

# WOMEN

**W**E ARE FULLY committed to equal employment opportunity," declared a spokesperson for the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. In testimony filed with the Federal Communications Commission in Washington, D.C., ATT said it has been unjustly maligned by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The Bell System, according to EEOC documents, is "the largest oppressor of women workers in the United States," whose "policies toward women are morally and ethically indefensible, and since July 2, 1965, they have been against the law." The report quantified the difference paid to female employees as \$500 million per year less than males with comparable personal characteristics. In regard to blacks, the report found that progress in black employment meant the hiring of large numbers of black females as operators. According to the report, the company was attempting to comply with racial requirements by substituting another form of low-paid work—in effect, replacing one form of illegal discrimination with another.

In rebuttal testimony, a Pacific Telephone official said that his firm has "pioneered new concepts in the employment of minorities and women." Pacific, a subsidiary of ATT, stressed the rapid rate of change in hiring patterns. According to the spokesperson, women are being hired into and transferred to jobs from which they were previously excluded by state protective laws, and minorities and women are being hired at a rapidly increasing rate directly into management positions. Of all the Bell System managers, one-third are women, and more than half, 32,000, earn over \$10,000 annually.

*The work of the Women's News Collective has grown out of a weekly radio program of Women's News at KPFA in Berkeley. We welcome readers' contributions, particularly items from women's struggles outside the U.S.*

**T**HE PLIGHT OF LONDON women who clean office buildings by night and care for their children by day was the subject of a special article in the *New York Times*, July 27, 1972.

May Hobbs, who for the last eight years has been attempting to organize the night cleaners, described her own work. "I had to work at night. With four children, you don't do it for pin money; you go out because you need money desperately, but you can't leave the children to take a day job. I came from a political family, so I knew we were bloomin' exploited."

The two male-dominated trade unions which the women were eligible to join failed to support and encourage them in their struggle for better pay and working conditions. Salaries for the night cleaners range from \$29 to \$34 per week; they work from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. but many stay later to finish their jobs although there is no overtime pay. Only the better buildings provide hot water for coffee or tea, and the women provide their own sandwiches for the dinner hour at 1 a.m.

Two years ago the women cleaners found a new ally, the Women's Liberation Movement. "Month after month they stuck to us and never faltered," said Ms. Hobbs. "Without them we would have failed." Members of the Women's Liberation Workshop printed leaflets examining job conditions and the question of forming a union. They visited selected buildings across London each week, distributing the leaflets and discussing them with the workers. Together, the Women's Liberationists and the cleaners have formed the Cleaners Action Group, whose major goals are adequate staffing of all buildings, a minimum wage of £19 a week (about \$45), sick pay and vacation pay. "Our women are learning to run themselves," Ms. Hobbs said. "They've been suppressed for so many years, they have nothing left to be frightened of."

**A** NUMBER OF ARTICLES and estimates have been published this year on the question of the financial worth of the housewife. Last Valentine's Day, Sylvia Porter's column in *Business World* measured a wife's worth at \$257.53 a week for 99.6 hours of work, based on a study done by Chase Manhattan Bank in 1966. Ms. Porter had updated the Chase figures to reflect 1972 wage schedules in the New York area.

An article perhaps more widely read by housewives appeared in the July issue of *Ms.* magazine. Ann Crittenden Scott used the same figures in her discussion as did Ms. Porter, calculating the annual salary at \$13,391.56. The twelve job categories considered in both articles were: nursemaid, dietitian, food buyer, cook, dishwasher, housekeeper, laundress, seamstress, practical nurse, maintenance person, gardener and chauffeur.

But neither Ms. Porter nor Ms. Scott include the job of childbearing in their calculations of the cash value of a wife. During the week of July 27, a classified ad appeared in the weekly Philadelphia newspaper, *The Drummer*: "Wanted; Female to become pregnant." The advertisement offered \$10,000 plus expenses, a \$3000 educational scholarship and "fringe benefits" to any woman under 26 willing to produce a baby for a childless couple. Many women applied for the job, but the offer turned out to be a hoax perpetrated by Lenard E. Goodfarb, a 45-year-old actuary. As we go to press, Mr. Goodfarb's motives are still questionable, for he has explained that the ad was an attempt to determine the value of the service of childbearing, but has also admitted that the original ad was "30 percent true." One wonders if Mr. Goodfarb isn't prostituting himself.

**I**N SPAIN, IT IS STILL written into the civil code that "for reasons of matrimonial harmony, the husband is the decision maker as his natural, religious and historical right." Without her husband's written permission, a married Spanish woman cannot, for example, transfer property, appear as a witness in court, apply for a passport, sign a contract, or establish a bank account

of her own.

Strong-arm censorship forbids any printed or spoken statement in favor of divorce, abortion or the use of contraceptive devices. Mere participation in a feminist rap session can lead to several years in jail. Even so, a growing number of Spanish women are willing to take the risks involved in working for women's rights in Spain. An underground coalition group, called the Women's Democratic Movement, is currently working to educate Spanish

women to their plight and organize them to take an active stand against social and political oppression.

Perhaps somewhat indicative of the Spanish *macho* mentality is a trial held recently in which a Spanish woman was sentenced to two years and four months in prison after police found feminist propaganda in her apartment. Her husband, who is not politically active in any sense, was sentenced to an equal amount of time. It was somehow inconceivable to the Spanish judge that

a woman could be moved to act politically in her own right, unabettled by a male.

As a relatively recent development on the Spanish political scene, the Women's Democratic Movement is sorely in need of funds for legal defense. Anyone interested in helping the movement financially or in providing it with pertinent literature is asked to contact the Women's Room at 2490 Channing Way, room 504, Berkeley, Calif. 94704.

# Poor Derek's Almanac

**O**NE THING about that new American society we are interested in building: it won't come magically out of thin air or History's hat. It has to be devised, proposed, tested, and struggled for.

Around the country, people are saying it's time for the American left to get on with this work. Whatever the shortcomings of Senator McGovern's program—and there are many—his campaign and convention victory have raised the issue of Issues and Positions on Alternative Policies to the level of public debate, if not public awareness. There is new political fermentation in America, and we would do well to recall what Staughton Lynd wrote last year: "To be serious about being an alternative government, we must be able to talk concretely about how a socialist society would deal with problems which oppress people now."

Our job, in part, is to work out the specifics, to conceive and set up alternative models and to demonstrate that they are not only workable, but better than the present institutions. Already, in many parts of the country, this new round of radical experimentation has begun. The purpose of this column is to facilitate communication between groups and individuals who are exploring specific alternatives and working for them politically. Each month I will report on groups that are doing interesting and important political work, let you know how to get in touch with them, how you can help them, join them, and obtain their literature. In addition, I'll mention articles in journals and magazines that seem worthwhile, as well as new books,

pamphlets, slide shows and films which are relevant to the task of building a new American society.

In deference to Ben Franklin—to whom we owe the name of this column—let us commence with a group called the People's American Revolutionary Bi-centennial Commission (1346 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Room 1021, Washington, D.C. 20036, Telephone (202) 833-9121). The purpose of the Commission is to expose the plans of the Nixon Administration and Corporate America for turning the Bicentennial in 1976 into a gigantic merchandising effort. In addition, it seeks to help communities develop alternative activities which highlight the American radical tradition and suggest alternatives to the future envisioned by America, Inc.

The People's Commission has posters, buttons, pamphlets, records, and proposed programs of action for high schools, universities, and community groups. It makes available 4-minute radio spots, and already over 900 stations have broadcast this material. For \$5, the Commission will send you a complete packet of educational material, including a 15-page booklet on radical democratic thought in America. A subscription to the Commission's bi-monthly newsletter, "Committee of Correspondence," costs \$2 a year. Moreover, by subscribing you will be informed of regional workshops to be held later this fall and next year.

In October, Lyle Stuart, Publisher is bringing out a book called *Revolution American Style—the Bi-centen-*

*nial Declaration*, edited by Jeremy Rifkin and John Rossen, two organizers of the People's Commission. The book will include essays by Staughton Lynd, Bill Domhoff, and Ed Schwartz, as well as Jeremy Rifkin's "The Red, White and Blue Left." Particularly recommended is the piece by Domhoff, author of *Who Rules America?*, on "How to Commit Revolution in Corporate America."

Also soon to be published is the important book, *Strategy and Program—Two Essays Towards a New American Socialism*, by Staughton Lynd and Gar Alperovitz (Beacon Press, late 1972). Alperovitz's essay, "Notes Towards a Pluralist Commonwealth," proposes a vision of decentralized, community-controlled socialism for America. An addendum to the essay lists 15 possible "non-reformist reforms" which people might consider organizing around. Lynd's essay, "Prospects for the New Left" (written in 1971), deals with strategy and tactics for the left over the next decade.

Finally, the July-August, 1972 issue of the journal *Socialist Revolution* (single copies \$1.50; subscriptions \$6.00, 396 Sanchez St., San Francisco, Calif. 94114) has a very informative article by James Weinstein, in which the historian discusses the successes and failures of the old left (and the reasons why) and the growth and present condition of the new left.

*News of political work, including publications, films, slide shows, etc., should be addressed to Derek Shearer, RAMPARTS Magazine, 2054 University Ave., Berkeley, California 94704.*

by Derek Shearer