

Women's Rights Gains Reviewed

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In 1963, with the publication of Betty Friedan's book, "The Feminine Mystique," small numbers of women started seriously to question their roles. The movement was hardly earth-shattering then.

In the past eight years, and especially within the last two, what has come to be called the women's liberation movement has grown steadily in scope and intensity. Whether or not everyone agrees with it, everyone talks about it. It has moved from the back pages of magazines to join the feature stories and regular columns. It has been studied by talk shows, TV specials, symposiums, sit-ins, speak-outs and special commissions.

But has the new feminism accomplished any more than making itself a fashionable issue? The early feminists rallied around the concrete aim of winning the right to vote. They won. Then most went home and continued to live as before.

ROLES REDEFINED

The new feminists say they will not be content until the whole social structure is radically altered and women's—and men's—roles are completely redefined. But the modern feminists have their immediate legislative goals, too. Equal employment opportunities, abortion law repeal and 24-hour free child care are the central aims, but politicians, advertisers, psychiatrists, psychologists, educators, lawyers and the clergy have

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been asked to make legislative and procedural changes to accommodate women as equal members of society.

In almost every area of concern, some concrete headway has been made within the last eight years, mostly within the last two. Sometimes the movement women, who have used highly theatrical tactics, have been accused of impeding progress especially in abortion repeal. And even where the movement has its strongest legal basis for progress, in the area of employment, according to Joan Hull, on the employment committee of the National Organization for Women, "our gains are in inches."

Following is a review of the major recent accomplishments in women's rights.

EMPLOYMENT GAINS

Perhaps the most significant gains of the new feminist movement have been in the area of employment. According to the most recent U.S. Labor Department statistics, there were 31,600,000 women in the labor force as of March, 1970, 38 per cent of all workers. Nearly half of them were working out of economic need, being either widowed, divorced, separated, single or living with husbands whose incomes were less than \$7,000 a year.

The employment area is considered vital because the median wage or salary differential between men and women working full-time year-round was greater in 1969 than it was 10 to 15

years earlier. In 1969, the last year for which statistics are available, women earned only 60.5 per cent of what men earned. From 1955 to 1958, they earned at least 63 per cent.

Feminists see two reasons for the wage gap. The first is that women are getting unequal pay for similar work. The second is that women are being shunted into low-paying jobs—or believe themselves unsuited for higher positions—and rarely reach executive or supervisory levels.

Progress has been made in both areas because women have two strong legislative tools—the Equal Pay Act of 1963, and Title 7 (the section dealing with employment discrimination) of the

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Civil Rights Act of 1964—which they only began to use in great numbers in recent years.

Feminists also claim that "protective" hours laws are restrictive, not protective, because they keep women from working overtime or on late shifts (and thus earning higher wages or, perhaps, promotion). In most industrial states except Ohio, legislatures have repealed such laws, or attorneys general have declared them contrary to Title 7.

STEADILY BACK

Women have been moving steadily backward in politics. Twelve women now sit in the House and one, Margaret Chase Smith (R-Me.), sits in the Senate. This is the lowest number in 18 years. Eight years ago, a record 19 women sat in Congress. State legislators are doing no better. So politics has been making its way quickly up the women's lib priority list. This year getting women elected to public office has become as important as the big three areas of day care, abortion repeal and equal status in employment.

It took 47 years, but the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution came out of committee. It made it out of the House Judiciary Committee to the floor last year, over the vigorous

protests of the committee chairman, 82-year-old Emanuel Celler (D-Brooklyn). It was then passed in the House and defeated in the Senate.

This year the amendment is again in trouble. It came out of the House committee this time with an amendment attached, one that the bill's supporters believe virtually cripples it. The amend-

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ment, introduced by Rep. Charles E. Wiggins (R-Calif.), exempts women from serving in the armed forces and allows for the continuance of the so-called protective labor laws, which feminists claim keep them from many well-paying and supervisory jobs. A letter-writing campaign against the Wiggins amendment has been instituted by Women United.

'SHE'S BLACK'

The story goes: "I just saw God." "What does he look like?" "She's black."

It might seem that the religious would be slow to embrace the concepts of women's liberation, yet even in this bastion of tradition large numbers of women have been pressing for equal status. Even more surprising, many of their demands already have been met.

Within the past year, women have won the right to be ordained as ministers in the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is allowing women to vote in the church, and the Episcopal Church voted in November, 1970, to ordain women as elders (though not as priests).

COMPLAINTS FILED

Since 1970, a spate of maternity-leave complaints has been filed against the school boards and private businesses before state economic-opportunity commissions and the courts. Most aim at allowing women to work as long before childbirth and as quickly thereafter as they or their doctors consider appropriate. In Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Washington and Puerto Rico, state laws prohibit women from working for periods

ranging from three weeks to four months before delivery and from three to six weeks after.

But reformers have other targets, too: There are such anomalies as the board of education policy in Sonoma City, Calif., where women teachers cannot take accrued sick leave when they are delivering their babies, but male teachers can use sick leave to help when their wives give birth.

The Citizens Advisory Council on the Status of Women, appointed by the President, issued a statement in principle in November, 1970, asking that the childbirth period be defined as a temporary disability and treated as such.

REPEAL FIGHT

Although abortion was an issue before the women's rights movement became highly active, feminists have joined with abortion groups to fight for repeal of abortion laws in all 50 states. The movement undoubtedly helped propel the wave of abortion-law changes, the first of which occurred in Colorado in 1967. Technically there has been no repeal anywhere in the world in the sense of wiping all abortion laws off the books, but laws have been liberalized to varying extents in 16 states.

Complete repeal bills were filed in more states this year than in any previous one. Among them are five states that already have reform laws.

WORKING MOTHERS

There were nearly 26 million children under 18 years of age who had mothers working or looking for work in March, 1970. Almost 6 million of these were children under six. The Day Care and Child Development Council estimates that about 20 million children are in need of full or partial day care, but according to a Westinghouse study only about 1,300,000 were in centers or pri-

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vate day-care homes in 1970. What little progress has been made has come over the past few years.

Day-care centers have sparked a lot of legislative interest. Congress is now considering four major bills with child-care provisions geared to the needs of low-income parents, but many persons interested in child care feel it will not accept the provisions.

OTHER AREAS

Some gains in other areas include:

Four states have passed laws outlawing discrimination by sex in public accommodations. These are New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. New York City also has passed such a law. New York State and Pennsylvania have outlawed discrimination in the sale and rental of housing. The New York State laws go into effect Sept. 1.

Freud's "Anatomy Is Destiny" thesis is being questioned by the mental-health establishment. Many women psychologists claim that in treatment females are encouraged to fit themselves into the traditional wife-mother role rather than accept the idea that other roles they may prefer are perfectly normal and acceptable.

Shop and home-economics classes are being integrated in school systems in many areas. In Florida, the requirement that women take home-economics courses to graduate high school has been eliminated. Several women have won the right to play on men's teams in no body contact sports, and women are demanding equal funding for girls' physical education departments.