

The Working Woman: Leadership for the '80s

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I travel a great deal and I belong to a number of boards and committees because that is where I find out what is going on, what the concerns are, what women want, what men expect of women,



and how we are all getting along together. Let me give you some background figures before we go rolling into questions that come to me from working women. These questions I will tell you right now, have to do with salaries (you might have some interest in salaries), stress, job burnout, and changing careers. These are the four areas in which I get the most questions and the most concerns. Well, what happened to get us to that state? Just a few facts or statistics so that we are all coming from the same place:

I am a mother, I have three grown kids, and I know that women who stay home and raise children and run households work. But when I say working women, I am using a Department of Labor definition: work full time or part time outside of the home for pay. In 1950, 17.3 million women worked outside the home. Ten years ago 31.5 million women worked outside the home, and right now 46 million women work, or, to be exact, 45,928,000 women are in the work force. This is obviously more than half of all the women in this country. What is happening to women has never happened before in the history of any country. What we are participating in, we who are the new majority, we women who work, is nothing less than a social revolution. It is a revolution that is unprecedented, and nobody quite knows what it means or where it is taking us.

Five years ago Eli Ginzberg was Chairman of the National Commission for Manpower Policy. (It is now the National Commission for Employment Policy: When 42% of the Labor force is women, you have to look at little things like that title). Five years ago Eli Ginzberg said, the rush of women into the labor force is "the single most outstanding phenomenon of our century." The single most outstanding phenomenon of our century, and he was willing to stack it up against anything else going on, like the development of atomic energy, or the development of Communism in Europe. The rush of women into the labor force was the single most outstanding phenomenon of our century and, he added, We don't know what it will mean, and won't until the 21st or the 22nd century. You, we, all of us, are riding on the cutting edge of a social revolution. And, of course, anything that happens to us happens to men and children as well. There is no way it cannot. So where is it all going to go?

First, there will be more of us. We are not through. The Department of Labor has us up to 57 million women in the work force before this century is out. Dr. Ginzberg thinks that we may not stop moving into the labor force until 80% of women are in the labor force. At that point it will be just about the same percentages as men and we will be in very direct competition with each other. Dr. Janet Norwood, the first woman Commissioner of Labor Statistics, said not too long ago, "Women are going to continue to move forward fast in the labor force." How far, how fast, "will depend on how women feel about themselves." I think that it is absolutely key how we feel about ourselves in the labor force. When I travel I hear a lot from women who are not yet comfortable with what has happened to them.

People ask me what is going to happen in the future: O. K. Kate, where is it going to take us? Let me tell you right away, I am no expert. I am an expert on absolutely nothing except that I am an expert on not being an expert. I can say that because editors are that way. You are writing about microsurgery one day and needlepoint the next. I think I know absolutely only one thing about the future, and it is this: About two centuries from now someone is going to sit down and write a romantic, historical costume-drama novel about way back in 1981. You know, a real blockbuster,

one of those novels that is so thick you have to have an intermission in it, and it is going to be in all your libraries, of course, because it will be a real classic. This novel is going to have a heroine, and we might as well call her Scarlett. That is a good name in the South, I think. And it is going to have a hero, and we might as well call him Rhett, because Rhett sounds good with Scarlett. At the very end of this novel, Scarlett has been offered a top executive job in another city. Rhett wants to stay with his law firm in Atlanta. So on the next page, Scarlett has her bags packed, and they are standing at the front door. Rhett is plucking at her sleeve and saying, "But darling, what about my socks? And how long do I thaw the chicken pot pie?" And Scarlett turns on her heel and says, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn." So now you know just as much about the future as I do.

Salaries

One of the questions, as I said, that keeps coming up is salaries, pay scales. Equal pay for work of comparable value. O. K., where are we? The 1980 Census points out that right now the median salary for men is \$17,000 plus change. For women it is \$10,000 plus change, and that's comparing men and women both of whom work full time. I just read in *Time* that men and women graduating with Masters of Business Administration degrees at the same time, with the same background and the same training are experiencing discrepancies in their starting salaries from the word go. The salary difference between a male MBA and a woman MBA is \$9,334.00 a year. That is a little appalling! It isn't true, by the way, of some prestigious schools such as the Harvard Business School. Harvard women start at the same salary as men do. But, guess what? Within five years, a gap has opened and the men are making considerably more than the women, according to a study by Anne Harlan. You all know that statistically women earn fifty-nine cents on the dollar that a man earns.

This discrepancy isn't just rank discrimination. We need to be clear about what is happening and what we are contributing to our own low pay scales. Because we are contributing. You see, three-fifths of all the entrants into the labor force in the last ten years have been women. We have been rushing in by those thousands and millions, and that means that, frankly, we are beginners. We are still in the starting jobs. Of course, those pay less. There is another explanation that is a little sordid, and that is that most of us are still rushing into the wrong fields of endeavor. This has a lot to do with the choices that we made in our schooling and in our careers. Now, I don't know whether librarians work in a female intensive field, but it begins to look like that.

I want to read you a quote that blows my mind every time I look at it. This is from the Vice President for Financial Affairs at Princeton University, a gentleman whom I have never met. But I was reading an interview with him in *Forbes* magazine, and at the very end of it, he said something terribly revealing. He was being modest; he was saying that the relative fiscal wellbeing of Princeton was really not attributable to him. Instead, he said, and I quote him.

"Actually, the smartest things Princeton has done from a budgeting standpoint since I have been here had nothing whatever to do with me. It was co-education . . . Where we had excess capacity was in the humanities and the social sciences which are the areas that women are still disproportionately going to take. Co-education was a superbly timed financial bargain."

I don't know about the counselling services of Princeton, but some place along the line a lot of women did not get very good career advice.

You see, at this point, women represent more than half, 51%, of all the students enrolled in colleges and universities in this country. It never happened before. Here we are 51% of all those enrolled in colleges and universities, and we are still chasing each other like lemmings into the wrong job fields. In fact, women, this huge mass of women, have been predominantly going into only 20 of 440 possible job classifications listed by the Census Occupational Classification System. And you know what those jobs are. Clerical, of course, is the largest one of them, with 13 million people, mostly women. Of course they include teaching, retail sales, health services, maybe they even include librarians. The truth of the matter is that we are bringing into effect the very simple law of supply and demand. In those 20 fields women are bargains in warm bodies.

How do you handle a question like equal pay for work of comparable value when you have a situation like the one I have just been describing where the laws of supply and demand are depressing women's salaries in female intensive fields? But they are not depressing salaries only in female intensive fields, that is what makes us concerned. It makes us concerned when those women MBAs start out at \$10,000 a year less than a man does. What is going on out there? Eleanor Holmes Norton pointed out when she was the head of the EEOC, that in some states state librarians with advanced degrees make less than state liquor store clerks. She went on to question

whether the skills, training, and talents that a librarian, usually a woman, brings were not perhaps worth more than the skills a liquor store clerk, usually a man, brings. His skill is essentially making change. How do you handle this?

What they did in San Jose, California, was interesting. Are you all up on the San Jose case? That case of equal pay for work of comparable value was started by a librarian. A senior librarian in the municipal system noticed that there was something funny about the pay scales. The librarians were being paid less than the groundskeepers and the gardeners. In San Jose the mayor is a woman; seven of the council members are women; the entire school board was women: a powerfully female city, and yet here were these sorry discrepancies. Well, an administrator wanted a survey done. So he got Hays Associates to document the management salaries and the librarian assembled a team of people to examine the non-management pay scales with the consultant from Hays Associates to help them make sure that everything meshed. They came up with discriminatory wage differences.

The thing that fascinates me is that no one disagreed. Every one agreed that the discrepancies existed, there was pay discrimination against the women. Even the people who didn't want to correct it agreed. It was an open and shut case. Then something happened that worries me. It looked for a while as if a gentleman's agreement was going to be made. The Mayor, Janet Gray Hayes, said, Gee, they did a marvelous presentation. It was absolutely fascinating what they found out, and they were very compelling. But, of course, we don't have the money to correct it. She was expecting that these women would be good girls, and look at the facts that it was the taxpayers' dollar that was being spent. (Whose dollar is being spent on men's salaries, while we are at it?) The women — and men who were also being discriminated against in the female intensive jobs — decided to go on strike. They went out for nine days. So, guess what, they got 1.5 million dollars' worth of salary increases. What worries me, as I said before, is that they almost continued to get away with it. I think it is important that they expected women to be nice about it.

Women are really beginning to see the handwriting on the walls. The *Chronicle of Higher Education*, for instance, surveyed career goals for freshman women and found those hoping to be teachers was down from 38% to 10%. At *Working Woman* magazine, we experience that, of all fields, teachers are trying hardest to get out. We do an article every year on how to change careers if you are a teacher because women are so stuck there. So, freshman women hoping to be business owners or executives was up from nearly zilch to about 10%. That is a good sign, too. It is more realistic.

None the less, as I travel around the country, what I see on campuses and what I ask is, What is your worst problem here? It's not drugs, and it's not sex; it's nothing exciting like that. It's apathy. Assistant dean after assistant dean tells me, our problem is apathy. There is still an enormous number of young women in this country who think that Prince Charming is going to come and fix it all up. Prince isn't coming, or if Prince does come, his armor is going to get rusty. Or, I love this: Alexis Herman, when she was the head of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor said, "Prince Charming isn't coming, or if he does, it will probably be on a Honda and he will expect help with the payments."

Smith College did a survey of their alumnae and discovered that in 1959 four graduates went into teaching for every one who went into business. In 1979, one graduate went into teaching for every four that went into business. And of course the movement of women into all of the graduate schools, the percentage of women in engineering and even dentistry, is way up. That is exciting and interesting because even if a MBA degree doesn't get a woman as much as it gets a man, it certainly gets her a lot more than automatically diving into one of the female intensive fields does. So there's bad news and good news; it's that old business of is the cup half full or is it half empty. This reminds me of a story credited to former Secretary of State Muskie. There is this Maine farmer, you see, and he is on his tractor going up and down his fields and along comes a big car zooming down the road, screeches to a stop, backs up and out gets a gentleman in a Stetson hat. The guy in the Stetson walks over to the farmer and says, "Is this your farm?" and the Maine farmer says, "ayuh." The guy in the Stetson says, "That's interesting, I am a farmer, too. Please tell me about your farm." The Maine farmer says "Well, my farm goes from the fence over there to the trees back there to the creek over there and back to the road over here." The guy in the Stetson says "That is nice. Now let me tell you about my farm. I am from Texas, and on my farm you can get in your car at dawn and you can drive all day long, and in the evening when the sun goes down, you still haven't come to the end of my farm. Now what do you think of that?" The farmer thinks for a while and then he says "Ayuh, once I had a car like that too." So bad news or good news, it's all in the perception.

I have a terrible time trying to convince women that perhaps there are fields for them other than just the female intensive ones. This country is becoming a service industry country. According to the Department of Labor, by 1990 75% of all jobs will be in service professions, service industries. Those will be men's jobs as well as women's. We are down to seventeen percent of jobs being in manufacturing. Now, the only area in which women may not be able to perform as efficiently as men is in those jobs that take upper-arm strength, right? Service industry jobs don't take upper-arm strength at all. We are looking at a time not only of a movement towards service industry, but toward 1990 when forty percent of all the jobs in this country, according to IBM (which has a vested interest), will be in information processing. I don't think I have to tell you about that because your libraries are moving into automation, too, and fast.

We are moving away, as a professor of business at the University of Chicago said, from muscle industries to mind industries. I know you all have wonderful careers going for you, but what I tell other women across the country is where the jobs are now, should you be unhappy with what you are doing. Computers are it. I read in *Wall Street Journal* what, in view of this enormous boom in computers, is the single fastest growing job area in the United States: Servicing computers. You know the little devils do not always work when you kick them. So employment for data processing machine mechanics will increase between 148 and 173 percent. Following close behind — just so you know where the world is going — the next five categories of outlooks for percentage growth in employment from 1978 to 1990 are: fixing up those machines was number one, and after that came paralegal personnel. I don't know how that sneaked in there because from there on we are right back to computers again: computer systems analysts followed by computer operators, followed by office machine and cash register servicers, followed by computer programmers. It is hard for me to convince women of this because for women these are not sexy jobs. They don't sound sexy; they don't feel sexy. For men a sexy job is one for a faster career ladder and a lot of bucks. Let's take my case for a moment; I am in journalism. I see an awful lot of young women who want to be in journalism. They were raised on Brenda Starr. They have delusions of Lois Lane. Well, journalism is becoming a female intensive field because it doesn't pay well, and when I talk to these young women I say, two doors down the hall from me is the advertising staff, all women, and every single one of them bought a new fur coat last winter. That's where, in my field, the money is. Women should re-decide what sexy is when it comes to jobs and go for the bucks.

Career Change

Another thing that women ask me about over and over again is changing their careers. They are not happy with their original decisions. If you picked a dud career, how do you get out of it? That's a big question. Any radical shift, I tell them, is going to take re-education and re-training. You can move to a lateral job; you can take the basket of skills that you already have and translate them perhaps into some parallel field. Again, to go back to journalism, I probably could have taken my fashion copywriting experience when I first started and moved to a retail store or to an advertising agency. That skill would have been transferable at a lateral level, but it really would not have gotten me out of writing fashion copy. So what do you do when you do want to switch? It bothers me that so few women know how far the company that they work for will go to help them to change fields, or to improve their job within the same field. Men are getting their work seminars paid for all the time. Most corporations that I know and talk to do have tuition refund policies, some of them limited to courses that apply directly to the job. Some let you take anything — pottery 101 — so it distresses me that many women are not taking advantage of what is available to them.

I am encouraged to see many schools and universities coming down out of the clouds and looking at where the jobs and the careers of the future are going to be, especially the community colleges and the continuing education classes that are helping women and men to work on practical job tracks. But, you have to be careful, really careful about what courses you take. I was doing a radio show in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I was in New York doing this on the telephone with my talk-show hostess in Grand Rapids who had an open phone, and people could call in to her. We were talking about jobs and career changes. A woman called in and she said, "I am 50, I was in college and I dropped out when I was 19 to get married and have a family. Now my children have grown, and I must go to work, so I am back in college getting my degree." I said, "Wonderful. What are you studying?" "I am majoring in English and History." Well, we talked a little and after a while she said, "I think I'd better change my plan," and I said, "I think so, too." I have gone all over this country and I have asked groups like this, where is a 50-year-old woman with no work experience and a brand new BA in English and History going to find a job? No one has been able to tell me yet.

and yet we know that the colleges need to fill tenured faculty's classrooms. If they can talk women into continuing to go into those wonderful areas of the social sciences and of the arts and humanities, they will. We have to be awfully sure that we don't let ourselves get pushed there unless we really want to.

It is important for all of us to remember that right now is a stinky time for women in the labor force. The cuts that have been made in the budget are going to impact hardest on women. Government itself is being cut and government is the biggest single employer of women. The arts are being cut; the humanities are being cut; the social services are being cut; all of the areas in which women excel are being cut. It looks pretty drab right now, but it doesn't look so drab a little further down this very decade. Peter Drucker, that great panjandrum of management, pointed out in 1980 "that the most important development in the next ten years, the area to which managers should devote particular attention is the imminent labor shortage in the developed countries. Young people will not be available for traditional jobs in manufacturing and services. Changing birth rates and life expectancy play an essential role in the equation." It is the old baby boom that is doing it to us, as you know. By the end of this decade there will be six million fewer entrants into the labor force, male and female aged 18 to 24, than there were at the beginning of this decade. At the same time, as I told you, 51 percent of those enrolled in schools of higher learning are women. Where is the country at a time of declining productivity going to go to find people it needs to run this economy? It's going to have to turn more and more to women, and if we are smart, we will make sure that we know that and that we negotiate from the new strength that we will have.

Now, I can really fantasize, and tell myself that the time may come when women will have fewer options than they do now. You know we still do have the options, most of us, to get our degree, get our fancy education and then say, I have decided I am going to go home and have babies and cookouts. Well I can fantasize that the time might come when we are told, "No, sorry, gang. This economy needs your participation, your skills, your education. You can't go home and have those kids until you put in a couple years of work." O. K. it is an off-the-wall fantasy, and mine alone. You won't find it anywhere else. But I don't know that it is any more off-the-wall than Herman Kahn's.

Herman Kahn that great futurologist who has been the head of the Hudson Institute, says that by the end of this century fifty of the chief executive officers of *Fortune* 500 companies will be women. How you like that for fantasy? He says so and that is a cheery sign. It's very important, though, that we all remember that we don't necessarily want to be chief executive officers. We really don't all want to be the president of a university.

I was listening to a panel talking about this kind of stuff, and the women in the audience were getting up and asking questions about balanced lives: want to have a family, want to have a career, want to have an education, want to have power, want to have money, *all in balance*. Finally, George Ball, who is the chief executive of E. F. Hutton & Company, couldn't stand it any longer. He said to want to be a CEO, you have to be a freak. Later on, when we went to interview him, he changed "freak" to "eccentric." But the point that he was making, is that you cannot have a balanced life, if you want to get to the very top. A lot of us don't want to get to the very top.

The female intensive fields will still be needed, and I don't want to try and talk any of you out of doing what you really love doing, even if it is in the female intensive area, but as we draw back from some of the areas which are underpaid and unattractive labor, they will start to become more attractive. There is a shortage of 250,000 secretaries in this country right now. People are scratching their head and saying, gee, maybe we should make being a secretary more attractive, maybe we should open career paths, maybe we should make it possible for them to move on. And, we all know what is happening with nurses. Their salaries may not have gone up much, but they are being given free cars, free day care, many incentives. Here goes the old law of supply and demand working the other way around.

Burnout

Another area that I get asked about all the time as I told you at the beginning is burnout. What do you do if you have been sitting at the same dull job, knocking yourself dead forever, and you feel you are just burned out? Well burnout ranges all the way from boredom to disease and if it is the disease you better go and find really good professional help. Most of you probably know about the Framingham Study. The Framingham Study done outside of Boston with groups of people in different kinds of work disclosed that working mothers who were clericals had a higher rate of heart disease than any other group studied. The only thing that any one could figure out was that the combined frustration of being stuck in their jobs, plus the stress of running households as well

as doing a full time job was causing literal disease. Stress, save the biggest questions for the last, and the worst.

Stress

First of all let's get cheery about stress. Everybody has stress. If you didn't have stress, you would be dead. There is no way not to have stress except to be dead. There is good stress, and there is bad stress. Right now, however, we are talking about the social revolution that we are all a part of, and the truth of the matter is that women do have stress for some good solid reasons. I don't know if it helps you, but it helps me to be aware of what those reasons are. One of them is the absence of role models. We are out there doing things women have not done before, at least in many fields. We don't have the experience of our mothers having had the exact same job as we do, and we are running through what is for us new territory. That is stressful. Karen Burstein, a former New York State Senator said "We women are inventing ourselves everyday." That's stressful.

Also, we are experiencing new levels of ambition and competition. We didn't know we had ambition and competition for a long time. We didn't like the words. We didn't like "aggressive," "assertive" was bad enough. We are learning to face that we are ambitious and that we are in competition with each other, and that is hard. Have you heard the story about two campers, which has something to do with this? Two campers were out camping, and we will make them women campers. In the middle of the night one of the women woke up because she heard a noise. She looked outside the tent and there was a grizzly bear pawing through their knapsacks. She woke up her fellow camper and said, "We've got to get out of here. There is a bear in the food." The second camper instantly started putting on her running shoes. The first camper said, "You dodo, don't you know that it is impossible for a human being to outrun a grizzly bear?" And the second camper said "Yeah, yeah, I know that. I was just hoping maybe I could outrun you!" Very interesting to tell that story to a room full of men, and then to tell it to a room full of women. From women I get a lot of groans and gasps. Men roar. We are facing the fact that we are competitive and have to acknowledge that to ourselves.

We have another reason for stress. And that is that we have no failure models. You know a failure model is just as important as a role model. It is wonderful to know that people can fail and survive, and yet most women aren't willing to be less than perfect. They want not to fail.

Another reason that we have stress is that we are working all the time with skeptical audiences, people who are waiting to see if we can handle what is next and what is out there. And, the last reason is that we work more hours than men do. That's stressful. We literally work more hours than men do because we still come home to run the lives of our households and our families. We don't like being superwomen, but there it is. The Urban Institute in its recent book, *The Subtle Revolution*, pointed out that men still contribute only 18 percent of the time necessary to run households and raise children. Mind you that figure is up from 14 percent, not because men are contributing more. The fact is that women are doing less. Women looked at the superwoman stuff, tried it on for size, and are rejecting it while dust mice frolic under the bed. But then you know no one was ever bitten by a dust mouse. For men, it is not easy. It is not easy to give up privilege after you have been taken care of all of your life. I mean that seriously. It is not easy to give up privilege, but I think men are as fair as anyone else and are willing to give up some privilege in return for tradeoffs. Well, are there tradeoffs? There certainly are. Men are beginning to recognize how women's liberation has liberated them.

In an interview in *Working Woman* the anthropologist, Lionel Tiger, said "Many women know that their jobs are part of their courtship apparatus." That's sort of like having good legs, I think. And Tiger continued, "The man has accepted the ethic that women should be as efficacious as men and therefore wants a woman who is talented, skilled, etc." The corollary to Tiger's remark is that the woman's ability to earn income for her own and her family's needs relieves the man of a burden that is about as old as the Industrial Revolution. That is the burden of ceaselessly day in and day out, year in and year out, earning the entire wherewithall for the family. One liberation for men is the option to change careers, even if it means a setback in salary. Other options are to go back for new training, new education; to refuse to relocate unless the move serves his family's convenience; to say no as more and more men are drawn to working conditions that offer inadequate personal rewards. That kind of men's lib can be very habit forming, and it is women who are offering it to men.

Speaking of needing more help from men. We need more help, too, with this business of pay parity. You all know that women earn 59 cents to the dollar a man earns. This, of course, reminds us of the Bible, (Leviticus, isn't it?) in which it turns out that a man is worth fifty shekels and a

woman is worth thirty shekels. So, the proportion hasn't changed in 2,000 years. If it is going to change, we need to have men's help in changing it. We need to make it clear to men in dual income families — and that is two-thirds of all the families in this country now — that they, too, are suffering from the inequality of their wives' paychecks. After all, men are losing women's services at home, and they have agreed — the man and woman together have agreed — that they need the income she can bring in and so she, too, is going out into the work force. How come men are willing for her to come back with only 59 cents of what she is worth? It is the whole family who suffers, including the men.

Here is a small very macabre side of our pay discrimination that I want to give you. This is from *The New York Times* in which Jane Brody was writing about the effects of transsexual operations on people who had decided to change gender — men who wanted to become women and women who wanted to become men — and she reported that “those who changed from female to male all earned more after surgery, while most of the male to female patients had to settle for a lower income after the change.” I mean if we ever wanted to see how arbitrary some of this is, I think that is the ultimate proof.

Well, those are the questions that I am hearing and some of the things that I try to say back to the women of this country. Ultimately revolution itself is stressful. We are in a social revolution. It isn't going to go away. We are just going to have to ride it out. Women didn't cause the social revolution. We are the frontline troops, and we contributed to it, but we didn't cause it. Or, at least, we didn't cause it alone. Of course, the women's movement helped. So, too, did employers who saw a great fresh source of able, reliable and intelligent workers. So, too, did husbands and families who agreed the woman's power to earn would benefit them all. And so, too, did the economic forces that have acted on everyone of us in the last several years. As we all know 78 to 79 percent of all the women in the work force work out of plain old-fashioned necessity. This isn't all fun and games. In this revolution there is no turning back.

It was an historian who said, “The trouble is the future just isn't what it used to be.” Well, it isn't, but whatever it is is going to be is whatever we help make it. I think it was Mark Twain who was talking about a man being ridden out of town on a rail. Being ridden out of town on a rail is hardly a comfortable thing to have happen and as I remember it what Mark Twain said was, “If it weren't for the honor of the thing, I'd really rather walk.” Well, I wake up a lot of mornings and I think to myself if it weren't for the honor of the thing, I'd really rather walk, and I bet that you would too. Nonetheless, we are there on the frontline of this revolution. Whether it turns out to be good for all of us or bad for all of us is really to a very large extent up to us to decide. So let's continue to ride it out and hope that what happens next, happens with understanding, with commitment and with love.