

**Silvia Federici**

**The Restructuring of Social Reproduction in the United States in the 1970s**

*The following is the text of a paper that Silvia Federici wrote in 1980 for a Conference convened by the Centro Studi Americani in Roma on “The Economic Policies of Female Labor in Italy and the United States.” The Conference was held in Rome on December 9-11, 1980 and was co-sponsored by the German Marshall Fund of the United States.*

New York, (1980)

“If women wish the position of the wife to have the honor which they attach to it, they will not talk about the value of their services and about stated incomes, but they will live with their husbands in the spirit of the vow of the English marriage service, taking them ‘for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, honor, obey.’ This is to be a wife.” – *New York Times*, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1876: “Wives’ Wages”

“The most valuable of all social capital is that invested in human beings and of that capital the most precious part is the result of the care and influence of the mother, so long as she retains her tender and unselfish instincts.” – Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics* (1890).

While it is generally recognized that the dramatic expansion of the female labor force is possibly the most important social phenomenon of the 1970s, uncertainty still prevails among economists as to its origins. Technological advancement in the home, the reduction of family size and the growth of the service sector are offered as likely causes of this trend. Yet, it is also argued that these factors may be an effect of women’s entering the labor force and that looking for a cause would lead us in a vicious circle, a “what comes first, the chicken or the egg”

problem. As this paper claims, the uncertainty among economists stems from their failure to recognize that the dramatic increase of the female labor force in the 1970s reflects *women's refusal to function as unwaged workers in the home*, catering to the reproduction of the national work force. In fact, what goes under the name of "homemaking" is (to use Gary Becker's expression) a "productive consumption" process,<sup>1</sup> producing and reproducing "human capital," or in the words of Alfred Marshall, the laborer's "general ability" to work.<sup>2</sup> Social planners have often recognized the importance of this work for the economy. Yet, as Becker points out, the productive consumption that takes place in the home has had a "bandit like existence in economic thought."<sup>3</sup> For the fact that this work is not waged, in a society where work and wages are synonyms, makes it invisible as work, to the point that the services it provides are not included in the Gross National Product (GNP) and the providers are absent from the calculations of the national labor force.

Given the social invisibility of housework, it is not surprising that economists have failed to see through the 1960s and 1970s that this work has been the main battleground for women, so much so that even their opting for market jobs must be seen as a *strategy* that women have used to free themselves from this work. In this process, women have triggered a major reorganization of social reproduction, that is putting into crisis the sexual division of labor that has so far prevailed and the social policies that have shaped the reorganisation of reproduction in the post-war period. However, despite indications that women are breaking away from the wagelessness of the home, today more than 30% still work primarily as homemakers, and even those who hold a market job devote a considerable amount of time doing work that entitles them to no pay, no social security or pension and none of the benefits that come from a wage. This means that housework is still the major source of employment for American women, i.e. that *most* American women spend most of their time doing work that entitles them to no pay, no social security or pension and none of the benefits that come with a wage.

It is also becoming clear that, in the absence of monetary compensation, women face serious obstacles in the attempt to gain "economic independence," not to mention the heavy price they often pay for it: the inability to choose whether to have children or not, low wages and the burden of a double shift when they enter the labor market. The problems that women are facing appear particularly serious given the economic prospectives we are presently offered, as they emerge from the current debate on the "energy crisis" and the feasibility of a growth versus a non-growth economy. It appears that no matter what path will prevail, women will be the main losers in the "battle to control inflation" or energy consumption. The recent experience of Three Mile Island, for instance, has shown what are the likely effects on women's lives of the type of economic growth that is presently sponsored by the "business community" and the government, which is based on the expansion of

nuclear power, the de-regulation of many economic activities, and increased military spending, Equally unappealing, however, is the no-growth alternative, which promises to women an unlimited intensification of their work in the home, although it would not be devoted to “cleaning up the nuclear mess” but to substitute (by gardening, sowing, etc) for too-much-energy-consuming technology. The question, however, is whether these are the only alternatives we have and, equally important, whether American women will accept them.

### **The Revolt Against Housework**

Although it is rarely recognized, the first signals of women’s refusal to function as unpaid workers in the home did not come from Betty Friedan’s bestseller *The Feminine Mystique*, but from the claims of thousands of mothers during the welfare struggles of the mid 1960s. While developing in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement and usually perceived as a minority issue, the struggle of welfare mothers gave voice to the dissatisfaction of American women with a social policy that ignores their work in the home, stigmatizes them as parasites when they demand public assistance, while reaping enormous benefits from the wide variety of services that they provide to the maintenance of the national work force. Welfare mothers, for example, denounced the absurdity of the government policy that recognizes child-care as work only when it involves the children of others, thus paying the foster parent more than the welfare mother, while devising programs to “put the welfare mother to work.” What was the “spirit” of the welfare struggles is well expressed in the words of one of its organizers:

If the government was smart it would start calling AFDC [Aid For Dependent Children] 'Day and Night Care,' create a new agency, pay us a decent wage for the service work we are doing now and say that the welfare crisis has been solved, because welfare mothers have been put to work.<sup>4</sup>

A few years later, discussing the Family Assistance Plan (FAP) proposal presented in 1971 by the Nixon Administration, Senator Moynihan recognized that this demand was far from extravagant:

If American society recognized homemaking and child rearing as productive work to be included in the national economic accounts...the receipt of welfare might not imply dependency. But we don't. It may be hoped - Senator Moynihan added – that the Women's Movement of the present time will change this. But as of the time I write it had not.<sup>5</sup>

Moynihan was soon to be proved wrong. At the very time when he was recalling the legislative adventures of FAP, a Wages for Housework Movement was emerging in the U.S. and, despite the prevailing climate of austerity, the claims of welfare mothers were reaching so deeply into the consciousness of women that the National Women's Conference held in Houston in 1977 included in its Plan of Action that welfare should be called a wage.<sup>6</sup> Not only did the welfare struggle pose the question of housework, though disguised as a "poverty issue," on the national agenda, it also made it clear that the government could no longer hope to regulate women's work through the organization of the male wage. A new era was beginning when the government would have to deal with women directly, without the mediation of men.

That the refusal of housework was a widespread social phenomenon was further dramatized by the development of the Women's Movement. Women protesting bridal's fairs and Miss America contests were as many indications that fewer and fewer women accepted the home as their "natural place." By the early '70s, however, women's refusal of housework was taking the form of a massive migration into the waged labor force. It is a commonplace among economists to explain this trend as the result of technological advancement in the home and the spreading of birth control which presumably have "liberated women's time for work." Yet, with the exception of the microwave oven and the food processor, little technological innovation has entered the home in the seventies, by far not enough to justify the record growth in the female waged labor force.<sup>7</sup> As for the decline of fertility rates, past trends indicate that the family size is not *per se* a determinant factor in the decision of women to search for a market job, as proven by the example of the 1950s when, in the presence of a baby boom, women, particularly married ones and with young children, began returning in record numbers to the waged labor force.<sup>8</sup> How little women's time has been liberated for work is also shown by the results of several studies, like the one conducted by the Chase Manhattan Bank in 1971, showing that, at the end of the sixties, American women were spending an average of 45 hours per week doing housework, a number that easily escalated in the presence of young children.

If we also consider that the highest rates for women entering the labor force have been among women with preschool children, we can hardly conclude that it is work *per se* that women have been missing, particularly since on a mass level the market jobs women can find are usually extensions of housework. The truth, as Juanita Kreps (1971) points out, is that women "are eager to trade (housework) for a market job that is equally routine and repetitive (because) the difference is the job pays a salary."<sup>9</sup> Another crucial reason for the record expansion of the female labor force, particularly after 1973, has been the extensive cuts of welfare benefits in the course of the '70s. Starting with the Nixon administration, a campaign has been carried out daily in the media blaming all social problems on the "welfare mess."

Meanwhile, across the nation, eligibility rules have been tightened, cutting the number of women who can qualify and increasing the amount of work involved, while the benefits themselves have been reduced despite the steady increase in the cost of living.<sup>10</sup>

As a result, while until 1969 AFDC benefits were higher than the median female wage, by the mid seventies the opposite was true, despite the fact that the median real wage had fallen compared with that of the sixties. Faced with the virtual onslaught on welfare, women seem to have followed the advice of that welfare mother who once commented that if the government is willing to pay women only when they take care of the children of others then women should “swap their children.” Considering that in the labor market they are concentrated in service-sector jobs involving reproductive labor, it could be argued that they have traded off unpaid housework for their families for paid housework in the marketplace,

That the growth of the female labor force reflects women’s refusal of housework also explains the seeming paradox whereby at the very moment when women were entering the labor market in record numbers, housework began surfacing as a worthwhile ground of economic investigation. The 1970s saw a true boom of studies on housework; then in 1975 even the government decided to measure the contribution that housewives’ chores make to the GNP. Again, in 1976, researchers at the Social Security Administration, studying the impact of illness on national productivity, included in their figures the dollar value of housework.<sup>11</sup> Being based on a market-cost approach, the estimates reached were extremely conservative. Yet, the very fact that an attempt was made to make these calculations demonstrates the government’s rising concern with the “family-housework crisis.” Indeed, behind the sudden interest for housework lies the old truth that this work remains invisible only as long as it is done. However, other factors make the housework crisis worrisome for policy makers. First and foremost is the threat to “family stability,” as a correlation is made between the increasing earning capacity of American women, the escalating divorce rate and the concomitant increase of female headed families. By the mid seventies, the government was also becoming concerned that the expansion of the female waged labor force was growing beyond all projected accounts,<sup>12</sup> thus revealing an autonomous character that promised to thwart its plans for it. For example, far from providing a “solution” to growing welfare rates, the increase in the number of women seeking a waged job has created a buffer for welfare benefits, for the disparity between the number of women looking for a job and the jobs available has continually pre-empted the government’s attempts to “put welfare women to work.” Equally worrisome, in the context of the severest recession since the Depression and in the face of prolonged unemployment, has been the seeming “rigidity” of female participation in the waged labor market.

Would women so easily accept to go back to the home, as they did in the post-war period, and would they accept to go back empty handed after experiencing the financial benefits of a wage?<sup>13</sup> It is in this climate that a revaluation of housework has taken place. Yet, despite much lip service little has been done. The value of housework has been recognized in some minor legislative proposals. For example, a government authorized retirement plan passed in 1976 (as part of the Tax Reform Act) has allowed husbands to make contributions to an Individual Retirement Plan (IRA) also on behalf of their non-employed wives. The contribution of the wife to the welfare of the family is also recognized, at least on a formal level, in the no-fault divorce laws that several states have passed in recent years, which allow for a division of the family property on account of the services provided by the wife. (Some recent court cases, however, have turned down the claims of some women demanding a division of the male wage). Finally, the Tax Reform Act of 1976 has allowed parents to deduce childcare expenses from their taxes up to a maximum of \$400 per child (parents, however, must spend \$2,000 to qualify for that sum). As for the possibility of a monetary compensation for housework, the only suggested proposal, so far, has been a symbolic price tag functional to its calculation into the GNP. The assumption is that this would give women a heightened sense of its value and increase their satisfaction with this work. Typical of this approach is the recommendation made by a task force studying work in America:

The clear fact is that keeping a house and raising children is work, work that is, on average, as difficult to do well and as useful to the larger society as almost any paid job involving the production of goods and services. The difficulty is ... that we have not, as a society, acknowledged this fact in our public system of values and rewards. Such an acknowledgement *may begin by simply counting housewives in the labor force*, assigning a money value to their work.<sup>14</sup>

In reality, the only response to women's revolt against housework has been the continuing growth of inflation which has increased women's work in the home and their dependence on the male wage. Yet, despite the virtual absence of supportive legislation and the growth of inflation, women's refusal of unpaid labor in the home has continued through the 1970s, producing significant changes in the organization of housework and the general process of social reproduction.

### **The Reorganization of Social Reproduction**

Women's relation to housework in the 1970s is a good example of what economists call the "income effect," that is, the tendency of workers to reduce their work in the face of increased earnings, although in the case of women what has been reduced has been exclusively their unpaid work in the home. Three trends have

emerged in this respect: reduction, redistribution (otherwise known as “sharing”), and the socialization of housework.

The *reduction of housework* has come primarily through both the reorganisation of many housework services on a market basis and the reduction of family size, beginning with a dramatic reduction in the number of children. By contrast, labor-saving devices have played a minor role in this process. As indicated, few technological innovations have entered the home in the 1970s. Moreover, the persistent stagnation in the sales of household appliances<sup>15</sup> shows a tendency towards the *disaccumulation of capital in the home*, in line with the reduction of family size and the *disaccumulation of the services* the household provides. Even the apartment and furniture designs – the virtually nonexistent kitchen, the trend towards *modular units* and *knock out* furniture – are indicative of the tendency to expel from the home large slices of its previous reproductive functions. Indeed, the only true labor-saving devices women have used in the 1970s are contraceptives, as indicated by the collapse of the birth rate, which in 1979 reached a peak of 1.75 children per 1,000 women aged 15-44. As we are often told, the baby boom of the 1950s has turned into a baby bust, that is deeply affecting every area of social life, from the school system, that has been forced to close several schools, to the labor force, which, if the present trend continues, will see a progressively aging population, to the production industries that are shifting their priorities to the needs of a more adult population.<sup>16</sup>

Despite predictions that a new baby boom is coming, this trend is likely to continue since, unlike in the 1950s, American women today are willing to forego motherhood, even to the point of accepting sterilisation, in order to keep a job, rather than submit to the work and sacrifices that having children entails.<sup>17</sup> (From this point of view, current estimates pointing to the astronomical cost of having children actually grossly underestimate it, even when they calculate the “foregone earnings of the mother.”) A reduction of the work done in the home is also evidenced by the increasing number of women who delay marriage or do not marry (often living alone or in communal settings) as well as the escalating rate of divorces (still primarily filed by women) that, in the 1970s, has marked a new record every year. What this indicates is that marriage no longer seems to be a “good bargain” for women or a necessary one and that, while the refusal of marriage is still not “on the agenda,” women have gained a *new mobility* with respect to men and the possibility of establishing part-time relations with them, where the work element is substantially reduced. To what extent women are refusing to service men for free is also reflected in the continuous growth of female-headed families.

Here, however, some clarification is needed since too often this trend has been interpreted as a “broken home syndrome” produced by the current welfare policies that prevent the payment of Aid To Dependent Children (AFDC) in the presence of a husband in the home. In other words, too often the growth of female-

headed families is seen in a perspective of victimization that ignores women's attempt to reduce the work and the discipline that come with a male presence in the home. That the impact of welfare policies has been overrated is shown by a recent experiment conducted in Seattle where welfare benefits were given to intact couples. After one year, these couples had the same rate of marital dissolution as other welfare families. This indicates that it is not that families break up to qualify for welfare but that *welfare buys women more autonomy from men* and the possibility of terminating a relationship only built on monetary constraints.<sup>18</sup>

Not only have women reduced housework, they have also changed the conditions of this work. For example, women have challenged the right of the husband to claim sexual services from his wife, independently of her consent. The 1979 trial of a man charged with raping his wife was a landmark in this respect, since never before had forcing one's wife to have sex been considered a crime. Equally significant has been women's revolt against battering, that is corporal punishment in the home, traditionally condoned by the courts and the police, that implicitly legitimized it as a "condition of housework." Also in this case *the right to self-defense* that the courts have increasingly recognized to the battered wife has been won on the basis of the power women have gained and their determination to refuse the traditional "hazards" of work in the home.

Another growing tendency in the 1970s has been "sharing the housework" which has long been supported by some feminists as the ideal solution to the housework problem. Yet, precisely when we consider what has been accomplished in this area, we realize the obstacles that women face when they try to enforce a more egalitarian division of labor in the home.

Undoubtedly, men are more likely today to do some housework, particularly among couples where both partners have a job. Moreover, many new couples stipulate a *marriage contract* that establishes the division of labor in the family. In the '70s a new phenomenon has also begun to appear: the *househusband*, possibly more widespread than it is acknowledged, as many men are reluctant to admit that they are supported by their wives. Yet, despite a trend towards a desexualization of housework, as a recent survey indicates, most of the work done in the home is still done by women, even when they have a second job. Even couples that establish more egalitarian relations face a true turn of the tables when a child is born. The reason for this change is the wage benefits that a man forfeits when he takes time off from work to take care of his children. This suggests that even such innovations as *flexitime* are not sufficient to guarantee that housework will be equally shared, given the decline in the standard of living that the absence of the men from work involves. It also suggests that women's attempt to redistribute housework in the family is more likely to be frustrated by the low wages they command in the labor market than by entrenched male attitudes towards this work.



Finally, the clearest evidence that women have used the power of the wage to reduce their unpaid labor in the home has been the explosion of the service (reproduction) sector in the 1970s. (US Department of Commerce 1975: 3-13). Cooking, cleaning, taking care of children, even problem solving and companionship have been increasingly “taken out of the home” and organized on a massified, industrial basis. It is calculated that, at present, Americans eat half of their meals away from home, and the fast food industry has grown in the '70s at a yearly 15% rate, despite the fact that inflation has encouraged the revival of the “do it yourself” habits. Equally significant has been explosion of the recreation and entertainment industry which are picking up the traditionally female task of making one's family happy and relaxed. In fact, as wives and mothers have “gone on strike,” many of their previously invisible services have become saleable commodities around which entire industries are built. A typical example is the novel growth of the body industry – ranging from the health club to the massage parlor, with its multiple-- sexual, therapeutic, emotional-- services, and the industries that have been created around jogging (the popularity of jogging is itself an indication of the new general awareness that you have to “take care of yourself” because nobody else may be doing it). Further evidence of the trend towards the disaccumulation of services in the home has been the growth of daycare centers and the dramatic increase in the number of children enrolled in preschool. (194% for age 3 between 1966 and 1976).<sup>19</sup>

Taken as whole, these trends indicate a major transformation in the organization of social reproduction, in the sense that this work is increasingly desexualized, taken out of the home and, most important, waged. Thus, while the home is still the center for the reproduction of labor power (or “human capital” from a business viewpoint), its importance as the backbone of reproductive services is waning. What has entered into crisis is the organisation of reproduction that prevailed in the Keynesian economic model of the post-war period. Within it, housework was commanded and regulated through the organisation of the male wage, that was to function both as a direct investment in human capital and as an incentive to production through its demand-consumption role. In this model, not only did women’s work in the home become hidden in the male wage, while the only activity recognised as work was the (waged) production of commodities, women became appendages, dependent variables of the changes and transformations in the workplace. Where your husband lived, what job he had and what wages he made directly dictated the intensity of women’s work and their required levels of productivity. However, in refusing to work for free, women have broken with the home/factory, male wage/housework cycle, posing themselves as “independent variables” that the government and employers must confront directly, even at the point of reproduction. This development is also causing the reproduction of labor-power to assume an autonomous status in the economy with respect to the production of commodities, so much so that the productivity of reproductive work

is no longer measured (as it used to) by the productivity of the male worker on the job, but directly at the point where the services are delivered.

Undoubtedly, throughout the 1970s the government and business have attempted to use the reorganization of reproduction to (i) dismantle the social welfare programs which sustained the policy of “human capital development” that characterized the post-war period up to the Great Society, (ii) to contain the male wage that has been climbing through the 1960s. Claiming that social welfare spending has failed to produce the expected results, the government has encouraged the reorganisation of reproduction on a market basis, for it seems to guarantee (despite its low productivity level, at least measured in conventional terms) immediate returns, independent of the productivity of the labor-power produced. Yet, while succeeding in reducing welfare spending and creating a climate where welfare is blamed as one of the main problems of American society, the government has failed to eliminate what can be considered the first “wages for housework.” Most important, while the “female welfare wage” has fallen and women and poverty are *still* synonyms, the *total wage* in the hands of women has decisively increased. As for the attempt to use women’s increasing demands for market jobs to contain male wages (via a reorganisation of production that “underdeveloped the manufacturing sectors while encouraging the development of the service sector”) this too has failed to provide the expected results.

It has been noticed that despite the high rates of unemployment, we have not witnessed in the 1970s the backlash against women’s employment (particularly married women’s employment) that was so pronounced in the '30s and '40s.<sup>20</sup> Men, it seems, have recognised the benefits of a double income, as indicated by the continued reduction of male participation in the labor force. It is even claimed that men are behaving increasingly like women as far as their work patterns are concerned. Not only is the husband-breadwinner-wife-homemaker model breaking down (according to the statistics by the Department of Labor this applies today to only 34% of men of working age), but husbands with wives holding a market job are less likely to accept job transfers (often turning down job promotions rather than face a move that would disrupt their wives' employment), they also change jobs more frequently, prefer jobs that entail shorter hours to higher salaries, and retire earlier than in the past. Moreover, the double pay-check in the family has provided a crucial buffer against unemployment and inflation, as shown by the experience of the last few years when a predicted recession would not “take off” because consumer demand (and consumer debt) kept expanding. Cushioned by the prospect of a double income, families were less afraid of borrowing and spending, to the point that inflation has had the opposite effect that it has had traditionally: it has increased spending rather than diminishing it.

## Conclusions

This paper has argued that women's refusal to be unpaid workers in the home has caused important changes in the organization of reproduction and the conditions of women's work. What we are witnessing is the crisis of the traditional sexual division of labor that confined women to (unwaged) reproductive labor and men to the (waged) production of commodities. All the power relations between men and women have been built on this "difference," as most women have had no alternative but to depend on men for their economic survival and submit to the discipline that comes with this dependence. As already indicated, the main change in this respect has been accomplished by women literally migrating into the waged labor force which, in the 1970s, has been the main factor of women's increased social and economic power. This strategy, however, presents many limits. While men's work has decreased over the last decade, *women today work even harder than in the past*. This is particularly true for women heads of families and women with low wages, who are often forced to moonlight to make ends meet.<sup>21</sup> The burden women are still carrying is well reflected in their medical history. Much is made of the fact that women live longer than men. Yet, medical records tell a different story. Women, particularly in their early thirties, have the highest rate of suicide among the young population, as well as the highest rates for drug use (tranquilizers), mental breakdown and mental treatment (in-patient and out-patient), and they are more likely to report stress and discomfort than men.<sup>22</sup> These statistics are a clear symptom of the price that women are paying for either their life as full-time homemakers or the burden of a double shift, that is, the burden of a life built exclusively on work. Clearly, no positive change can occur in women's lives unless a profound transformation occurs in social and economic policies and social priorities.

However, if what the newly elected Reagan Presidency has promised comes true, women will have to fight a hard battle just not to lose what they have gained in the '60s and '70s. We are told in fact that welfare spending will be cut, the military budget will be increased, and new tax cuts are planned that will certainly benefit business while giving very minor relief to low income people and none to people with no income. Furthermore, the kind of economic growth that the supply-side economists of the Reagan entourage are promoting threatens women with the nightmare of a continuously growing pollution, brought about by increasing nuclear waste and far-reaching industrial deregulation. This means more Three Mile Islands, more Love Canals, more diseases in the family, more day to day worrying about one's health and the health of one's children and relatives, more work to cope with it.

At the same time, it is doubtful that a slower rate of economic growth, based on reduced energy consumption, "could have a beneficial effect on women's role in

society.”<sup>23</sup> The slow-growth economic model usually presented is the model of a society based on intensive labor, and intensifying in particular that “component” of it that is not waged: housework. What “creative personal activities” the soft technology path opens to women is well indicated in the words of one of its supporters, the English economist Amory Lovins: gardening, canning, weaving, do-it-yourself carpentry, making preserves from your own fruits and vegetables, sewing clothes, insulating windows and attics, recycling materials, etc.<sup>24</sup> In exalting the return to “do-it-yourself habits” as a victory of quality over mediocrity, individualism over the System (the emotions such activities release –are “powerful, lasting, and contagious”) Lovins complains that:

We have substituted earning for an older ethics of serving and caring, as the only legitimate motivation for work. Thus, alienation in the place of fulfilment, inner poverty.<sup>25</sup>

Along the same lines Nancy Barrett envisions that in a slow-growing economy:

the line between work and leisure may become blurred...(and) the person who stays at home would not feel useless, if he or she were contributing to fuel conservation and increasing the food supply. To the extent that non-market activity is felt to be socially useful, it is much more likely that non-working people (predominantly women given the prevailing patterns of behaviour) will feel more content with staying out of the labor force than in the recent past.<sup>26</sup>

But – it is legitimate to ask – is not this seemingly idyllic picture of a life all built around reproducing oneself and others the life that women have always had? In other words, are we not hearing again the same glorification of housework which has traditionally served to justify its unpaid status, by contrasting this “meaningful, useful, and more importantly *unselfish* activity,” with the presumably greedy aspirations of those who demand to be paid for their work? Finally, are we not facing, once again, a variety of the old rationale that has been traditionally used to send women back to the home?

However, if the changes women have made over the past decade are any indication of the direction in which American women are moving, it is unlikely that they will be satisfied with an increased in their workload in the home, though accompanied, as it may be, by a universal, but purely moral, recognition of the value of their work. In this context, we definitely agree with Nancy Barrett that women:

may find it necessary to center their interest on financial support for non-market activities (and) Wages for Housework, Social Security...and other fringe benefits for housework will be matters of increased concern.<sup>27</sup>

## Bibliography

Becker, Gary. "A Theory of the Allocation of Time," *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976.

Department of Health, Education and Welfare. *Work in America*. A Report of a special task force to the Secretary of HEW (Health, Education and Welfare). Cambridge, MIT, 1975.

Kreps, Juanita ed. *Women and the American Economy*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1976.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Sex in the Marketplace: American Women at Work*. Policy Study in Employment and Welfare N II, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1971

*Industrial and Labor Relations*, April 1980

Lovins, Amory. *Soft Energy Paths*. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

Marshall, Alfred. *Principles of Economics*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1938. (First edition 1890).

*Monthly Labor Report*, Vol. 103, No. 5, May 1980.

Moynihan, Daniel P. *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income*. New York, 1973

Oppenheimer, Valerie K. *The Female Labor Force in the United States*, Population Monograph Series, Number 5, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970.

Smith Barrett, Nancy. "The Economy Ahead of Us." In Kreps ed. (1976).

US Department of Commerce. *Service Industries. Trends and Prospects*. Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1975.

*Women and Health, United States 1980*. Public Health Reports, U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, 1980.

Department of Health, Education and Welfare. *Work in America*. A Report of a special task force to the Secretary of HEW (Health, Education and Welfare). Cambridge, MIT, 1975.

Milwaukee County Welfare Rights Organization. *Welfare Mothers Speak Out*. New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1972.

### Notes

1. Gary Becker, "A Theory of the Allocation of Time," *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976.
2. Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics*. London: Macmillan and Co., (First edition 1890), 1938: 207.
- 3) Gary Becker, "A Theory of the Allocation of Time," *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976: 89.
- 4) Milwaukee County Welfare Rights Organization. *Welfare Mothers Speak Out*. New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1972: 79.
- 5) Daniel P. Moynihan. *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income*. New York, 1973: 17.
- 6) The text of the proposal reads: "Congress should approve a Federal floor under payments to provide an adequate standard of living based on each State's cost of living...And, just as with other workers, homemakers receiving income transfer payments should be afforded the dignity of having that payment called a wage, not welfare." National Plan of Action adopted at the National Women's Conference held in Houston in November 1977.
- 7) Also from the point of view of consumer expenditure on household appliances, the 1970s have experienced no growth (compared with the 1960s) and a decline compared with the 1950s. It is also questionable whether more technology can liberate women from work. It has often been the case that labor saving devices have increased women's work.
- 8) This point is convincingly argued by Valerie K. Oppenheimer in her study *The Female Labor Force in the United States*, Population Monograph Series, Number 5, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970.
- 9) Juanita Kreps. *Sex in the Marketplace: American Women at Work*. Policy Study in Employment and Welfare N II, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1971: 68.
- 10) In New York, welfare benefits are frozen to 1972 levels (adjusted in 1974), despite the fact that the cost of living has practically doubled over the last eight years.
- 11) It was calculated that a fulltime housewife is worth \$6,000 a year, a very low figure compared with the \$13,000 of the Chase Manhattan Bank study and the \$20,000 of a contemporary study by economist Peter Snell.
- 12) By 1976 women's entrance into the labor force had reached figures that the Department of Labor did not expect until 1985.
- 13) It is important in this context, to mention the proposal for a revised unemployment insurance that was debated during the Ford Administration. Although not openly admitted, it aimed at cutting unemployment benefits for those persons – read housewives – who had just 'left the home.' It also proposed that unemployed persons with working spouses should not be counted as recipients of unemployment benefits. Persons "whose lack of education or previous job experiences renders them unqualified" would also be excluded from unemployment insurance. See Eileen Shanahan, "Study on Definitions of Jobless Urged." In *New York Times*, January 11, 1976.
- 14) *Work in America*. A Report of a special task force to the Secretary of HEW. Cambridge, MIT, 1975.
- 15) Compare the sales of the service industry with the sales of household appliances. The increase of services sales (compared with appliance sales) has doubled in less than ten years.

1965	1970	1975	1976
6.3%	8.7%	11.8%	11%

16) The present collapse of the birth rate plays an important role in the current discussions on immigration policies (see *Industrial and Labor Relations*, April 1980).

17) This was the case of a female worker at a chemical plant in West Virginia in 1978, who had themselves sterilized for fear of being dismissed or being transferred to a lower paying job. As it turned out, in the wake of a suit brought by United Auto Workers (UAW) against General Motors (against restrictions for women of childbearing age) this was not an isolated case.

18) The highest rate of increase for female headed families has been among divorced women. The situation of female headed families shows the hardships women must face when they try to “make it on their own,” as they score the lowest income levels for all population groups. This is due both to the low levels of AFDC payments and the low wages the “displaced homemaker” commands when she takes a market job. As long as housework is not recognized as work, the housewife is considered to have no skills and is forced to accept the lowest paying jobs.

19) Yet, as of 1977, it was calculated that only 3% of children up to age 2 and 5% of children of age between 3 and 5 were going to a daycare centre. In 1975, in a study by the Census Bureau on childcare arrangements, most of the parents surveyed listed themselves or the public system as the main caretakers of their children. The responsibility for the gap between the number of daycare centers available and the needs of working women – including those who work in the home – lies with the policy of the Federal government that considers daycare services legitimate only in the case of “handicapped” families, thus restricting daycare benefits to the recipients of AFDC. With the exception of the Federal Tax exemption, Federal involvement in daycare services has decreased in the 1970s (particularly after 1975). Under these circumstances, mothers do not have any alternative but to seek personal arrangements or face the substantial costs of a for-profit-run day-care centre, averaging \$50 a week, a sum that cuts into their earnings while failing to provide an adequate service.

20) As Valerie Oppenheimer points out, throughout the 1930s and 1940s, negative attitudes prevailed towards married working women, as it was feared that they would take jobs away from men. Bills against the employment of married women were passed in the legislature of 26 states. Oppenheimer also points out that even before the 1929 crash “the majority of the school system would not hire married women as teachers, and about half required single teachers to retire upon marriage.” Oppenheimer (1970), 127-128, 130.

21) Women’s share of moonlighting nearly doubled during the 1969-1979 period, although figures may be higher if we include employment in the underground economy. By 1969, women were 16% of all moonlighters, while by 1979 they were 30%. It is calculated that women who moonlight work an average of 52 hours per week (*Monthly Labor Report*, Vol. 103, No. 5, May 1980).

22) *Women and Health, United States 1980*. Public Health Reports, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980, 9-11, 36-37.

23) Nancy Smith Barrett, “The Economy Ahead of Us,” In Juanita Kreps, ed., *Women and the American Economy*. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1976: 165.

24) Amory Lovins. *Soft Energy Paths*. New York: Harper and Row, 1977: 151.

25) *Ibid.* 169

26) Smith Barrett (1976), 166.

27) *Ibid.*