

The discussion provided by the author is intended to be a prolegomena to a feminist analysis of power. Her suggestions as to what should be part of the final analysis include, as well as the fundamental historical materialism, elements of Freudian psycho-analysis and Levi-Strauss' analysis of the origins of human culture. These are elements earlier seen in Juliet Mitchell's *Psycho-analysis and Feminism* (1974), which, although it is not specifically directed toward an analysis of power, is more developed than the analysis provided by Hartsock. If it is agreed that Marx leavened by Freud and Levi-Strauss is the right direction to go, it would be interesting to see this more thoroughly worked out some day. It must be pointed out however that the works of both Freud and Levi-Strauss contain the male conception of eros objected to by the author, and themselves need the sort of feminist restructuring she recommends for the work of Marx. As a prolegomena this work has very worthwhile elements; what is needed now however is to get beyond the prolegomena, beyond the stage of pointing out the errors in past analyses, and on to providing the new one.

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Decades of Discontent: The Women's Movement, 1920-1940. Edited with an introduction by Lois Scharf and Joan M. Jensen. *Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983.*

As Minority Becomes Majority: Federal Reaction to the Phenomenon of Women in the Workforce, 1920-1963. Judith Sealander. *Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983.*

Labouring for ages has reshaped the lives of North American women in the twentieth century. Women's work and political contention over it dominate these two contributions to twentieth-century American women's history. Scharf and Jensen have edited a wide-ranging

and useful anthology which assumes the task of explaining the "faltering" of the women's movement in the twenty years after suffrage. Sealander documents thoroughly the achievements, failures, and politics of the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor in a setting of public and official indifference or hostility to women's needs. Both books inspire useful reflections on feminism's current political adversities.

Scharf and Jensen argue that a number of divisive factors affected American women in the years after 1920. In sections of economic, cultural and political situations their authors demonstrate distinctions by class, race, and ethnicity—long established cleavages in American society, made more visible by recent historians' greater sensitivity as well as by the shattering of late suffrage unity. Mexican immigrants, for example, became increasingly significant in the American population as other immigration was restricted in the 1920s. Rosalinda Gonzalez's excellent overview of their experience suggests that women's employment began to break down patriarchal family forms, "freeing" women for the different hazards of wage-labour exploitation. Dolores Janiewski provides a class and racial geography of Durham, North Carolina and analyzes the racial, class, and gender antagonisms which were reproduced within the union organizations of the 1930s. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn concludes that black middle-class women ultimately had little political effect although they provided leadership in the long campaign against lynching. Like other non-Anglo groups they both chose and were forced to work separately for their own concerns.

Editors and authors of *Decades of Discontent* call attention as well to a subtler barrier between women—the social, economic, and cultural differences between single and married women. In prescription, and for the majority, in reality, single women took jobs and married women worked in the home. Earning a wage and less supervised morally, the stereotypical single

“working girl” best represented women’s new freedom in the 1920s. Despite birth control and the vote, marriage meant sacrifice. Yet cultural imagery countered the glamour of youthful independence. Mary Ryan writes that the movies acknowledged the near universality of employment but portrayed women’s jobs negatively, heightening the impetus to marriage as an escape. As servants disappeared and household appliances were mass-produced, explains Ruth Schwartz Coan, advertisements romanticized the housewife’s labour. Yet beneath the glow of traditional sentiment the lives of married women were changing rapidly: between 1920 and 1940 the total proportion of employed women increased very little while the proportion of employed women increased very little while the proportion of married women in outside jobs grew by over two-thirds, from 9% to 15%. Winifred Wandersee shows that during the Depression many middle-income families relied on wives’ wages to maintain the “American” standard of living glorified by advertising. Lois Scharf’s article demonstrates that women’s organizations in the 1930s may have fought over *how* to protect employed women, but at least they sought actively to do so. Yet, unable to question the primacy of married women’s family commitment, feminists let pass without criticism a social security program systematically biased against women because it was founded on labour force participation. Breezy hopes for equality remained unrealized for single women as well, of course, but this book does well to document the growing complexity of married women’s situation.

Differences among women were used and exaggerated by external political forces. The final section in *Decades*, “Organizational and Ideological Struggles,” raises the issue of feminist political survival after suffrage. Perhaps the problems stemmed not only from losing the vote as a unifying symbol but also from losing an image of innocence which votelessness enhanced. “Women’s issues,” peace and social welfare,

explains Joan Jensen, ceased being beyond partisan politics and were ensnared by that demon of American politics, anti-Communism, as the War Department labeled peace workers “Red Sisters.” Labour and socialist groups sought to limit potential discord by rejecting the propriety of separate women’s organizations. The declining legitimacy of feminist organizing left many women, like the Yiddish writers discussed by Norma Pratt, to experience the pain of “seeming acceptance” by men but “implicit exclusion” (p. 148). Only individually could they voice their grievances as women. Certainly these historians find no veil of female unity to cover the fragmentation of this period. Yet despite defeat and division, the accounts here also acknowledge feminist persistence and achievements.

Scharf and Jensen have edited an excellent collection. Their introduction serves well to draw together the diverse and well-crafted articles. A few pieces are flawed: the account of photographer Marion Post Walcott is weakened by too little analysis of Walcott’s actual work (some of which is printed). The story of international battles between social feminists (maternal feminists) and advocates of equal rights details the conflicts but explains too little of their sources. As a whole, however, the book exemplifies some of the best new writing on the twentieth century.

Judith Sealander has written a solid and well-researched monograph which centers on the work of the Women’s Bureau from its inception in 1920 to 1963, when civil rights legislation for blacks and women began to be enacted. She argues that the Bureau, which grew out of Progressive or social feminists’ vision failed in part because that vision was sustained past its usefulness by female government professionals who stayed at the Bureau for thirty years. She documents admirably the hard work and commitment of Bureau professionals who sought to safeguard exploited wage-earners. The reader shares their frustration at the near total unres-

ponsiveness of Congress and the executive to the Bureau's need for funds and authority and is shown how that marginality stemmed from lack of genuine political power.

One of Sealander's most important contributions is to describe the lives of early women bureaucrats and the networks between them and major voluntary women's organizations like the Women's Trade Union League and the League of Women Voters (successor of the major suffrage organization). These networks explain the survival and political influence (such as it was) of the outnumbered and ignored Bureau workers.

Even more investigation of the backgrounds of Bureau employees might have offered a route to understanding the bitterest feminist conflict in the 1920s and 1930s, since as Sealander notes, "Educated middle-class women advocated or opposed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) either as a boon or a harm to an economic class of women to which they did not belong." (p. 76) Neither Sealander nor writers in the Scharf and Jensen volume really advance our insight into this battle in which Women's Bureau professionals took a major part as providers of data to justify protective legislation (and oppose the ERA). As the Scharf and Jensen volume makes clear, paid employment affected different categories of women in different ways. Perhaps this diversity contributed to the inability of feminists to agree on the meaning of paid work for women. Employees of the Bureau were ambivalent, calling for "advancement" and equality for women yet also insisting on the need for restrictions on women's labour owing to their greater vulnerability. As Stanley Lemons has noted in *The Woman Citizen* (1973), virulent anti-social welfare attitudes in the U.S. made the use of arguments about women's "specialness" essential to achieving any labour protections—men had to be sacrificed—while in Europe, her protection was more prevalent for male and female workers, feminists could afford to stress equality.

But more is involved. Both books under review note the predominance of attention to women in manufacturing at a time when clerical and professional employment were growing more rapidly. What accounts for the Women's Bureau's unwillingness to concern itself with office workers or to identify and discuss the difficulties of professional workers? Was it perhaps the fact that industrial workers, who were unquestionably much exploited, also fit into a class structure with which Bureau employees were familiar and comfortable, while relatively more "privileged" women workers were new types, less appropriate as objects of maternal feminist assistance? Perhaps significant differences in background, age, or perspective on class relationships divided women in the bureau from advocates of the ERA. The latter group grew beyond the militant National Woman's Party after the Depression and the enactment of New Deal labour legislation while proponents of protective legislation dwindled in number. Sealander helpfully explains the Bureau's prolonged opposition to the ERA (till 1970) by pointing to the exceptionally long tenure of Bureau appointments from the early years. This immobility was owing in part to the lack of opportunities elsewhere for female government professionals.

The major problem with *As Minority Becomes Majority* is one of balance. The Bureau's outstanding research work aside (usefully catalogued in the book), Sealander convincingly argues that the agency was not a success. Salient in her explanation for this is the Bureau's failure to develop ties with powerful (male dominated) agencies and groups which could have made them more effective (but which usually opposed feminist aims!). This conclusion is mitigated by discussion of negative public opinion, unsupportive male trade unionists and business leaders, and government officials indifferent to Bureau goals, but the impression remains that women bureaucrats themselves were at fault. Yet by the book's own account, the

Women's Bureau lacked the power and authority to justify such accountability. As Sealander notes in her introduction, "all the federal efforts here examined remained small, poorly funded, or temporary—losers in a broker state best attuned to the needs of powerful constituencies." (p. 9)

American women's political inefficacy may be ending at last as statistically significant male-female voting differences have emerged and women have begun voting in higher proportions than men. The important changes documented in these two books helped to create this "gender gap." Employment has shifted from "minority to majority" experience, not only for single women but for married women and for mothers. Already nearly half of mothers of preschool children in the U.S. are employed. The tension between productive and reproductive roles has been heightened, and women have sought equality in the family, paid work, and the public world. Between 1920 and 1960 employed women had neither the consciousness nor the power to change American public policy or public opinion on women's status or employment rights. Yet employment deeply affected the lives of individual women who gained fuller lives (professionals), income for the family (Mexican Americans, blacks, middle income women), or new non-family roles (Jewish women writers, single or childless women unionists and socialists). Such experiences among the grandmothers and mothers of today's feminists have made issues of equality in work (paid and unpaid) central to the revived women's movement.

"Determination of one's own sexuality and work," note Scharf and Jensen in their introduction, were "the main areas of conflict for women" in postsuffrage years. On the question of work these two books have much to offer in advancing our understanding of women's lives in the twentieth century. Historians of Canadian women will find them useful for comparison as

they too expand studies of paid labour and public policy and of feminist political work after suffrage.

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Integrating Women's Studies into the Curriculum: An Annotated Bibliography. Compiled by Susan Douglas Franzosa and Karen A. Mazza. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984. Pp. 100.

Integrating Women's Studies into the Curriculum is a rather misleading and gradiose title for this slim annotated bibliography. Franzosa and Mazza argue in the preface and introduction to the bibliography that they have innovatively organized the 500 sources listed in this guide in such a way as to further a feminist reconceptualization of scholarship by illustrating inequities in traditional disciplines. No bibliography can accomplish that. What this text does provide, however, is a good checklist to keep in mind when filling up gaps in university libraries.

In keeping with the goal of the text, Section I is entitled "Bibliographic Studies and Resource Guides." Section II includes material on "Issues and Perspectives on the Integration of Women's Studies." The rest of the text is organized along more traditional disciplinary lines.

Notably absent are references to many excellent Canadian feminists' works and to Canadian learned journals. Also, given the current rate of production of feminist literature, the bibliography is already dated.

Despite these problems, the guide is not without some value. Given the interdisciplinary nature of feminist scholarship, it is difficult to be aware of all the material being produced. *Integrating Women's Studies into the Curriculum*