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[935-937]

Back to the Kitchen

World War II had interrupted traditional patterns of behavior for both men and women. As servicemen went overseas, women left their homes to work. After 1945, there was a period of adjustment as the men returned. In the 1950s, traditional gender roles were reaffirmed, even though, paradoxically, more women entered the work force than ever before.

Men, of course, expected to go to school and then find jobs to support their families. Viewing themselves as the primary breadwinners, they wanted their jobs waiting for them after the war. For women, the situation was more difficult. Many had enjoyed working during the war and were reluctant to retreat to the home, although the government and employers persistently encouraged them to do so. In 1947, Life magazine ran a long photo essay called "The American Woman's Dilemma." It argued that women were caught in a conflict between the traditional expectation to stay home and the desire to have a paid job. A 1946 Fortune poll also captured the discontent of some women. Asked whether they would prefer to be born again as men or women, 25 percent of the women asked said they would prefer to be men. That dissatisfaction was strongest among white, well-educated, middle-class women, which was understandable since family economic circumstances usually required black and lower-class white women to continue working outside the home.

By the 1950s, doubts and questions had been mostly suppressed. The baby boom increased average family size and made the decision to remain home easier. The flight to the suburbs gave women more to do, and they settled into the routines of redecorating their homes and gardens and transporting children to and from activities and schools.

In 1956, when Life produced a special issue on women, the message differed strikingly from that of nine years earlier. Profiling Marjorie Sutton, the magazine spoke of the "Busy Wife's Achievements" as "Home Manager, Mother, Hostess, and Useful Civic Worker." Married at 16, Marjorie was now busy with the PTA, Campfire Girls, and charity causes. She cooked and sewed for her family, which included four children, supported her husband by entertaining 1,500 guests a year, and worked out on the trampoline "to keep her size 12 figure."

Marjorie Sutton reflected the widespread social emphasis on marriage and home. Many women went to college to find husbands; if they succeeded, they dropped out. Almost two-thirds of the women in college stopped before completing a degree, compared to less than half of the men. Women were expected to marry young, have children early, and support their husbands' careers. "Modern man needs an old-fashioned woman around the house," novelist Sloan Wilson asserted.

Despite the reaffirmation of the old ideology that a woman's place was in the home, the 1950s was a period of unnoticed but important change. Because the supply of single women workers was diminished by the low birthrate of the Depression years and by increased schooling and early marriage, older married women began entering the labor force in large numbers for the first time. In 1940, only 15 percent of American wives had jobs. By 1950, 21 percent were employed, and ten years later, the figure had risen to 30 percent. Moreover, married women now accounted for more than half of all working women, a dramatic reversal of earlier patterns.

Although many working women were poor, divorced, or widowed, many others worked to acquire the desirable new products that were badges of middle-class status. They stepped into the new jobs created by economic expansion, clustering in office, sales,

and service positions, occupations already defined as female. They and their employers considered their work subordinate to their primary role as wives and mothers. Comparatively few entered professions where they would have challenged traditional notions of woman's place. As Life magazine pointed out in 1956, "Household skills take her into the garment trades; neat and personable, she becomes office worker and sales lady; patient and dextrous, she does well on competitive, detailed factory work; compassionate, she becomes teacher and nurse."

Black women worked as always but often lost the jobs they had won during the war. As the total percentage of women in the Detroit automobile industry dropped from 25 to 7.5, for example, jobs for black women nearly disappeared. Their median income at the end of the 1940s was less than half that of white women. Nor did they obtain white-collar work as easily as white women. But during the 1950s, they succeeded both in moving into white-collar positions and improving their income. By 1960, more than a third of all black women had clerical, sales, service, or professional jobs, and their paychecks were 70 percent of those of white women.

Despite women's mixed experiences; society continued to view women in traditional ways. The belief that women's main role was still at home justified paying them low wages and denying them promotions. Adlai Stevenson, Democratic presidential candidate in 1952 and 1956, defined their role in politics by telling a group of women that "the assignment for you, as wives and mothers, you can do in the living room with a baby in your lap or in the kitchen with a can opener in your hand." As in much of the nineteenth century, a woman was "to influence man and boy" in her "humble role of housewife" and mother.

Pediatrician Benjamin Spock agreed. In *Baby and Child Care* (1946), the book most responsible for the child-rearing patterns of the postwar generation, he advised mothers to stay at home if they wanted to raise stable and secure youngsters.

Movies seized on popular stereotypes and dramatized them. Doris Day, charming and wholesome, was a favorite heroine. In movie after movie, she showed how an attractive woman who played her cards right could land her man -- the assumed goal of every woman.

Sexuality was a troublesome if compelling topic in the postwar years. In 1948, Alfred C. Kinsey published *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Kinsey was an Indiana University zoologist who had previously studied the gall wasp. When asked to teach a course on marriage problems, he found little published material about human sexual activity and decided to collect his own. He compiled case histories of 5,300 white males, analyzed their personal backgrounds, and recorded patterns of sexual behavior.

Kinsey shocked the country with his statistics on premarital, extramarital, and otherwise illicit sexual activity. Among males who went to college, he concluded, 67 percent had engaged in sexual intercourse before marriage; 84 percent of those who went to high school but not beyond had done the same. Thirty-seven percent of the total male population had experienced some kind of overt homosexual activity. One out of every six farm boys in America had copulated with animals. Kinsey published a companion volume, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), that detailed many of the same sexual patterns. Although critics denounced the books, both sold widely, for they opened the door to a subject that had previously been considered taboo.

Interest in sexuality was reflected in the fascination with sex goddesses like Marilyn Monroe. With her blonde hair, breathy voice, and raw sexuality, she personified the forbidden side of the good life and became one of Hollywood's most popular stars. The images of such film goddesses corresponded to male fantasies of women, visible in *Playboy*, which first appeared in 1953. As for these men's wives, they were expected to manage their suburban homes and to be cheerful and willing objects of their husbands' desire.

(photo) Sex goddess Marilyn Monroe -- shown here in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* --

stirred the fantasies of American males in the family-oriented 1950s.

[1004-1008]

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The black struggle for equality in the 1960s and 1970s was accompanied by a women's movement that grew out of the agitation for civil rights but soon developed a life of its own. That struggle, like the struggles by Hispanics and Native Americans, employed the confrontational approach and the vocabulary of the civil rights movement to create sufficient pressure for change. Using proven strategies, it sometimes proceeded even faster than the black effort.

Attacking the Feminine Mystique

Many white women joined the civil rights movement only to find that they were second-class workers. Men, black and white, held the policy positions and relegated women to menial chores when not actually involved in demonstrations or voter drives. Many women also felt sexually exploited by male leaders. Stokely Carmichael's comment only underscored their point. "The only position for women in SNCC," he said, "is prone." Despite growing dissatisfaction and their awareness of sexual exploitation, women learned the importance of militant, well-publicized pressure groups in bringing about change.

Although the civil rights movement supplied some of the impetus behind the women's movement, broad social changes provided the preconditions.

During the 1950s and 1960s, increasing numbers of married women entered the labor force, and half of all women worked. Cries for fair treatment arose from some of them. In 1963, the average working woman earned only 63 percent of what a man could expect; in 1973, only 57 percent. Just as important, many more young women were attending college. By 1970, women earned 41 percent of all BA's awarded, in comparison to only 25 percent in 1950. These educated young women held high hopes for themselves. Many found that sexual liberation failed to bring equality. Feminism was compelling both in its analysis of women's problems and in the solutions it offered.

Just as in the civil rights movement, reform legislation sought to end sexual discrimination. Title 7 of the 1964 Civil Rights bill, as originally drafted, prohibited discrimination on the grounds of race. During legislative debate, conservatives opposed to black civil rights seized on an amendment to include discrimination on the basis of gender. In this way, they hoped to defeat the entire bill. But the amendment passed, giving women a legal tool for attacking discrimination. They discovered, however, that the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission regarded women's complaints of discrimination as far less important than those of blacks.

When a small group of women failed to win support from existing women's groups to pressure the commission to change its policies, they decided to form their own civil rights organization. In 1966, a group of 28 professional women, including Betty Friedan, established the National Organization for Women (NOW) "to take action to bring American women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now." By full participation the founders not only meant fair pay and equal opportunity but a new, more egalitarian form of marriage. NOW also attacked "the false image of women ... in the media" By 1967, some 1,000 women had joined the organization, and four years later, its membership reached 15,000.

NOW was a political pressure group and did not seem radical enough to some young women. The radical feminists, who had come up through the civil rights movement, felt that NOW's agenda did not adequately confront the problem of gender discrimination. They sought to make women understand the extent of their oppression through the technique of consciousness raising. Soon used by other radical groups, consciousness raising encouraged women to analyze "a women's experience at the hands of men as a political phenomenon," writer Susan Brownmiller explained.

Feminism at High Tide

In 1971, Helen Reddy expressed the energy of the woman's movement in a song called "I Am Woman": I am woman, hear me roar In numbers too big to ignore And I know too much to go back and pretend 'Cause I've heard it all before And I've been down there on the floor, No one's ever gonna keep me down again.

Oh, yes, I am wise
But it's wisdom born of pain.
Yes, I've paid the price
But look how much I gained
If I have to
I can do anything.
I am strong,
I am invincible,
I am woman.

Reddy's song reflected a new militancy and sense of self-confidence among women. In the early 1970s, a survey noted that in a two-year period, the number of college students who believed women were oppressed had doubled, and the number continued to rise. A 1970 survey of first-year college students showed that men interested in such fields as business, medicine, engineering, and law outnumbered women eight to one; by 1975, the ratio had dropped to three to one. The proportion of women beginning law school quadrupled between 1969 and 1973. Women gained access to the military academies and entered senior officer ranks. To be sure, many employers systematically excluded women from certain positions, and women usually held "female" jobs in the clerical, sales, and service sectors. But changes were under way.

A flurry of publications spread the ideas of the women's movement. Gloria Steinem, author of a regular political column in New York magazine, first thought of herself as a professional journalist with no particular interest in women's affairs. "I certainly didn't understand that women were an 'out' group," she noted, "and I would even insist that I wasn't discriminated against as a woman." While working on a story about abortion, however, she began to understand that discrimination took many forms. She realized she "had been unable to get an apartment because, the reasoning was, a single woman wasn't financially responsible -- and if she was responsible, she was probably a prostitute." Steinem began writing more about women, and in 1972, she and several other women founded a new magazine. Ms. succeeded beyond their wildest dreams, reaching a wide audience of women who were not members of feminist organizations. In the first eight days, the 300,000 copies of the preview issue sold out. By 1973, there were almost 200,000 subscribers. Most of them were under 35, had graduated from college, and were working in professional, managerial, or technical jobs.

Among other publications that publicized the issues and concerns of the women's movement was The New Woman's Survival Catalogue, which provided useful advice to women readers. Our Bodies, Ourselves, a handbook published by a woman's health collective, encouraged women to understand and control their bodies; it sold 850,000 copies between 1971 and 1976.

These new books and magazines differed radically from older women's magazines like Good Housekeeping and Ladies' Home Journal. Those publications aimed at women at home and focused on their domestic interests, needs, and sometimes fantasies. Ms., in dramatic contrast, dealt with abortion, employment, and discrimination and provided a forum for the discussion of important feminist issues.

Despite certain shared interests, women's struggle for equality was decentralized, diffuse, and often internally divided. As Time magazine pointed out in 1972, "The aims of the movement range from the modest, sensible amelioration of the female condition to extreme and revolutionary visions." Groups like NOW pressed for equal employment opportunities, child care centers, and abortion reform. Women both in and out of NOW who were concerned with legal reforms worked for congressional passage, then

ratification, of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution. Passed by Congress in 1972, it stated simply, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." Thirty of the required 38 states quickly ratified it, a few others followed, and for a time final approval seemed imminent.

Other feminist groups adopted more radical positions. Legal changes were not enough, they argued. Fundamental changes in sexual identity were needed to end male domination and social exploitation. Shulamith Firestone, a former member of the New Left, explained in *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) the necessity of a new society in which women were freed "from the tyranny of their reproductive biology by every means available." Moreover, traditional gender and family roles must be discarded and "the childbearing and childrearing role [diffused] to the society as a whole, men as well as women." Other socialist feminists claimed that it was not enough to strike out at male domination, for capitalist society itself was responsible for women's plight. Only through the process of revolution could women be free.

Moderates and radicals alike attracted opposition. Men, and sometimes women, ridiculed Gloria Steinem. One man, she recalled, approached her on the street and said, "I have ten women employees and I pay them a third of what I pay men, and if I had to pay them more, I'd fire them. What do you think of that?" Nixon himself sided with the traditionalists when in 1971 he vetoed an appropriation for day care centers with the argument that they undermined the sanctity of the family. He insisted that "the vast moral authority of national government... must be... consciously designed to cement the family in its rightful position as the keystone of our civilization." Women themselves resisted feminism for many reasons. Many felt the women's movement was contemptuous of women who stayed at home to perform traditional tasks. Marabel Morgan was one who still insisted that the woman had a place at home by her husband's side. The wife of a Florida attorney, she argued that "it is only when a woman surrenders her life to her husband, reveres and worships him, and is willing to serve him, that she becomes really beautiful to him." In her book *The Total Woman* (1973), she counseled others to follow the 4A approach: accept, admire, adapt, appreciate. She suggested ways of meeting a husband at the door and cited approvingly the case of one woman who "welcomed her husband home in black mesh stockings, high heels, and an apron. That's all." Everything was designed to move from "fizzle to sizzle," and substantial numbers of women wanted to hear the message. As of 1975, some 500,000 copies of the hardcover volume had been sold before a paperback version appeared.

In politics, Phyllis Schlafly headed a nationwide campaign to block ratification of the ERA. Author of several books, including one strongly supporting the conservative presidential candidate Barry Goldwater a decade before, she was both vigorous and articulate. On the ERA she was adamant: "It won't do anything to help women, and it will take away from women the rights they already have, such as the right of a wife to be supported by her husband, the right of a woman to be exempted from military combat, and the right, if you wanted it, to go to a single-sex college." The ERA, she predicted, would lead to the establishment of coed bathrooms, the elimination of alimony, and the legalization of homosexual marriage. Women, she argued, already had legal backing enough for their rights.

Despite the counterattacks, the women's movement flourished in the 1970s. But like earlier attempts to change the status of women, the grievances of middle-class women largely fueled it. Focusing on issues of interest to them, the movement often ignored the special problems of black and white working-class women. As one black woman told Betty Friedan, "We don't want anything to do with that feminist bag." Most black women found race a far more compelling problem than gender. Black women, Friedan was told, wanted "black men to get ahead." Nor did the feminists' emphasis on the satisfaction of working outside the home make much sense to white working-class

women, who could only expect dull, monotonous, and poorly paid jobs if they went to work. They preferred to stay at home if they could.

(graph) Women in the Work Force, 1920-1986. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

(graph) Women College Graduates, 1940-1980. Source: U.S. Department of Commerce.

(photo) "This healthy normal baby has a handicap. She was born female." Awareness of racial discrimination led women to speak out against unequal opportunity based on sex, as shown in this advertisement sponsored by the National Organization for Women.

(photo) The book *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, and *Ms.* magazine were among the publications spawned by the women's movement in an attempt to give women greater control over various aspects of their lives.

[1032-1033]

Growing Up

In the mid-1970s, the birthrate began to rise slowly after a decade and a half of decline. The baby boom, which peaked in 1960 with a rate of 23.7 births per 1,000 persons, had created a population explosion in the years after World War II before leveling off. In 1981, the rate stood at 15.9, and demographers viewed the new increase in births as part of a long-term trend.

But children did not always live in traditional homes. Despite the stereotype of the breadwinner father, the homemaker mother, and two children, the Labor Department estimated that only 7 percent of the nation's families matched that pattern in the late 1970s. Divorce shattered the mold. By 1980, the rate reached a historic peak, as the courts granted nearly 1.2 million divorces, the highest total in the nation's history. For each 1,000 marriages there were 490 divorces, up from 328 per 1,000 in 1970 and 258 per thousand in 1960. The social stigma once attached to divorce disappeared, and the nation elected its first divorced president. Single-parent families, particularly those headed by women, were now common. In 1960, one child in 12 lived with a single mother; in 1983, that figure had risen to one in five. For blacks, the proportion of families headed by women was three times as great as for whites. A 1986 study observed that children in such families were more likely to leave school, have children out of wedlock, and end up on welfare.

During hard times, particularly for members of the working class, new children could pose problems. An extra mouth to feed could make a difference to a family on the fringe. New children also required women of all classes to consider the relationship between family and career. Women entering the work force with long-range employment commitments had to juggle work and home schedules and find adequate childcare facilities.

The rising divorce rate also affected children. In the past, divorced mothers had almost always gained custody over the children, but now husbands increasingly asserted their parental rights. Sometimes the struggles became angry and intense. In 1977, Diane and James Tilden fought over their 10-year-old son Jimmy. A New York judge gave James custody, except in the summer. When he handed over his son to his ex-wife, James was concerned, and with good reason, for she promptly disappeared. He found her in Florida, but a judge there gave her custody of the boy. James then smuggled his son back to New York and successfully appealed the Florida case. Finally he had complete custody -- and \$34,000 in legal fees. Jimmy had become a pawn in a painful contest.

The rising rate of runaway children became another product of changed family life. According to some estimates, more than a million children between the ages of 10 and 17 were on the run. They left home for various reasons. Some were driven out. Others were victims of physical abuse. Still others fled violent arguments or other recession-induced strains in family life. Many returned home within a few days. Some, however, remained on city streets. In 1974, Congress passed the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, which established telephone hot lines and temporary shelters. But

the shelters served only 45,000 youths a year, leaving countless others without help.

Even more ominous was the rising death rate among the young. The Public Health Service reported in 1982 that the death rate for most Americans had dropped significantly over a 30-year period, but the rate for those between 15 and 24 rose steadily after 1976. Automobile accidents, murders, and suicides caused three out of four deaths for that group.

[1036-1039]

THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

In the 1970s and 1980s, women, blacks, Hispanic, and Native Americans continued their struggle for equal opportunity and treatment. But the pace of change slowed as the economic climate made many Americans, convinced that enough had been done already for these groups, less sympathetic to reform.

Consolidating Feminist Gains

Most liberals applauded the accomplishments of the women's movement. Betty Friedan, whose book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) had helped mobilize a pervasive discontent two decades before, admitted in 1983:

I am still awed by the revolution that book helped spark.... I keep being surprised, as the changes the women's movement set in motion continue to play themselves out in our lives -- the enormous and mundane, subtle and not so subtle, delightful, painful, immediate, far-reaching, paradoxical, inexorable and probably irreversible changes in women's lives -- and in men's.

Changes had indeed occurred. Affirmative action made jobs for women more accessible. Women made tremendous gains in fields like banking, where women's share of jobs increased from 18 to 34 percent between 1970 and 1980. According to the Census Bureau, 45 percent of mothers with preschool children held jobs away from home in 1980. That figure was four times greater than it had been 30 years before. In 1988, the Census Bureau reported that half of new mothers remained in the work force, compared with 31 percent in 1976.

Legal changes brought women more benefits and opportunities. Title 9 of the Education Amendments of 1972 broadened the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The new legislation, which barred gender bias in federally assisted education activities and programs, stimulated colleges to admit far more women to law, medical, dental, and business schools and to drop nepotism restrictions that kept husbands and wives from teaching at the same schools. The same measure changed the nature of intercollegiate athletics. Big Ten schools, which spent millions of dollars on men's programs, in 1974 spent an average of \$3,500 a year on women's sports. That kind of favoritism was no longer legal, and while complete equity remained a distant goal, women's athletics benefited. By 1980, fully 30 percent of the participants in intercollegiate athletics were women, compared to 15 percent before Title 9 had become law.

In politics, women also made important strides forward. Women won mayoral races in Chicago, Houston, Honolulu, San Francisco, and many smaller cities. In 1981, President Ronald Reagan appointed Sandra Day O'Connor as the first woman Supreme Court justice, and in 1984, Geraldine Ferraro, a Democratic member of Congress, became the first woman vice-presidential candidate for a major party. Far more women were elected to state legislatures and to Congress. As women began to win elective office, political analysts noted that women voters began to show distinctive voting behavior. In the election of 1980, analysts observed a "gender gap": For the first time, women were voting significantly differently from men. Men supported Ronald Reagan by a margin of 56 to 36. Women, alarmed by his hard-line foreign policy and opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, voted for him by a much smaller margin of 46 to 45.

In the tenth anniversary issue of *Ms.* magazine, in 1982, founding editor Gloria Steinem noted the differences a decade had made. "Now, we have words like 'sexual harassment' and 'battered women,'" she wrote. "Ten years ago, it was just called 'life.'"

Other examples followed: "Now, rape is defined as a crime of violence -- and victims are less likely to be raped again by the law." Perhaps best of all: "Now, we are becoming the men we wanted to marry. Ten years ago, we were trained to marry a doctor, not be one."

Progress for women continued in some areas in the 1980s. In 1987, the Supreme Court ruled that all-male Rotary Clubs must admit women in states that had laws upholding equal access to public accommodations. A few members grumbled and predicted that women would soon seek membership in every other male organization, even the Boy Scouts. But professional women began to win rapid acceptance in many Rotary Clubs and other professional and service organizations.

Despite substantial gains, women still faced serious problems. Access to new positions did not change their concentration in lower-paying jobs. In 1985, most women still served as secretaries, cashiers, bookkeepers, registered nurses, and waitresses -- the same jobs most frequently held ten years before. Even when women moved into positions traditionally held by men, their progress often stopped at the lower and middle levels. In politics, too, they had no more of the very top political offices than they had a quarter of a century before. Interruptions of work -- to bear children or assume family responsibilities -- impeded advancement. Lack of experience served as another convenient excuse for failure to promote women.

Critics also became increasingly concerned about continuing wage differentials between women and men. In 1985, despite modest improvement, fulltime working women still earned only 63.6 cents for every dollar earned by men. Their concentration in the so-called pink-collar positions -- traditional women's jobs -- made further improvement difficult. Arguments that women should receive equal pay for equal work now led to demands for equal pay for different jobs of similar value. Opponents argued that it would be hard to classify positions fairly, but proponents countered that equity demanded that the effort be made. Comparable-worth cases began to work their way through the courts.

Day care remained another major concern. Increasing numbers of day care centers permitted women to pursue careers outside the home soon after childbirth, but a majority of working women still depended on friends or relatives for that service. Yet as more women went to work, fewer were available to provide such care. "Ten years ago, when my oldest son was born, my mother lived with us and looked after him and I didn't worry," Mary Robinson, a researcher from Palo Alto, California, declared in 1988. "And when my second child was born,... my mother-in-law was available to take care of her. But when Britney was born, there wasn't anybody in the family who could do it." The first day care home she found for her children proved unsatisfactory. The second was better -- until the owner, a nurse, decided to go back to work herself. Even when fathers played a greater role in their children's lives, the same difficulties in securing day care remained.

An even greater worry, particularly for working-class women, was the growing feminization of poverty. In 1980, more than half the families defined as poor were headed by single women. Left alone by divorce or desertion, they often had no means of subsistence. Their standard of living dropped dramatically from what it had been before.

The women's rights movement, in its long history, had never been unified, and in the 1970s and 1980s women with a variety of different priorities continued to debate their roles and rights. Despite changes in their portrayal by the media, a subtle sex-appeal image remained. Ellen Goodman took exception to an advertisement showing the Maiden form woman as a doctor. "There she was," Goodman wrote, "hair tied back primly, medical chart in her left hand, pen in her right hand, long white jacket over her shoulders, exposing her lacy magenta bra and panties." There she was, according to the caption, "making the rounds in her elegant Delectables." Goodman was disgusted; she observed, "I always thought she was a candidate for a cold, not a medical degree." More

troubling was the implication that the doctor "is revealed in the flesh, to be -- yes, indeed -- just another woman insecure about her femininity, just another woman in search of sex appeal, just another woman who needs 'silky satin tricot with antique lace scalloping.'"

Women who applauded when the Supreme Court legalized abortion in 1973 discovered that the question of abortion remained very much alive. The number of abortions increased dramatically in the decade after the decision. By some estimates, 10 million lawful abortions were performed in that decade, or one for every three births. In response, "pro-life" forces mobilized as never before. Nellie Gray organized a march on Washington every January 22 to call attention to the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision. "It's murder, pure and simple," she said. "Abortion means killing babies." Opponents lobbied to cut off federal funds that allowed the poor to obtain the, abortions the better-off could pay for themselves; they insisted that abortions should be performed in hospitals and not in less expensive clinics; and they worked to reverse the original decision itself. Though the Supreme Court, which included the first woman in its history, reaffirmed its judgment in 1983, the pro-life movement was not deterred. In 1989, a solidifying conservative majority on the Court ruled in Webster v. Reproductive Health Services that while women's right to abortion remained intact, state legislatures could impose limitations if they chose. With that judgment, a major legislative debate over the issue began.

Agitation over the ERA also became more intense. Ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment had been taken for granted after its favorable vote in Congress in 1972, so much so that no ratification strategy was thought necessary. Within a few years, 35 states had agreed to the measure, but then the momentum disappeared. Even with an extension in the deadline granted in 1979, the amendment could not win the necessary 38-state support. Phyllis Schlafly and others continued their highly effective opposition campaign, gaining the assistance of women who felt threatened by the changes occurring and men, particularly in state legislatures, who had long been uncomfortable with the women's movement. By mid-1982, the ERA was dead.

Although women could savor their gains, some worried that complacency was setting in. Many young women who enjoyed the fruits of the movement avoided the feminist label and shunned involvement in militant campaigns. Others remained active, convinced that only with continued pressure would women achieve full equality.

(graph) Changes in Female Employment, 1940-1980. Percent of all employed women.

(graph) Married Women in the Work Force, 1950-1980. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

(photo) Sandra Day O'Connor became the first woman justice to sit on the United States Supreme Court.

(photo) Women marched to mobilize support for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, but the campaign failed and the ERA died.