

1992 to June 1993, the state lost 12,100 jobs, reflecting a 108,450 loss in the Boxer counties and a gain of 96,350 in the rest of the state. From August 1992 to August 1993, the contrast is even greater: the total loss in the state was 20,900, made up of a gain of 106,650 in the Herschensohn counties and a loss of 127,550 in the counties that liked Barbara Boxer.

Of the Boxer counties, Alameda, Los Angeles, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Sonoma, and Yolo, all lost jobs; only Alpine, Contra Costa, Humboldt, Monterey, and Solano gained. The latest figures available show the trend continuing: From December to December, '92 to '93, the state gained 119,800 jobs, losing 34,225 in the Boxer counties, adding 154,025 in the others.

NO DOUBT liberals who see no connection between welfare policies and the collapse of family structure in the slums, or between minimum wages and unemployment, will insist that here, too, other factors must be at work; but the consistency of the pattern, and its consistency with what we know about economics, are pretty convincing. And of course there are some, especially among those not dependent on the private job market, who are ready in any case to bear stoically their neighbors' loss of jobs in the interest of the Harvestman spider. But to those with open minds who care about the state's economic health, however, the county-by-county statistics ought to be one more indication of the soundness of "producer-friendly" policies and of California's urgent need for them.

CPR

Transcending NOW

Growing Weary of the Rhetoric

An Alternative for Women to The Vocal Few

Barbara C. Lydick

THE NATIONAL Organization for Women's predicament in Florida over the Orange Juice Wars was made more interesting by the reactions of some journalists. NOW had attempted a boycott to protest the Florida Citrus Growers Association's decision to advertise their liquid gold on the Rush Limbaugh (that loveable little fuzzi-ball) radio show. But to NOW's dismay, they were faced with a protest to their protest; people emptied the shelves of OJ at a rate of thousands of gallons per day, much of it then donated to charity.

Some reporters seemed to be genuinely surprised at the utter lack of support given P. Ireland & Co. And little wonder. The media have been NOW's water carriers and spear chuckers since

its inception. Moreover, they have chosen to focus their coverage primarily on a very few, albeit very vocal, fiercely ideological (unelected) feminist leaders. Therein lies the problem.

In some respects, the media's support when the movement began was welcomed, indeed constructive, because the attention they gave to it helped lower and in some cases remove institutional barriers women faced. To the naïve at that time (this writerette among them), removing barriers meant gaining access to those organizations. Once there, we believed our participation at higher and higher levels would be based on merit. Well, not exactly.

The Vocal Few have refined the definition of a barrier: it now means any hostile environment, any slight bump to that ubiquitous idea of self esteem. With a straight face they define hostile environment as anything from a cross look from a little boy on the play-

ground to overhearing a profane word in the workplace (both under consideration as actionable offenses, the former by reprimand, the latter by lawsuit).

SOMEHOW, THE Vocal Few have been able to define women as weak, needy, oppressed — as victims of society's inequities and injustices requiring protection under the law from all things unpleasant. And in a curious twist of doublespeak, we also hear that we are the stronger sex and able to bring to the fore more desirable skills than men have ever exhibited. This has escalated to outright male bashing and is close to spinning out of control. One pauses to wonder if Rousseau, even in one of his arboreal flights of fancy, could have constructed so ludicrous a scenario, a few of his fingerprints here, notwithstanding.

It is this — well, the word nonsense comes to mind — that receives the

Barbara C. Lydick is president of B & A Associates, a management consulting firm, and a member of the National Governing Board of the Women's Freedom Network.

most media attention, but, some of us hope, not for long. Readers of the last issue of *CPR* ("Notebook," Winter 1994) were introduced to a new organization, the Women's Freedom Network. This is a group of women grown weary of the rhetoric, concerned by the results it has wrought, and desirous of stemming the media's continued reliance on the Vocal Few because we are safe in the knowledge that P. Ireland, G. Steinem, C. MacKinnon, et al., do not speak for a great majority of women in this country, including the educated and professional ranks.

FOR SOME time, many of us have doubted the veracity of statements made by the Vocal Few in support of their contention that women are oppressed, victims all. To those of us who are mature enough to engage in critical thought, these statements appear to have been derived from specious reasoning and look suspiciously like *a priori* statements posing as studied fact.

We were right. Christina Sommers, associate professor of Philosophy at Clark University, and also on the National Governing Board of the WFN, has written a book, with humor (we may be thankful), that provides hard evidence that these statements are indeed based on manipulated and distorted data. Moreover, she points out clearly that research done on such issues as harassment, rape, economic bias, etc., while well-funded, is quite sloppy. Her book, *Who Stole Feminism?*, has been published by Simon & Schuster and will be available this April.

With a ready file of appropriately credentialed people, the WFN will serve as another address for the media, primarily to refute those who would deliberately foster misconceptions to advance certain agendas. A conference is scheduled for later this spring in Washington, D.C., and it is hoped that C-SPAN will cover it, thus giving the group wide notice.

My own interest in the WFN (as one who's never before been associated with any women's organization) is driven by

my concern with the ill effects this ideological, victimist brand of feminism has had on the business community. After nearly three decades in business, now with my own company, I have seen things progress steadily downhill. The Vocal Few have been the driving force behind some very bad law which has resulted in some very bad consequences. No surprises here; such are the ends of Utopian designs.

Lately, men appear to be questioning the wisdom and value of including women in business. Most companies have had to create bureaucracies that reach into every level of management to protect themselves against harassment and wrongful firing suits. Here in California, the average cost to defend against a wrongful firing is \$80,000 while the median award to a successful plaintiff is \$100,000. Some firms actually violate affirmative action quotas, finding it more cost effective to await an audit than to hire someone who may not work out (someone, for instance, who falls short in performance or who may have their feelings hurt one day and sue) and be subjected to lengthy and costly litigation. Others have just given in, hiring women often disregarding competence and absorbing whatever costs result, feeling they are held hostage to this feminist agenda.

Now companies must factor into the equation the potential consequences relative to the opinion handed down by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (*Ellison v. Brady*) which held that determination of whether behavior or speech constitutes sexual harassment should be based on how a "reasonable woman" would perceive it. Previously the standard had been a "reasonable person."

At another level, men are questioning the wisdom and value of including women they *already know* in the real process of business. They are becoming as prone today to look for signs of these extremist attitudes as some women are to read harassment, sexual or otherwise, into most any situation. Even women who up to this point have exhibited no

signs of these attitudes are cast a suspicious eye. This has created an environment where male/female working relationships have been thrown into confusion resulting in valuable time taken away from the reason everyone is there in the first place.

Women who understand this are rightly concerned. Many fear their advancement could be stalled until some degree of sanity is restored. Case in point: What man in his right mind today would take a woman not well known to him into his office and close the door? What woman seeking membership on the "team" would not want this to happen? Where, one should ask oneself, is the most valuable information shared? Behind closed doors.

Those of us who understand these realities do not wish to be spoken for by the Vocal Few. And no woman should want to have power conferred upon her by those whose understanding of real power is quite shallow indeed. We're made of sterner stuff, the stuff Cervantes referred to when he said, "The woman who is resolved to be respected can make herself so even amidst an army of soldiers."

When we cede independent thinking to groupthink we cede our independence, together with our ability to sway in our favor any argument of substance. Truth becomes trivial, subordinate to the agendas of the interest group.

THE BUSINESS of business is business; the corporate world does not exist to provide women careers. Businesses cannot continue to spend time, energy, and large dollars on things that do not advance their real purposes. If men are assumed guilty until proven innocent, they will harbor resentment and engage in backlash, quietly and not so quietly. Women will advance into the highest ranks of management if we work together with men. Cervantes was right.

We cannot allow the Vocal Few to define and drive their own agendas. I hope my confidence in the collective wisdom of the American woman is well placed. There is so much at stake. *CPR*