OUR SUBMISSION TO
THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
SUBJECT: THE LEGAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN IRELAND

The married woman in Ireland who works in the home has no legal or economic identity. She is not entitled to payment or salary either from her husband or the state. In a society where financial reward is the measure of each member's contribution, it is significant that the housewife is valued at nothing.

The wife who is the homemaker exists economically at the pleasure of her husband. In families where there is integrity and goodwill the homemaker, because of her partner's generosity, can exist comfortably. In cases where the husband neglects his duty the woman is virtually powerless.

For this reason we believe that the laws governing marriage in this state are repugnant to women. Legislation must be devised to protect the partner in a marriage who becomes the homemaker, be it for a number of years or for a lifetime. The partner who remains at home should be legally entitled to a portion of the salary of the partner working in employment. Property acquired on and after marriage should be jointly owned. The situation, as it exists, allows a husband to sell the family home, to realize the assets of a lifetime and emigrate with the proceeds, leaving a wife, who has contributed years of work in the home, destitute. The position of women in homes provided by public bodies must also be protected by legislation.

In a marriage both partners should have equal guardianship rights to their children; this is of particular importance with regard to religion, education and domicile.

Much of the present discrimination against women (i.e. she is not allowed to enter financial agreements without her husband's consent) is the result of an unjust marriage contract, which awards no financial recognition to the work of the wife in the home.

The present legislation in this state to cope with the problem of marital breakdown is hopelessly inadequate. Divorce is withheld from those, who in conscience believe it to be their right. Legal separation is too costly to benefit any but the wealthy few. We do have one popular back door in Ireland for men who wish to end a marriage. They can desert their families and completely reject their paternal responsibilities for a mere £5 - the cost of a boat ticket for Liverpool. The Irish Govt. do not recognise British divorce and will not help the British authorities to force ex-husbands resident in Ireland to pay alimony. For this reason the British authorities: (tit for tat) will not cooperate in action against Irish deserting husbands living in Britain. There is one amazing anomaly in the whole situation; the lept. of Social Welfare in Dublin

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have disqualified deserted wives from their allowance because they produced evidence of their husband's British divorce to prove desertion. Our civil service apparently can be hypocritical enough to recognise divorce to save the Exchequer £5 p.w. I a deserted wives allowance.

The awful and often heartbreaking inability of women to provide homes for themselves and their dependants must be rectified. Public bodies which traditionally provide homes for families must be made aware of their duty to house single people, alone, in groups or with dependants. The discrimination against women in employment, lack of motivation and opportunity, unequal pay for work of equal value, puts them at an immense disadvantage when trying to buy a home. The ending of discrimination in employment on grounds of sex would help this situation but not eradicate it completely. Building societies and other bodies financing housing must not be allowed to discriminate against applicants on the grounds of sex.

In Ireland it is almost impossible for women to serve on a jury. Women on trial by jury are not being tried by their peers which negates the whole principle of trial by jury. A jury of male property wherever is not a peer group for the average woman; this is a situation which makes a farce of our legal system.

What I Want: ••

The legal recognition of the equal rights of the female citizens of this state.

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A constitutional guarantee that discrimination on the grounds of sex will no longer be allowed in this state.

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The provision of either a legal marriage contract or adequate legislation guaranteeing the rights and enforcing the duties of both partners in a marriage.

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Realistic allowances for dependants, be they children, invalids, or old people.

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Adequate facilities for one parent families which allow for the maintenance of a decent home.

Next month we will examine the possibility of a marriage contract.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Miss Angela O'Doherty, the Derry Bunny of Late Late fame
"Men are great if you don't take them seriously."
The great destroyer of woman is romance. As children we are given dolls and delph and shown picturebooks of fairy princesses with golden hair and sugar sweet faces, the ideal that girl must attain to become women. We are given an inferiority complex at the same time as we are given a longing for the impossible in life. In contrast boys are hardened at an early age with games and guns and adventure stories that train them to bloodshed. Women are made from their earliest years to accept life as it does not exist, has never existed and never will exist. Our lives are an illusion from our make-up to our shaven legs and set hair, an illusion deliberately implanted in our minds for the sole purpose of turning us from persons into fools desperately trying to attain the impossible.

There is no such thing as chivalry. The knight on his white horse never existed, or if he did the horse had better manners and more kindness. While knights were kneeling to Guinevere, serfs were dying in ditches. The so-called romantic poets create the worst illusions. Woman is a creature like a star, an angel unobtainable and above all of course, pure. We are conditioned and fed like prize cattle from youth with ideas and sick ideals in an attempt to turn us into mindless children. Why are men with paunches to their ankles and no hair still attractive while their like in woman is expected to retire where her hair and appearance will not offend? The romantic poets have turned women from person into myth and this myth is pandered from the little girl on daddy's knee being good, to the matron desperately hving a facelift and the girl in her thirties lying about her age. Our bodies are stunted and turned into acrobats to please and satisfy what? Why are we not sure of ourselves just because we are women as paunchy bald men are sure of themselves because they are men? Robbie Burns, egoist and poet said "Love is to man's life a thing apart, 'tis woman's whole existence". Why? Because the conditioning of our lives into romantic idiocy has left us nothing to fall back on but romance. The middle-aged woman reading romantic novels, novels that from her own life experience she must realise are identical to the fairytales she was read as a child. She has to keep up the pretence that this fairyland exists, else she has nothing. The saddest thing is that she believes it existed for other women and not for herself. She has believed what was said to her from the cinema screen, she believed what she heard about the marvellous man her sister married, she believes that only she missed out and that God help us. There are probably a few other people worse off than herself. We must forget this celluloid romantic idiocy with which we have been indoctrinated from birth, forget the bells ringing at our first kiss (mine stank of stale Guinness but do I ever admit it?) and become the people we are intended to be. If we can do this we are still women as women should be with strength and identity and will still be so...
LUNIARYAN
SCULPTOR JEWELLER
11, South Anne Street
Dublin 2.

"You don’t need to get married to get a ring."

Warm slacks
for Winter
demonstrations
BASEMENT
BOUTIQUE
CHURCH LANE

Overweight
Weig
on just flabby we get results
at the

ENDA RYAN
FITNESS CENTRE
1-2. Cope Street: 78214
Make this your slim, get
liberated for living and
love

GAI'S
Restaurant.
132 Bagot Street en. 12:30-3 m 5:30-12 m.
BRAIN WASHING - IRISH STYLE

Is is any wonder that girls have such a lack of interest in any but the traditionally accepted female careers, when from an early stage they are brain washed? By the age of 12, this has been successfully accomplished as can be seen by what is accepted as average standard by the Department of Education in their Primary School Teacher's Handbook (Part 1). The exercise below is the work of a 12 year old girl, translated from Irish:

CHRISTMAS DAY - WORKING WITH MAMMY

Will you help me with the dinner, Mairead?

I will, Mammy.

The children were playing cards when Mammy called Mairead.

Mairead said she would set the table in the dining room.

Will I set the table?

(Spread the new tablecloth.)

Now everyone to dinner.

Daddy, Sean, the dinner is ready now.

Everyone is coming to dinner now.

I never eat such a lovely dinner.

Oh, it was the Christmas pudding now.

The family had a lovely dinner.

Isn't it lovely? Oh, it is.

I will take it out now.

Everyone said that the Christmas pudding was lovely.

Will you help me with the dishes, Mairead?

I will, Mammy.

Now Mammy and Mairead are washing the dishes.

We had a great day today.

Now all the family are looking at the television.
Generally speaking, men are not as patient as women in general with young children. Therefore says tradition — only women can look after them whether or not as individuals they happen to be any good at it or not: it is "woman's work".

What happens when men do take up occupations traditionally regarded as female? They give it a grand name e.g. chef, not cook and say "all the best cooks are men" forgetting that in a traditionally female occupation they have to be as good as the best or better or they would not consider doing it and neither would anyone employ them. A female cook only barely competent will probably retain her job because it is "woman's work". In the same way a male engineer or average ability can middle along for years because he is a man doing a "man's work", whereas a female engineer will not only have to be outstandingly good to be even considered for the job, let alone given it, if there is a man around. A man is better than a woman Whatever the job, a woman is worse than a man whatever the evidence to the contrary.

Some men are very good drivers and some women are awful; what right does that give a man to categorise all women as ghastly behind a wheel when everyday people say that human, observant sex they must see as much evidence if not more to the contrary, both in the road and in the statistics of drivers involved in fateful accidents, could it not be just as logical to say that as women are more likely to go to their graves as a passenger statistic than as a driver one that they are the better drivers? Better does not necessarily mean more mechanically skillful, it means less dangerous.

Present all the arguments to the male and he "I'll concede that there may be some logic to your case but wait for it, he will say "Well then, why are there no great female composers, musicians, etc...? The answer to that one is the abilities or a few exceptional males does not contrive divinity on the rest of them and women are in the unfortunate position of being unable to take wives or mistresses to keep them alive so that they can create. There are precious few creative artists anyway, and a great many would DOT be an advantage; the value of a creative artist is in inverse proportion to his numbers. If every second man was a Michaelangelo we might be inclined to value those who could empty dustbins, if every second woman was a Cleopatra we might value someone who could boil an egg.

In other words as we really cannot say that one form of creativity is better than another, we are forced to assume that the rarer forms are the superior ones. This is not logical but it is the way things are. Women's Liberation are people who are not bogged down in the general traditional classification but people who see that what really matters is not whether men do "men's work" and women do "women's work" but that people do as their individual talents allow them. Is that really all that revolutionary? Educationalists try to preach the gospel that children should do what they are good at and that no
one talent is superior to another. Socialists say that the road-sweeper is as useful a member of society as the doctor. What use is it trying to get rid of other forms of discrimination when we haven't yet succeeded in eradicating what must have been the very first variety of this universal practice.

Nature intended women to be our slaves...they are our property; we are not theirs. They belong to us, just as a tree that bears fruit belongs to a gardener. What a mad idea to riemond equality for women! Women are nothing but machines for producing children.

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SOME MALE RESPONSES TO THE IDEA OF WOMEN'S LIB

The Laugh: Dismissing the issue without even discussing it.

Your fault: It's your personal problem. Not a social, political one. See your doctor. This is the technique of trying to isolate you.

Women's Rights were won years ago: Recognises the problem as a past one, but denies that it still exists.

The Male Liberal: He is all for it, but what about the family and the children. The technique works to agree that there is a "a problem", then tries to steer you back to the traditional role that men think you should play.

Women don't want a change: Since one can always find Aunt Toms and frightened women, this argument can be fairly convincing if one can not distinguish.

On people in the Women's Liberation Movement: She is unhappy because she can't get a man. Third person tactic used to persuade women that the very worst thing that could happen to them is to lose their oppressors.

Recognise these reactions for what they are. Don't let them keep your consciousness down.
PART TIME BUSINESS
work from your own home
be independent
have your own bank account
no gimmicks

write or phone

Dennot Mc.Dennotto Joe Finch
33 Brookwood Avenue, Artane, Dublin 5.
109 Haddington Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.
Dear Sisters,

I was standing among the noon-hour crowd at College Green when the gleaming hearse bearing the flag-draped coffin went by.

Realizing I am a foreigner, a woman beside me explained, "That's Kathleen Clarke, whose husband was shot for the Easter Rising. He was a rebel, she was. She did her stuff."

I already knew, for I had been to Kilmainham Prison two days before. She was imprisoned there. So was Mary MacSwiney and dozens of others. Constance Markievicz, condemned to death, waited there in her cell for the execution order that never came. Anne Devlin endured agonies worse than death for three years for her part in the 1913 rebellion.

In America we have our women heroes too, but nothing like the larger-than-life figures of the Irish rebel women.

The male survivors of the Rising and the Civil War became the prime ministers, presidents and T.D.'s of Ireland. The women held on at first - a cabinet post here, a lord mayor's seat there - and then slowly slipped into relative obscurity.

Perhaps their role was eclipsed because politics is the art of compromise, and principle mattered more to them than power and glittering office. Or perhaps, after all their sacrifices, Irish men could still see their women comrades only as wives and mothers when the shooting stopped?

In recently published correspondence, Pres. de Valera recalls he wanted to assign Mary MacSwiney to the Treaty negotiating team in 1921: "Miss MacSwiney I would like to have seen facing Lloyd George across the table."

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the table, not merely because of her own personality and her political ability, but because Lloyd George could not fail to see beside her the spirit of her dead brother. But this was ruled out because of Michael Collins's and Arthur Griffith's attitude toward her - women in general I suppose."

Kathleen Clarke went to her grave escorted by the highest political and military leaders of Ireland. Could one have imagined not one of those leaders would be a female?

Anne Gardiner-Sides
Gwenesville
Florida
USA

Dear Readers,

We want more single women at our meetings on Wednesday nights at 8 p.m.

The single women are not getting their social rights, or justice in our own country.

So please, single women, join the rest of us here.

K., Killiney.

Dear Madames,

I read your magazine for the first time and I was disgusted. I don't intend to buy it on any future occasion. What could have happened to make a group of women so violently anti-men? My husband who is kind and considerate, picked it up and had a good laugh. He said it was harmless. I could not laugh at it, you seem to be undermining the high position women have in society + a position some of us at any rate want to keep. Why do you advocate contraception? It is disgusting

I have three daughters and I constantly warn them about the pill. I would die rather than have one of them take it. Your article about prostitutes was disgusting. I pity them but it doesn't help to parade these things and bring public disgrace to our city.

I suppose some of you anyway mean well but you are misguided. My husband would do anything for me just because I know how to ask him. There are more ways of getting what you want than by demands.

D. O'L.
Coolock

Dear D. O'L.,

Demanding justice for women doesn't mean being anti-men; it does mean being opposed to discrimination to women, whatever form it takes. You say you have a kind considerate husband; many Irish women have unkind, inconsiderate husbands and because they have almost no legal redress, their lives are hopelessly miserable (our leading article deals with this subject). We do not advocate contraception, but we do say that it is a human right. This State, in its criminal legislation, deprives us of this right. This State, in its criminal legislation, deprives us of this right (in the context of our legal commitment to the Treaty of Rome and the EEC, this is ludicrous). We do advocate that you have a choice in the matter.

The article on prostitution in Dublin points to a situation which is disgusting, human beings are suffering because it is out custom to sweep abuses in our society which embarrass us under the carpet. Perhaps talking about them is a beginning.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO WRITE TO US, SEND YOUR LETTERS TO WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT, FOWNES ST. JOURNAL, 7 FOWNES ST., DUBLIN 2.
Q: What is a rasher (or bacon)?
A: Well, it just appears on my plate when I ask for it.
Q: Does your wife like bacon?
   How the hell do I know – ask her yourself.
Q: Does it worry you that your wife has to do washing three or four times a week?
A: Well, I mean, you always have mess after kids, don't you?
Q: Have you ever washed your wife's underwear?
A: Jesus – you must be joking! I
Q: How do you feel about your children?
A: I have the best looking kids in Ireland.
Q: Do you resent the fact that your wife is pregnant again?
A: No, I don't. Sure aren't I a man...
Q: How do you feel about contraception?
A: Well, I mean, the women ask for trouble, don't they? The Pill could kill you, or so Fr. Q'Brien says but then lets be honest, love, I mean, "a bit of you know how" after all it's tax free, isn't it? Ha, ha.
Q: Do you look after your wife properly?
A: What do you mean – for God's sake I give her the few bob every week – what more do you want?
Q: How do you feel about contraception?
A: Well, I mean, the women ask for trouble, don't they? The Pill could kill you, or so Fr. Q'Brien says but then lets be honest, love, I mean, "a bit of you know how" after all it's tax free, isn't it? Ha, ha.
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Q: Where is your husband this evening?
A: You know what men are - he's down at the All-Ireland Final and he's probably having a few pints with his pals.
Q: But it is Sunday evening?
A: Ah, well, Mrs. - you know yourself - men will be men.

Lord Longford is quoted in Sayings Of The Week (Observer 8th, October, 1972) as follows:

"I see myself as an unpaid and unsolicited member of Women's Lib."

He seems to be labouring under a number of misapprehensions. Women's Liberation, unlike the British Parliament, does not pay its members! Neither is soliciting one of our tactics! Anyway, Lord Longford, as a male, does not qualify for membership.

"I know it's old-fashioned, but I do feel that women just are inferior to men - in almost every way. So we should concentrate on being just that - women - and leave the rest to men. I'm sure everybody would be a lot happier."

Janet Pearce, "Pet of the Month", Penthouse, December '69.

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SEXIST TERMINOLOGY AS APPLIED TO WOMEN - contd.

Little woman: condescendingly flattering term generally used by the male who likes to be thought of as "the big man". Rarely applies to the actual size of the woman in question!

Doll: pretty plaything, toy, to be picked up and played with by Will, incapable of independent thought or action.

Dish: something delectable, for consumption usually by people who are unused to same. Adjective "dishy" in "common" use.

Princess: relatively flattering if one doesn't mind the restrictions of being perched on a pedestal.

N.B. All intending princesses should realize that although they may cease to be a princess they can never, never, never become a "queen"!

We have received many definitions involving winged creatures - these will be flying next month. More definitions welcome.

All articles were contributed by various members of the Movement and future contributions by any woman on any aspect of women's liberation should be sent to our office at Fownes St.

Women's Liberation Movement welcomes you to:

Mondays: Equal Pay Workshop
Wednesdays: Education Workshop (every second Wed.)
Thursdays: Legal Workshop Contraception Workshop Single Parents Workshop

Our next general meeting is on 1st November.