning sex discrimination in employment along with race discrimination. The sex discrimination part had been tacked on as a joke and a delaying maneuver by a Southern Congressman, Howard Smith of Virginia. At the first press conferences after the law went into effect, the administrator in charge of enforcing it joked about the ban on sex discrimination. "It will give men equal opportunity to be Playboy bunnies," he said.

In Washington I found a seething underground of women in the Government, the press and the labor unions who felt powerless to stop the sabotage of this law that was supposed to break through the sex discrimination that pervaded every industry and profession, every factory, school and office. Some of these women felt that I, as a now-known writer, could get the public's ear.

One day, a cool young woman lawyer, who worked for the agency that was not enforcing the law against sex discrimination, carefully closed the door of her office and said to me with tears in her eyes, "I never meant to be so concerned about women. I like men. But I'm getting an ulcer, the way women are be-

ing betrayed. We may never have another chance like this law again. Betty, you have to start an N.A.A.C.P. for women. You are the only one free enough to do it."

But I wasn't an organization woman. I never even belonged to the League of Women Voters. However, there was a meeting of state commissioners on the status of women in Washington in June. I thought that, among the women there from the various states, we would get the nucleus of an organization that could at least call a press conference and raise the alarm among women throughout the country.

Lawyer Pauli Murray came to that meeting, and Dorothy Haener and Caroline Davis from the U.A.W., and Kay Clarenbach, head of the Governor's Commission in Wisconsin, and Katherine Conroy of the Communications Workers of America, and Aileen Hernandez, then a member of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. I asked them to come to my hotel room one night. Most didn't think women needed a movement like the blacks, but everyone was mad at the sabotage of Title VII. The consensus was that the conference could surely take respectable action to insist the law be enforced.

I went to bed, relieved that probably a movement wouldn't have to be organized. At 6 the next morning, I got a call from one of the top token women in the Johnson Administration, urging me not to rock the boat. At 8 the phone rang again; this time it was one of the reluctant sisters of the night before, angry now, really angry. "We've been told that this conference doesn't have the power to take any action at all, or even the right to offer a resolution. So, we've gotten a table for us all to eat together at lunch, and we'll start the organization." At the luncheon we each chipped in a dollar. I wrote the word NOW on a paper napkin; our group should be called the National Organization for Women, I said, "because men should be part of it." Then I wrote down the first sentence of the NOW statement of purpose, committing ourselves to "take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof, in truly equal partnership with men."

The changes necessary to bring about that equality were, and still are, very rev-

olutionary indeed. They involve a sex-role revolution for men and women which will restructure all our institutions: childrearing, education, marriage, the family, medicine, work, politics, the economy, religion, psychological theory, human sexuality, morality and the very evolution of the race.

I now see the women's movement for equality as simply the necessary first stage of a much larger sex-role revolution. I never did see it in terms of class or race: women, as an oppressed class, fighting to overthrow or take power away from men as a class, the oppressors. I knew the movement had to include men as equal members, though women would have to take the lead in the first stage.

There is only one way for women to reach full human potential—by participating in the mainstream of society, by exercising their own voice, in all the decisions shaping that society. For women to have full human identity and freedom, they must have economic independence. Breaking through the barriers that had kept them from the jobs and professions rewarded by society was the first step, but it wasn't sufficient. It would be necessary to change the rules of the game to restructure professions, marriage, the family, the home.

Equality and human dignity are not possible for women if they are not able to earn money. But the importance of work for women goes beyond economics. How else can women participate in the action and decisions of an advanced industrial society unless they have the training and opportunity and skills that come from participating in it?

Women also had to confront their sexual nature, not deny or ignore it as earlier feminists had done. Society had to be restructured so that women, who happen to be the people who give birth, could make a human, responsible choice whether or not—and when—to have children, and not be barred thereby from participating in society in their own right. This meant the right to birth control and safe abortion; the right to maternity leave and child-care centers if women did not want to retreat completely from adult society during the childbearing years; and the equivalent of a G.I. bill for retraining if women chose to stay home with the children.

I couldn't define "liberation" for a woman in terms

that denied the sexual and human reality of our need to love, and even sometimes to depend upon, a man. What had to be changed were the obsolete feminine and masculine sex roles that dehumanized sex, and women, making it almost impossible for women and men to make love, not war. How could we ever really know or love each other as long as we played those roles that kept us from knowing or being ourselves? Weren't men as well as women still locked in lonely isolation, alienation, no matter how many sexual acrobatics they put their bodies through? It seemed to me that men weren't really the enemy—they were fellow victims, suffering from an outmoded masculine mystique which made them feel unnecessarily inadequate when there were no bears to kill.

IN these past years of action, I have seen myself and other women becoming both stronger and more gentle, taking ourselves more seriously yet beginning to really have fun as we stopped playing the old roles. We discovered we could trust each other. I love the women with whom I took the brave and joyous actions of these years. No one realized how pitifully few we were in the beginning, how little money we had, how little experience.

What gave us the strength and the nerve to do what we did, in the name of American women, of women of the world? It was, of course, because we were doing it for ourselves. It was not charity for the poor; we, the middle-class women who started this, were all poor. It was hard even for housewives whose husbands weren't poor to get money to fly to board meetings of NOW. It was hard for women who worked to get time off from their jobs, or take precious weekend time from their families. I have never worked so hard for money, gone so many hours with so little sleep or time off to eat or even go to the toilet as in these first years of the women's movement.

I was subpoenaed, Christmas Eve, 1966, to testify before a judge in Foley Square, because the airlines were so outraged at our insistence that they were guilty of sex discrimination by forcing stewardesses to resign at age 30 or upon their marriage. (Why, I had wondered, are they going to such lengths? Surely they don't really think men ride the airlines because stew-

Woman power



The march down Fifth Avenue during the Women's Strike for Equality, Aug. 26, 1970, organized by Betty Friedan. Right, she speaks at last month's NOW convention in Washington.

ardesses are nubile. And then I realized how much money the airlines saved by firing those pretty stewardesses before they had time to accumulate pay increases, vacation time and pension rights. And how I love it now, when stewardesses hug me on an airplane and tell me they are not only married, and over 30, but can even have children and keep flying!)

I felt a certain urgency of history, that we would be failing the generation coming up if we evaded the question of abortion now. I also felt we had to get the Equal Rights Amendment added to the Constitution despite the claim of union leaders that it would end "protective" laws for women. We had to take the torch of equality from the lonely, bitter old women who had been fighting all alone for the Equal Rights Amendment, which had been bottled up in Congress for nearly 50 years since women had chained themselves to the White House fence to get the vote.

On our first picket line at the White House fence, ("Rights not Roses") on Mother's Day in 1967, we threw away chains of aprons, flowers and mock typewriters. We dumped bundles of newspapers onto the floor of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission in protest against its refusal to enforce the Civil Rights law against sex-segregated "Help Wanted: Male" ads (for the good jobs), and "Help Wanted: Female" ads (for gal Friday-type jobs). This was supposed to be just as illegal now as ads reading "Help

Wanted, White" and "Help Wanted, Colored." We announced we were going to sue the Federal Government for not enforcing the law equally on behalf of women (and then called members of our underground in the Justice Department to see if one could do that)—and we did.

I gave lectures in Southern finishing schools and commencement addresses at out-of-the-way colleges of home economics—as well as at Yale, U.C.L.A. and Harvard—to pay my way in organizing NOW chapters (we never did have money for an organizing staff). Our only real office in those years was my apartment. It wasn't possible to keep up with the mail. But when women like Wilma Heide from Pittsburgh, or Karen De Crow in Syracuse, were so determined to have NOW chapters that they called long distance when we didn't answer their letters—the only thing to do was to have them become local NOW organizers.

I remember so many way stations: going to lunch at the for-men-only Oak Room at the Plaza Hotel with 50 NOW women and demanding to be served. . . . Testifying before the Senate against the nomination to the Supreme Court of a sexist judge named Carswell who refused to hear a case of a woman who was fired because she had preschool children. . . . Seeing the first sign of a woman's underground in the student movement, when I was asked to lead a rap session at the National Student Congress in College Park, Md., in 1968. . . . After a resolution for the

liberation of women from the mimeograph machines was laughed down at the S.D.S. convention, hearing the young radical women telling me they had to have a separate women's lib group—because if they really spoke out at S.D.S. meetings, they might not get married. . . . Helping Sheila Tobias plan the Cornell intercession on women in 1968, which started the first women's studies programs (how many universities have them now!). . . . Persuading the NOW board we should hold a "Congress to Unite Women" with the young radicals despite differences in ideology and style. . . . So many way stations.

I admired the flair of the young radicals when they got off the rhetoric of sex/class warfare and conducted actions like picketing the Miss America beauty contest in Atlantic City. But when Ti-Grace Atkinson — whom I originally pushed forward in NOW because her ladylike blond image would counteract the man-eating specter—told establishment women at the National Conference of Christians and Jews that the prostitute was the only honest woman, did it build the women's movement or alienate women?

The media began to publicize, in more and more sensational terms, the more exhibitionist, down-with-men, down-with-marriage, down-with-childbearing rhetoric and actions. Those who preached the man-hating sex/class warfare threatened to take over New York NOW, and National NOW, and drive out the women who wanted equality,



but who also wanted to keep on loving their husbands and children. Kate Millett's "Sexual Politics" was hailed as the ideology of sex/class warfare by those who claimed to be the radicals of the women's movement. But after the man-hating faction broke up the second Congress to Unite Women with hate talk, and even violence, I heard a young radical say, "If I were an agent of the C.I.A. and wanted to disrupt this movement, that's just what I would do."

BY 1970, it was beginning to be clear that the women's movement was more than a temporary fad, it was the fastest-growing movement for basic social and political change of the decade. The black movement had been taken over by extremists; the student movement was immobilized by its fetish for leaderless structure, and by the growing alienation from extremist hate rhetoric. Someone was trying to take over our movement too — or to stop it, immobilize it, splinter it—under a guise of radical rhetoric, and a similar fetish against leadership and structure. "It's fruitless to speculate whether they are C.I.A. agents, or sick, or on a private power trip, or just plain

stupid," a black leader warned me. "If they continually disrupt, you simply have to fight them."

The disrupters of the women's movement were the ones continually trying to push lesbianism or hatred of men, even though many weren't lesbians themselves and didn't act privately as if they hated men. They even tried to push purple armbands saying "We Are All Lesbians" on women attending a march on abortion and child care at Gracie Square. The responsible lesbians in the women's movement fought these disrupters. Who or what was really behind it? Some of the disruption seemed to be instigated by extreme left groups. Also, I never told anyone, but very early, Ti-Grace Atkinson took me to lunch in Philadelphia with the wife of a top C.I.A. official, who offered to help us. I told Ti-Grace we didn't want any help from the C.I.A. Sometime in 1968, we heard that 200 women had been trained by the F.B.I. or the C.I.A. to infiltrate the women's movement—as is known was done by the F.B.I. in the student and radical movements.

In the spring of 1970, a very troubled woman whom I had trusted came to see me

one night. She told me a story I could hardly believe. The lesbians were organizing to take over NOW and the women's movement, she said; they had used me, since they needed me for respectability and for my "contacts"; and she said they had given her the assignment to "seduce" me and blackmail me into silence. It seemed dangerous then to publicize this attempted lesbian take-over—even if it were true. I was considered square, uptight, old-fashioned, conservative, etc., about lesbianism; and considering my Middle American background, maybe I was. I think everyone has a right to sexual privacy—and to each her/his own (as long as it doesn't hurt or exploit anyone else). But it was both hurting and exploiting the women's movement to try to use it to proselytize for lesbianism because of the sexual preferences of a few. This could only subordinate the great issue of equality for women, the opportunity and institutional changes that all women so desperately need. As president of NOW, I never knew, or wanted to know, any woman's sexual preferences. But I warned those who were pushing lesbianism in New York NOW that they were creating a sexual red herring that would divide the movement and lead ultimately to sexual McCarthyism. It seemed to me the women's movement had to get out of sexual politics.

I thought it was a joke at first—those strangely humorless papers about clitoral orgasms that would liberate women from sexual dependence on a man's penis, and the "consciousness-raising" talk that women should insist now on being on top in bed with men. Then I realized, as Simone de Beauvoir once wrote, that these women were merely acting out sexually their rebellion and resentment at being "underneath" in society generally, being dependent on men for their personal definition. But their resentment was being manipulated into an orgy of sex hatred that would vitiate the power they now had to change conditions they resented.

THE disrupters who are viciously promulgating, or manipulating, this man-hate may be very few. (Others, like Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone, Robin Morgan, Ti-Grace, Flo Kennedy and — somewhat more subtly — Gloria Steinem, seem to be honestly articulating the legitimate and

too-long-buried rage of women into a rhetoric of sex/class warfare, which I consider to be based on a false analogy with obsolete or irrelevant ideologies of class warfare or race separatism.) The man-haters are given publicity far out of proportion to their numbers in the movement because of the media's hunger for sensationalism. (For instance, at last month's NOW convention in Washington, the television cameramen only turned their lights on for the resolutions on lesbianism and rape, ignoring the hundreds of other resolutions on economic, political, social and educational breakthroughs.) Many women in the movement go through a temporary period of great hostility to men when they first become conscious of their situation, but when they start acting to change their situation, they outgrow what I call the pseudoradical infantilism. But that man-hating rhetoric increasingly disturbs most women in the movement, in addition to the women it keeps out of the movement.

On the plane to Chicago, preparing to bow out as president of NOW, feeling powerless to fight the man-haters openly and refusing to front for them, I suddenly knew what had to be done. A woman from Florida had written to remind me that Aug. 26, 1970, was the 50th anniversary of the constitutional amendment giving women the vote. We needed to call a national action—a strike of women to call attention to the unfinished business of equality: equal opportunity for jobs and education, the right to abortion and child-care centers, the right to our own share of political power. It would unite women again in serious action—women who had never been near a "women's lib" group. (NOW, the largest such group, and the only one with a national structure, had only 3,000 members in 30 cities in 1970.) I remember that, to transmit this new vision to the NOW convention in Chicago, warning of the dangers of aborting the women's movement, I spoke for nearly two hours and got a standing ovation. The grass-roots strength of NOW went into organizing the Aug. 26 strike. In New York, women filled the temporary headquarters volunteering to do anything and everything; they hardly went home at night.

Mayor Lindsay wouldn't close Fifth Avenue for our march, and I remember start-

ing that march with the hoofs of policemen's horses trying to keep us confined to the sidewalk. I remember looking back, jumping up to see over marchers' heads. I never saw so many women; they stretched back for so many blocks you couldn't see the end. I locked one arm with my beloved Judge Dorothy Kenyon (who, at 82, insisted on walking with me instead of riding in the car we had provided for her), and the other arm with a young woman on the other side. I said to the others in the front ranks, "Lock arms, sidewalk to sidewalk!" We overflowed till we filled the whole of Fifth Avenue. There were so many of us they couldn't stop us; they didn't even try. It was, as they say, the first great nationwide action of women (hundreds of men also marched with us) since women won the vote itself 50 years before. Reporters who had joked about "the bra-burners" wrote that they had never seen such beautiful women as the proud, joyous marchers who joined together that day. For all women were beautiful on that day.

On Aug. 26, it suddenly became both political and glamorous to be a feminist. Politics, at first, had seemed to be something altogether separate from what we were doing in the women's movement. The regular politicians, right, left, center—Republican, Democrat, splinter—certainly weren't interested in women. In 1968, I had testified in vain at the conventions of both political parties, trying to get a single word about women in either the Republican or Democratic platform. When Eugene McCarthy, the chief sponsor of the Equal Rights Amendment, announced he was going to run for President to end the Vietnam war, I began to connect my own politics, at least, to the women's drive for equality. I called Bella Abzug and asked how I could work for McCarthy. But not even the other women working for him thought the women's issues were relevant politically, and many NOW members were critical of me for campaigning openly for McCarthy.

At the 1970 NOW convention in Chicago, I said we had a human responsibility as women to end the Vietnam war. Neither men nor women should be drafted to fight an obscene, immoral war like the one in Vietnam, but we had to take equal responsibility to end it. Two years earlier, standing outside the Conrad

Hilton Hotel in Chicago at the Democratic National Convention in 1968, I had watched helmeted troopers clubbing down the long-haired young, my own son among them. I began to see that these young men, saying they didn't have to napalm all the children in Vietnam and Cambodia to prove they were men, were defying the masculine mystique as we had defied the feminine one. Those young men, and their elders like them, were the other half of what we were doing.

And during that summer of 1970, I started trying to organize a woman's political caucus; later, it stuck together enough to get Bella Abzug elected to Congress. She and Gloria Steinem joined me as conveners of our Aug. 26 Women's Strike for Equality march. So many women who had been afraid before joined our march that day; we, and the world, suddenly realized the possibilities of women's political power. This power was first tested last summer in Miami when, for the first time, women played a major role in the political conventions. Although inexperienced caucus leaders may have been too easily co-opted by Nixon or McGovern, they brought change to the political arena. They won commitments from both parties on child-care, preschool and after-school programs. And Shirley Chisholm stayed in the Democratic race right to the end—and, by 1976, I predict that even the Republicans will have a woman running seriously for Vice President, if not President.

AND so, by now, most of the agenda of Stage I of the sex-role revolution—which is how I now see the women's movement for equality—has been accomplished, or is in the process of being resolved. The Equal Rights Amendment was approved by Congress with hardly a murmur in either house after we organized the National Women's Political Caucus. The amendment's main opponent, Emanuel Celler, has been retired from Congress by one of the many new young women who, these days, are running for office instead of looking up Zip Codes. The Supreme Court has ruled that no state can deny a woman her right to choose childbirth or abortion. Over 1,000 lawsuits have been filed forcing universities and corporations to take affirmative action to end sex discrimination and the other condi-

tions that keep women from getting top jobs. The American Telephone and Telegraph Company has been ordered to pay \$15-million in reparations to women who didn't even apply for jobs better than telephone operator because such jobs weren't open to women. Every professional association, newspaper office, television station, church, company, hospital and school, in almost every city, has a women's caucus or a group taking action on the concrete conditions that keep women down.

Lately, I've been asked to lead consciousness-raising sessions for the men who plan the training of guidance counselors in New York and Minnesota, in a Senate subcommittee on health and housing, among cosmetic salesmen in Virginia, at the Air Force Academy in Colorado, and with investment bankers in Florida. The State Department has said that women can't be fired from the Foreign Service just because they are married, and secretaries can't be told to go for coffee. Women are beginning to change the very practice of medicine by establishing self-help clinics that enable women to take active responsibility for their own bodies. Those at psychoanalytic conferences ask me, and other movement women, to help them change their definition of feminine and masculine.

In the women's movement itself, 2,000 women from 400 cities met at the NOW convention in Washington last month, and women from 50 states met at the National Women's Political Caucus in Houston. The rhetoric of sex/class warfare was forgotten in the urgency of blocking the John Birch-inspired campaign to prevent states from ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment. At the NOW convention, a major effort to recruit men for Stage II of the sex-role revolution was proposed; an attempt to delete from our Statement of Purpose the words "fully equal partnership with men" died for lack of support.

The women's movement is no longer just an American possibility. I've been asked to help organize groups in Italy, Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Sweden, France, Israel, Japan, India and even in Czechoslovakia and other Socialist countries. I hope that by next year we'll have our first world conference of feminists, perhaps in Sweden.

The United States Census
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reports a drastic decline in the birth rate, which I credit as much to women's new aspirations as to The Pill. The women's movement is strong enough now to bring out into the open real differences in ideology: I think my view of the sex-role revolution will emerge as the belief of those in the mainstream, and the man-hating fringe will evaporate, having represented a temporary phase, or even a planned diversion. It would be unrealistic, of course, not to expect forces threatened by the women's movement to try to organize or provoke a backlash—as they are doing now in many states to prevent ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. For example, women were given a week off by employers in Ohio, bused over the state line and put up in motels in an attempt to pressure the Kentucky Legislature to block the Equal Rights Amendment. But I remember that the liquor companies spent millions of dollars to prevent ratification of women's right to vote in Tennessee 50 years ago. And today, who is financing the campaign to stop the final act of the women's movement for equality? Not a conspiracy of men to keep women down; rather, it is a conspiracy of those whose power, or profit, rests on the manipulation of the fears and impotent rage of passive women. Women—the last and largest group of people in this nation to demand control of their own destiny—will change the very nature of political power in this country.

IN the decade since the publication of "The Feminine Mystique," the women's movement has changed my whole life too, no less powerfully or joyfully than the lives of other women who stop to tell me about themselves. I couldn't keep living my schizophrenic life: Joan of Arc leading other women out of the wilderness, while holding on to a marriage that destroyed my self-respect. I finally found the courage to get divorced in May, 1969. I am less alone now than I ever was holding on to the false security of my marriage. I think the next great issue for the women's movement is basic reform of marriage and divorce.

My life still keeps changing, with Emily off to college in the fall, Danny getting his Ph.D. at Princeton, and Jonny using his talents in a carpen-

try collective. I've finished my first stint as a visiting professor of sociology at Temple University, and I've written my own uncensored column for McCall's. I've moved high into an airy, magic New York tower, with open sky and river and bridges to the future all around. I've started a weekend commune of grownups for whom marriage hadn't worked—an extended family of choice, whose members are now moving into new kinds of marriages.

The more I've become myself—and the more strength, support and love I've somehow managed to take from, and give to, other women in the movement—the more joyous and real I feel loving a man. I've seen great relief in women this year as I've spelled out my personal truth: that the assumption of your own identity, equality and even political power does not mean you stop needing to love, and be loved by, a man, or that you stop caring for your kids. I would have lost my own feeling for the women's movement if I had not been able, finally, to admit tenderness.

One mystical footnote: I used to be terribly afraid of flying. After I wrote "The Feminine Mystique," I suddenly stopped being afraid; now I fly on jets across the ocean and on one-engine air taxis in the hills of West Virginia. I guess, existentially, once you start really living your life, and doing your work, and loving, you are not afraid to die. Sometimes, when I realize how much flying I do, I think there's a possibility that I will die in an airplane crash. But not for quite a while, I hope, because the pieces of my own life as woman with man are coming together in a new pattern of human sex and human politics. I now can write that new book. In fact, with these words, I have begun it.

I think the energy locked up in those obsolete masculine and feminine roles are the social equivalent of the physical energies locked up in the realm of $E=MC^2$ —the force which unleashed the holocaust of Hiroshima. I believe the locked-up sexual energies have helped to fuel, more than anyone realizes, the terrible violence erupting in the nation and the world during these past 10 years. If I am right, the sex-role revolution will liberate these energies from the service of death and will make it really possible for men and women to "make love, not war." ■