

WOMEN IN THE WORK FORCE:

A QUIET REVOLUTION

It is a pleasure to be with you tonight at this annual Friendship Dinner sponsored by your outstanding service organization. As men and women in executive and managerial positions, we all, I trust, share a great interest in the topic, "Women in the American Work Force: A Quiet Revolution."

There is currently a revolution occurring in America. It is occurring quietly all over the country. It is happening in business and labor organizations, and in homes. It is a revolution fired by changing career aspirations of women and fueled by rising inflation. In fact, a Wall Street journalist went so far as to equate it to the Industrial Revolution, with respect to the long-term impact it will have on the character of the business environment. We see it in the drastic changes occurring in the work force, in the tremendous wave of women now working or looking for work.

In view of this revolution, I want to talk with you tonight about opportunity -- opportunity for business organizations, and for this nation --for it is my opinion that women are a vastly under-utilized economic resource in this country. This is not to say that working women and the business community haven't already taken great strides. Women who are entering the work force today are better educated, better trained and more committed to careers and professional advancement than ever before. At the same time, many businesses are offering them better jobs than ever before. But we are still so far from any real assurance that use of this new talent will be maximized in a way that is best for the country, for business organizations, and for women!

There can be little doubt that the concept of women working for "pin" money is passe. Indeed, the old terminology, "Career Woman" vs. "Married Woman" -- a terminology which implied that work was an option for the vast majority of American women -- is now dead. The new terminology, as attested to by the names of the magazines that are sprouting up, is "Working Woman," and indeed, we are working. Did you realize:

*That 45% of the home buyers in 1977 were two-income families?

*That only between seven and fifteen percent of American families now conform to the so-called "typical family" model of a working husband and housekeeping wife?

*That 49% of all mothers with children under 18 are now in the labor force, compared to 35% in 1965 and 9% in 1940?

*That divorce is causing more and more single head of household families, and that five out of six of these families are supported by women?

*That the number of years the average American woman now spends in the work force has almost doubled since 1940, skyrocketing from an average of 12 years, to 23 years? For single women, the figure is even higher - 45 years.

DIFFERENCES --- MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Much has been written in recent years about the psychological differences between men and women, the psychological seeds that are sown the minute the pink blanket is put on us at the hospital.

Women have been studied and analyzed and their personalities dissected to the point there can be little doubt that the feminine psyche is different than that of the male....a fact we all know anyway. It seems to me we are spending too much time today comparing apples and oranges only to discover that they do,

indeed, grow on different trees with different characteristics. What I want to focus on are those factors in an organization which cause these differences to be barriers, rather than bonuses, to business.

There can be little doubt that the organizational culture of American business is still primarily a male culture. It would appear that effective management has always been defined in masculine terms. Why? Because most managers have been men. Just look around you in your business organizations. Current standards of what we call an "effective management style" still emphasize male traits. A study conducted at the Wharton School indicated that the personality traits viewed as requisites of good management by male managers are traits perceived in men, but not in women. This may help to explain why it seems that women are sometimes perceived as less effective in management jobs. They may not be given opportunities simply because they are measured by male standards.

All this -- despite the fact that effective management is really asexual: It merely means the efficient utilization of resources to accomplish an objective.

Two other studies indicate that managers still:

- *Show greater concern for careers of men,
- *Tend to promote men over equally qualified women, and,
- *Question the ability of women to balance work and family demands.

A Business Week article in 1975 estimated that while women held 15% of the entry level management positions, only 5% held middle management and 1% top management positions, and it took 15 to 25 years for employees to reach top executive positions. Bureau of the Census figures indicate that one woman in twenty is a manager or administrator, compared to one in seven men; and these figures make no distinctions between women in your office like Jane Cahill Pfeiffer, Chairman of the Board of NBC, and the women in your office who may be called an "administrator" but actually performs as a secretary.

The recent report of the President's Task Force on Women Business Owners highlights the fact that the inroads women have made in two occupational categories between the years 1959 and 1977 have been slight. The proportion of women in professional or highly technical jobs grew by only 3.8% and the growth in managerial and administrative jobs were less than 1% during this period -- hardly an advancement we can be proud of.

POST INDUSTRIAL ERA UNDERSCORES FEMALE SKILLS

It seems clear to me that we must now focus on how to maximize use of the talent of the female half of the human resource ledger....rather than how to turn women into male clones. We hear much about programs for women to teach them the rules of the game, but too little about efforts of businesses to remove those factors causing managers to misuse or overlook female talent.

And we seem to forget that business organizations, like all social organizations, are reflections of time and society. They are not static. In addition to the influx of women in the labor force, there is another major factor contributing to organizational change today. We are entering a post-industrial society, a society in which service industries abound and interpersonal skills are highly valued -- skills at which women are thought to excel. Yet many of the stereotypical traits of "effective managers" that currently inhibit utilization of women harken back to a time when the prime focus was on the management of material and machinery, and the effective management of people was only secondary. I was amused when flipping through the American Management Association's catalog of continuing education courses to find that many of the skills now being taught to male managers are those very skills women are thought to be good at -- group process skills

like listening, communicating, negotiating, consensus building.

In effect, what I am saying is that a woman may be as good, if not better, a manager as a man. Yet, it seems that many women, no matter how well schooled, what their age, or how thick their portfolio of credentials, find themselves in business organizations to be outsiders no matter how long they remain.

In summary, a woman manager may possess all the tools of the trade and still not fulfill her potential. Perceived as an outsider by the organization, she may be shunted off to odd corners of the company. The end result for women may be frustration, a lack of motivation, or quitting. But for the business, it is more serious: It means the loss of a talent or resource.

Today almost half of the work force is female, and this female business resource, once viewed as "temporary" and outside the mainstream of organizational life, is now permanent. Many business leaders say they are not sure that the labor force can take a larger influx of women. This has been said as if there is a possibility that the current tidal wave of women approaching the business environment can be reversed or turned away! All social indicators point to the fact that the ~~work~~ force revolution will continue to grow. One has only to look at the recent educational patterns of young women to see that members of this new generation of women are deadly serious about their careers. They are striking out into the lucrative so-called "male" fields of medicine, law, business, and engineering.

A recent article in Fortune Magazine pointed out that in only four years the proportion of women graduating from Harvard Business School quadrupled, rising from 5% to 20%, and at Columbia Business School, the figure rose from 8% to 35%. In the 1977 classes of other top business schools --

Stanford, Wharton, and the University of Chicago -- the enrollment of women exceeded 20%. At Duke University, where I serve on the Board of Trustees, women comprised about 22% of the incoming business school class.

The same trend is occurring in law. This past fall, women comprised approximately 30% of the students enrolled at Harvard Law School, 40% of the first year students at Georgetown University, and 44% of those at American University Law School. The American Bar Association estimates that enrollment of women in law schools increased ten fold between 1965 and 1975, from 2,537 to 26,737.

There can be little doubt that these women who are investing time and money for such graduate degrees are not doing it for fun, or to obtain the proverbial "Mrs." degree. It seems clear that women seeking a place in today's work force desire a fulfilling and challenging position. Indeed many women share with men the need for success, for aggressive outlets, for power. In the past, many women have had to fulfill these needs through other people -- their husband's positions and their children's achievements, for example.

CALL FOR ACTION

So I challenge business leaders to seize the opportunity. If you have not yet felt the reverberations of the revolution currently occurring in the work force, you will in the near future. If you have not focused on the tremendous force of woman power entering the work place on a permanent basis; if you have not recognized that the skills of many women may be particularly suited to the needs of our post-industrial society; and if you have not developed creative means of utilizing this female talent, then you may be in deep trouble. You may wake up too late and find you're the odd man out, that all the good talent has gone elsewhere. You may miss the boat because you didn't realize that the next "fair-haired boy"

of your organization might just possibly be a woman.

I emphasize this not only for the benefit of women, but because it makes good business sense. It's the bottom line for business and the country. I wonder if those of you in corporate and business policy positions have checked lately to see if the best and brightest of the female side of the ledger is still with you. Have women left to go with a competing firm, or to become competitors by starting their own enterprises? Talented women are now job-hopping as much as men once did in order to find advancement, and the President's Task Force on Women Business Owners predicts a steady increase of women starting their own businesses.

Have your organizations offered career development so that talented women can enter the organizational mainstream? We at the Federal Trade Commission have held a series of national workshops aimed at bringing women into our business network and informing them of the enforcement responsibilities of the Commission. We have also attempted to provide creative responses internally within our organization. Along with other agencies, the FTC is using the flexitime concept, which permits women with young children to stagger their work hours to accommodate both their child-rearing and their job responsibilities. This and other innovative management techniques must be more fully used by government and business so that a devoted mother can pursue a successful career as well.

As a nation, we are now faced with a wide array of complex domestic and international problems, which, at times, seem almost insoluble. Can we, under these circumstances, afford to waste one of our greatest assets, our women? It behooves us, as concerned men and women, to continuously raise the question with those who run our businesses and corporations: What have you been doing to take advantage of....and give advantage to....that vastly under-utilized economic resource in our country, that is, our women.

Let us hope that the ideals which gave life to an earlier revolution prevail in this latest one. The cause is just; the time is late. We hold the power and bear the responsibility. May we enthusiastically take up the task before us, giving new meaning to those time-honored words of "justice in America."

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