

WOMEN AND STATE GOVERNMENT

by Marilyn Power Goldberg
Economist, Berkeley, California

This paper will develop some policy recommendations for the employment of women, within the context of a full employment program for the State of California. Clearly we are far from achieving this goal; unemployment has been rising to crisis levels, and even in the high employment years at the end of the 60's, full employment was not a reality. So our recommendations are being made in a context of unemployment. Therefore we must take care that we are not creating employment for women simply by taking jobs from other groups, or upgrading women's work by giving the "undesirable" jobs to others.

Employment policies for women must take place in a context of an overall economic policy. The employment experience of women does not exist in an economic vacuum, but is directly and integrally related to the performance of the state economy. Nevertheless, women do face some very specific economic problems which merit directed state policies.

Women occupy a disadvantaged position in the California labor force, as in the labor force of the country as a whole. They find themselves largely confined to occupations which are predominately female--jobs which have traditionally been considered "women's work" because they involve serving or care of children; jobs which are dull, monotonous, repetitious; above all, work which is low paid, low status, with few or no fringe benefits or other job amenities, and, importantly, little or no chance for promotion. Women, along with non-white people of both sexes, can be said to be members of the secondary labor market, competing against each other for work in a pool of jobs distinctly separate from the more desirable job categories occupied predominately by white males.

This is not to say that no women ever achieve jobs in the primary market; but while gains have been made by a few, most of the increasing number of women entering the labor force find themselves channelled into the same standard work categories. Since the diversity of jobs open to women has not increased substantially with their increased labor force participation, the situation of women workers as a whole has, if anything, worsened over the last ten years.

In California in 1970, 42.2% of women were in the labor force. They were highly concentrated in two main occupational categories: 40% of white and 34% of non-white women were engaged in some form of clerical work; 17% of white and 28% of non-white women were engaged in service work, including domestic work (in this discussion, the data is from "Women at Work", written for the Employment Development Department by Kathryn S. Karrer in April 1974). Between these two categories, then, we can account for well over half of all women who work. Among black women, fully one out of every ten was engaged in domestic work, an extremely low paid, low status occupation which is allegedly disappearing.

Not only are women highly concentrated in the two occupations of clerical and service work, but this concentration has increased over time. Thus, from 1960

to 1970, while the proportion of the labor force which was female increased from 33% to 38%, the proportion of clerical workers who were women increased from 71% to 75%; the proportion of service workers from 48% to 55%. At the same time, the proportion of women in desirable professional and technical work actually decreased, from 34% to 31%.

Because of their position as a secondary labor market, women face problems of poverty and unemployment more severe than those faced by men, particularly white men. In 1969, 6% of families headed by men were below the poverty level in California, while 30% of the families with female heads were in poverty. Mean family income for all families was \$12,226; for families headed by women it was \$6,526.

There are two aspects to the problem of unemployment of women toward which state policy must be directed: a demand aspect and a supply aspect. The demand for women workers is affected by overt and implicit discrimination by employers (and sometimes unions and colleagues). Such discrimination effectively blocks women in many cases from participation in the primary job market, crowding them into low paid, low security traditional women's jobs, and confronting them with a higher likelihood of unemployment.

But women's ability to participate in the labor market faces obstacles on the supply side as well. Supply obstacles can be divided into two main categories. First, society tends to channel women, through schools, through media, through childhood socialization, into an assumption that any market work they do will be secondary; their primary roles will be as wives and mothers. In most grade school text books, for example, women are rarely shown in any but domestic roles; where they are shown working, it is overwhelmingly in traditional "women's work".

The result of such socialization is that many young women do not perceive a need to train themselves for a career, except a traditional job (i.e., typing) which is assumed to be temporary. When these women do enter the labor force, they find themselves in an overcrowded pool, competing for secondary jobs. An indication of this lack of career orientation on the part of young women is the fact that, among applicants to the University of California at Berkeley for the fall of 1972, 57% of the men but only 8% of the women had taken the high school prerequisites for introductory calculus (a required course for many traditional male subjects, including most sciences, engineering, environmental design, forestry and conservation, pre-medicine, and economics).

Socialization limits and channels women's labor force participation, but their participation is also obstructed by the fact that they are responsible for the care of the house and, especially, children, with little or no help from other family members. Women with many family responsibilities may find that they are only able to work sporadically, or part time, jobs with no overtime, or jobs located near home. Such requirements may make it extremely difficult for a woman to find any but secondary labor market jobs. Further, women may find themselves unemployed, whether officially or not, because they cannot find work which gives them an adequate return after the costs of child care and other substitutes for their (free) household labor.

In what follows we will discuss strategies for dealing with the problem of high unemployment and low economic position among women in California. Policy

recommendations will be aimed at both the demand and the supply aspects of the problem and will be divided into short and long-run strategies.

A. Short-run Strategies

1. Job restructuring--A number of proposals for job restructuring have been developed in recent years (the City of Berkeley, for example, has such a proposal--but has not approved it). Job restructuring has two basic goals; allowing more flexibility in work time through job sharing, and breaking down some of the hierarchy of the work situation through job pairing. We will examine each of these goals in turn, but first a comment is in order about the role the state can play in such a process. Clearly, the state cannot impose a job structure on private employers, or on county and city governments, as long as the existing structure cannot be considered discriminatory. But the state itself is a very large employer, and can encourage job restructuring by developing prototypes in its own agencies and by freely offering advice and information to other employers.

Job sharing essentially means allowing options for part time or part year work. For example, parents of school age children might want to work only the months their children are in school; in the summer, their jobs could be taken by college or high school students or others who want summer employment. Or, two people who want to work part time could share a job, each working four hours per day.

Job sharing would benefit both those workers who now work full time but would prefer part time, and people who are now unemployed or not in the labor force because they cannot work full time. Sharing is generally considered to be of benefit primarily to mothers of young children, but increasingly fathers as well are taking part in child care and would welcome part time work. People who want to work part time while engaging in some form of training or schooling would also benefit from such a plan. Older workers, both male and female, might choose to work part time or part year--allowing a period of slowdown, a transition to retirement. Some education may be needed in the initial stages to encourage men to feel that it is socially acceptable for them to work less than full time.

It is crucial that any job sharing plan be voluntary, so that no one is forced to work part time or part year who wants or needs full time work. Thus it is wise to begin cautiously, gauging the demand for restructured jobs as the experiment proceeds. Quotas may well be necessary to insure full time jobs exist for those who seek them. It is also crucial that part time workers not be viewed as a temporary or second-class labor force; job security should continue, as should health, pension, and other benefits on a pro-rata basis.

Job sharing will probably cause some increase in administrative costs, and may cause some confusion in initial stages; but it is likely to also create higher morale and productivity among workers. It is difficult to know how many jobs will be created by job sharing--chances are, any experiment will witness both an initial response among some workers (probably mostly mothers of young children) followed by a gradual choice of shared work by others as acceptance of the concept grows and people adjust their work patterns (as, for example, families in which one member works full time switch to two members working part time).

Job sharing may be a partial solution to the problem of monotonous, alienating work (typing pool, assembly line), as four hours of alienation is better than eight. However, most such jobs are extremely low paid and as such are not likely to face much demand for job sharing.

Job pairing is the process of sharing work responsibility across job steps, with a secretary and a supervisor, for example, discussing and distributing the work between them, each doing some of the work which is standardly done by the other. Inside this general format, there is room for a great deal of variation depending on the needs of the job and the individuals involved. Thus, a group of four production workers might simply rotate the job of foreperson, while office workers might prefer a more permanent (though still integrated) division of work.

Job pairing is not likely to create more jobs, as is the case with job sharing. It does have several benefits for women workers and, potentially, their employers as well. For women, it improves the quality of work time by insuring that no one worker spends all of her time at dull, repetitious work; and even repetitious work can take on more meaning when set in a wider text of responsibility and decision-making power. At the same time, job pairing creates bridges between jobs, which can allow women in formerly dead-end job ladders to acquire experience and training to move into more responsible positions. Thus job pairing can be a practical solution to the problem of lack of job preparedness among women, which we discussed above. Bridging can be a key element in a strategy to improve the economic position of women, and will be discussed again below under long-run strategy.

2. Job counseling--An active program of education and encouragement is needed, to aid women in moving out from overcrowded, traditionally female jobs, in taking themselves and their careers seriously. Such counseling is needed on two levels; in high school, for girls who are just beginning to consider what work they will do; and in the communities, for older women who want to enter or re-enter the labor force, or move out of the secondary labor market. It may be possible to make some use of already existing high school counseling arrangements if work is done on breaking down the prejudices of counselors (through training sessions, providing them with information, etc.).

There are clear advantages, however, to having direct connections between the counseling of high school women and the counseling of older women. The older women may serve as role models, concrete examples of the implications of different work-life choices; and a community-based group would have access to more specific information about the local job structure. Thus it might be better to combine many of the counseling functions in one organization. In many California communities, especially in urban areas, groups exist which already perform such counseling activities, although the scope tends to be limited by lack of funds. In such cases, the state may need simply to fund expansion of existing programs.

3. Entitlements--A program for the provision of grants or low interest loans could be developed, to enable women to receive training or re-training to move out of overcrowded women's fields into areas where there is a demand for workers.

4. Child care--The state should take on responsibility for the provision of adequate day care, within the financial means of all who need it. This can take the form of state run child care centers (i.e., for state employees), state

financial assistance to municipally run centers, and state supplementary funding of cooperatively run private centers. A system of fair payment should be developed and applied uniformly to all centers (perhaps a sliding scale by income), to insure that all centers are equitably priced.

NEW LEGISLATION AND ENFORCEMENT: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR WOMEN IN CALIFORNIA

1. Apprenticeship. The construction field--and that means the large majority of apprenticeship opportunities--is excluded from "Revised Order #4". This Order comprises the guidelines issued by the federal government (Office of Federal Contract Compliance) to enforce Executive Order 11246 and 11375 which forbid discrimination by federal contractors.

There are guidelines for affirmative action in apprenticeship, issued both by federal government (CFR 29 Chapter 30) and by California ("California Plan"). The California Plan incorporates the federal guidelines. These guidelines exclude women from the affirmative action requirements--in other words, although sex discrimination is forbidden, express affirmative action in hiring is required only for minorities.

This situation is peculiar, since it represents the "state of the art" before the women's movement. In fact, Order #4 was first issued for minorities only. It took a year of pressure primarily from N.O.W. before the Labor Department issued Order #4--Revised to include the phrase "women and minorities" wherever "minorities" had first been used. Hence the construction field has not caught up with the times in terms of generally accepted affirmative action practice required by federal law.

Action Required:

a. Add women to the California Plan. This can be done administratively by revising the administrative guides to the Plan to define women as a minority so that for purposes of the Plan the word "minority" applies to women. It can also be done by legislation, and would probably be clearer that way.

b. Communicate with the Office of Federal Contract Compliance and other federal contacts to pressure for a change in the federal Labor Code, which applies and is incorporated in the California Plan.

c. Add women to the guidelines of the California Fair Employment Practices Commission which apply to public works contracts of the state. These guidelines also represent the past by excluding women from goals and timetables requirements and also from reporting requirements. (Our Women in Apprenticeship Program offered testimony to this effect at the FEPC Hearings on their Guidelines Against Sex Discrimination in 1974).

2. Fair Employment Practices Commission. New legislation is needed to give the FEPC tougher enforcement powers. Much testimony to this effect was offered last year at the FEPC Hearings on their Guidelines Against Sex Discrimination.

More money is needed to beef up the affirmative action section of the FEPC, in particular. It is also needed to provide sufficient staff to handle the load of cases. Again, this is in the public record.

3. Establish a State affirmative action program in employment and in contracts and purchasing. Key issues involved in employment programs are, especially for civil service where many clerical workers are employed:

- a. Establish salaries for clerical work equitable for the skill level involved.
- b. Restructure the clerical field to permit more rapid movement from clerk levels to decision-making responsible levels.
- c. Create "bridging" jobs out of the clerical and other classification "ghettoes" so that state employees can be upgraded into management.
- d. Involve women and minorities from various occupational levels in planning the program and monitoring it.
- e. Survey clerical salaries and conduct a voluntary salary equity program to bring salaries in individual cases to a par with the work being performed, or clarify that the work being performed is definitely not required in that job. (Many clerical workers are performing highly responsible jobs and are relied upon for professional staff work but are paid clerical wages.)
- f. Require that State purchases and contracts be made with women-directed and women-owned establishments and organizations.
- g. In granting funds for community development, human resources training and employment, housing, job development, etc., intended to assist women as a target group, issue RFP's to women's organizations and allocate funds to women's organizations. Many federal contracts and grants are now being provided to male-run organizations to carry out small programs intended to assist women. These organizations will do quality work and many will assist women, however, if the funds were granted to women's organizations, they would do double service in strengthening the position of the women's movement and women leaders.

4. Protective legislation. Support efforts to provide safe working standards for all workers regardless of sex or age.

B. Long-run Strategies

In the long-run, women's unemployment is most affected by the overall employment rate, by the level of performance of the state and national economy. Policies to improve the employment situation in general will also improve the employment situation of women in particular, particularly if laws against discrimination and for affirmative action in hiring are strictly enforced.

Nevertheless, there will continue to be a need for special attention toward women's employment, from both the supply and the demand sides, for the foreseeable future. The pattern of use of women as a secondary labor force will not be easy

to break. To insure continued focus on the economic problems of women, women who have been actively involved in issues of women and employment should be directly involved in substantial numbers at all levels of the state planning process--not as a separate agency dealing with issues of women and employment, but as a part of an integrated plan for state economic development.

1. Job sharing and pairing should be continued, refined, and advocated for city governments and the private sector.

2. The concept of job pairing should be extended, with the creation of bridges between clerical and professional, technical and managerial jobs. The concept of apprenticeship, on-the-job training should be extended. The use of paraprofessionals should be encouraged, but combined with clearly set out programs of training and experience which would allow paraprofessionals to become professionals. I would like to see state hospitals, for example, develop programs which would create bridges between nurses and doctors.

Such a program would probably create some new jobs, but its main effect would be the upgrading of low level jobs and the opening of access to high level jobs to women and other disadvantaged groups.

3. The state can help fund the establishment and expansion of cooperative enterprises. While such a policy would certainly not be exclusively aimed at women, it could be particularly helpful in providing employment for women who possess skills but find themselves excluded from employment in the private sector through discrimination or lack of job flexibility. Some women might choose to create their own work environments rather than find themselves in token positions in male-dominated work situations. Many women, moreover, have developed skills on their own, in such areas as child care, cooking, sewing, and so on, but lack credentials or labor market experience. They could play an important role in providing cooperatively-run child care centers, catering services, and other services which are needed by other working women (and men).

Women in Appalachia have had some success with selling home produced goods such as quilts and preserves through producing and marketing cooperatives. They may be potential for developing such cooperative cottage industries in California as well, particularly in the chronically poor lumbering areas (as well as among crafts people in urban areas).

Such cooperatives would create jobs which, after some initial seed money from the state, would presumably be self-supporting. Already existing cooperatives could serve as a model and also as a base for expanding into new areas.

4. Finally, the process of job uptrading must include such policies as the recognition and encouragement of unions for clerical and service workers. Such recognition should not be put off until the "long run", but long run strategies for restructuring and upgrading work must take place with active participation by the unions involved.

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