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# American Women: Looking Back, Moving Ahead - The 50th Anniversary of The President's Commission on the Status of Women Report

## Abstract

[Excerpt] Eleanor Roosevelt, Chair of President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women, hosted the third meeting of the Commission at her home in Hyde Park just five months before she died. She expressed confidence in women's continuing progress toward equality, building on the work accomplished since 1929 when she hosted the Women's Trade Union League at the same home when Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) was Governor of New York. On October 11, 1963, members of the Commission gathered in the White House and presented their final report, *American Women*, to President John F. Kennedy. Mrs. Roosevelt's birthday was chosen for the presentation to honor her contribution to the struggle for women's equality.

The scope of *American Women* was broad and the issues were complicated. Established by Executive Order 10980 in 1961, the Commission undertook the first national assessment to determine the status of women in all walks of American life. Administered over two years by the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, the Commission laid out findings and recommendations in seven areas: education and counseling, home and community, employment, labor standards, basic income security, the law, and women as citizens. With the leadership of union women, the Commission's accomplishments included documenting gender discrimination on the national and state levels, contributing to executive and legislative solutions, and forming a network of state women's commissions that helped link diverse women to the newly emerging women's movement across the country. This paper reviews the origins of the Commission, its recommendations, the immediate results of its work, and the implications for working women in the 21st century.

Fifty years after the report was issued there has been significant progress toward achieving the goal of gender equality in the home, the workplace, and society. Women are now more likely than men to graduate from high school, college, and graduate school. Women have grown from one-third to almost one-half of the workforce. The greatest increase has come from women with young children, almost two-thirds of whom are now working. Women now earn 78 cents for every dollar a man earns, up from 60 cents. Women now hold 52 percent of management and professional occupations. They are almost half of all union members. Not only are women able to serve on juries, they are now Supreme Court Justices. Women have a significant impact on elections and hold leadership positions in the major political parties.

Challenges remain, including the lack of national child care and paid family leave policies, the ongoing struggle of minority women for racial as well as gender equality, and the interrelated problems of unequal pay between women and men and occupational job segregation by gender. These issues were raised by the President's Commission on the Status of Women, but not resolved. At the same time, critical new challenges have emerged with the expanded global economy and the decline in union membership for women half a century later. The 1963 *American Women Report* was introduced as "An invitation to action," and the challenge for continued action is being taken up by new coalitions of working women.

## Keywords

women, work, gender, pay equality, labor force participation, education

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**Comments**

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***AMERICAN WOMEN: LOOKING BACK, MOVING AHEAD***

**The 50th Anniversary of The President's Commission on the Status of Women Report**

By

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For

Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor  
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## Acknowledgements

The basis for this paper on the President's Commission on the Status of Women Report began with stories told by union women about their roles with the Commission that my colleague Joyce Kornbluh and I collected in *Rocking the Boat: Union Women's Voices 1915-1975* (1996). These stories led to examining Eleanor Roosevelt's role in the work of the Commission found in *She Was One of Us: Eleanor Roosevelt and the American Worker* (2010). My further understanding of the Commission and the context in which the work was developed and carried out has relied on three volumes.

Cynthia Harrison provides a detailed account and analysis of the Commission within the political framework of women's issues in *On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women's Issues 1945-1968* (1989). The work of the Commission from the perspective of the Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, is presented by Kathleen Laughlin in *Women's Work and Public Policy: A History of the Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, 1945-1970* (2000). The role of union women is further illuminated by Dorothy Sue Cobble in *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (2004). Primary sources about the Commission are the report itself, *American Women* (1963), the five year follow-up report, *American Women 1963-1968*, and related archival material at the Wirtz Labor Library, U.S. Department of Labor, and the Anna Eleanor Roosevelt Papers at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, NY.

I would like to thank several colleagues for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Esta Bigler, Mary Frederickson, Ariane Hegewisch, and Kitty Sklar asked insightful questions and offered constructive criticism. Staff of the Women's Bureau provided guidance and suggested positive changes. A discussion with Women's Bureau staff gave insight and direction, with special thanks for comments from Jacqueline Cooke, Joan Farrelly, Kelly Jenkins-Pultz, and Jane Walstedt. It was my special pleasure to discuss the Commission and its impact with Madeline Mixer, Ruth Nadel, and Ruth Shinn, all retired members of the Women's Bureau staff. Caleb Robinson's assistance at the Wirtz Labor Library was very much appreciated. The views and conclusions expressed here, however, are my own and I accept full responsibility for any errors that have occurred.

## Introduction

“I feel confident that in the years ahead many of the remaining outmoded barriers to women’s aspirations will disappear.” Eleanor Roosevelt, June 16, 1962

Eleanor Roosevelt, Chair of President Kennedy’s Commission on the Status of Women, hosted the third meeting of the Commission at her home in Hyde Park just five months before she died. She expressed confidence in women’s continuing progress toward equality, building on the work accomplished since 1929 when she hosted the Women’s Trade Union League at the same home when Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) was Governor of New York. On October 11, 1963, members of the Commission gathered in the White House and presented their final report, *American Women*, to President John F. Kennedy. Mrs. Roosevelt’s birthday was chosen for the presentation to honor her contribution to the struggle for women’s equality.

The scope of *American Women* was broad and the issues were complicated. Established by Executive Order 10980 in 1961, the Commission undertook the first national assessment to determine the status of women in all walks of American life. Administered over two years by the Women’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, the Commission laid out findings and recommendations in seven areas: education and counseling, home and community, employment, labor standards, basic income security, the law, and women as citizens. With the leadership of union women, the Commission’s accomplishments included documenting gender discrimination on the national and state levels, contributing to executive and legislative solutions, and forming a network of state women’s commissions that helped link diverse women to the newly emerging women’s movement across the country. This paper reviews the origins of the Commission, its recommendations, the immediate results of its work, and the implications for working women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Fifty years after the report was issued there has been significant progress toward achieving the goal of gender equality in the home, the workplace, and society. Women are now more likely than men to graduate from high school, college, and graduate school. Women have grown from one-third to almost one-half of the workforce. The greatest

increase has come from women with young children, almost two-thirds of whom are now working. Women now earn 78 cents for every dollar a man earns, up from 60 cents. Women now hold 52 percent of management and professional occupations. They are almost half of all union members. Not only are women able to serve on juries, they are now Supreme Court Justices. Women have a significant impact on elections and hold leadership positions in the major political parties.

Challenges remain, including the lack of national child care and paid family leave policies, the ongoing struggle of minority women for racial as well as gender equality, and the interrelated problems of unequal pay between women and men and occupational job segregation by gender. These issues were raised by the President's Commission on the Status of Women, but not resolved. At the same time, critical new challenges have emerged with the expanded global economy and the decline in union membership for women half a century later. The 1963 *American Women Report* was introduced as "An invitation to action," and the challenge for continued action is being taken up by new coalitions of working women.

### **Calls for Action—1950s**

Historian Cynthia Harrison, focusing on the politics of women's issues, called the period from 1945-1960 one of "consolidation and stalemate" between opponents and supporters of the Equal Rights Amendment (Harrison, 1989:1-65). A commission on women was not a new idea. In the aftermath of World War II, as many women moved not out of the workforce, but back to low-wage jobs, the Women's Status Bill was introduced in both houses of Congress in 1947. A key component of the legislation was a Commission on the Legal Status of Women. The commission was to lay out a comprehensive plan to achieve equality in the workplace, while improving conditions for women and men. This was the goal of a coalition of working women, led by union women and backed by liberal politicians. The bill was seen as an alternative to the constitutional Equal Rights Amendment, which opponents feared would eliminate hard-won protective labor laws, especially for working-class women in the lowest-paid and most dangerous jobs (Harrison, 1989:26-27; Cobble, 2004:62-66).

Supporters of the bill included twenty-one labor groups, as well as organizations such as the National Council of Negro Women and the YWCA. The bill was reintroduced each year until 1954, but no action was taken (Cobble, 2004:63). At the same time, in 1948 the American Association of University Women requested President Truman to name a commission to advance opportunities for women, particularly looking at women in defense planning, but Truman declined. A second request was made after the Korean conflict, but again rejected. In 1957, the National Manpower Council at Columbia University called for a commission to review the effects of federal and state laws on women's employment, but the Eisenhower administration did not act (Harrison, 1989:109-110).

During this same time period, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was introduced in Congress each year by the National Woman's Party. While it gained in general support, and was part of both Democratic and Republican Party platforms, there was considerable opposition and not enough pressure to move forward. The ERA was backed largely by an elite class of women, conservative politicians, and business groups. Women's organizations that supported it included the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the National Association of Women Lawyers, and the National Education Association. Historian Sue Cobble (2004:60-61), presenting this history from the union perspective, described the conflict in the fight for women's full citizenship in the context of "clashing class interests, fundamentally opposing philosophies of economic and political reform, and deeply held but divergent views on gender and women."

### **The New Frontier**

"The very existence of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, under Eleanor Roosevelt's leadership, creates a climate where it is possible to recognize and do something about discrimination against women, in terms not only of pay but of the subtle barriers to opportunity."  
 Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963

In 1960 newspapers routinely advertised jobs as "male only" or "female only." In some states women couldn't get credit cards without a male co-signer and in others they

were barred from jury duty. Women were unabashedly paid less than men at work and told they worked for pin money. In her book *When Everything Changed*, *New York Times* columnist Gail Collins (2009:20) reported that women were just 6 percent of doctors and quoted a medical school dean saying “Hell yes, we have a quota...We do keep women out, when we can. We don’t want them here...” Yet one-third of the workforce was female, and the fastest-growing group of workers was mothers with young children. Many of these women were looking to make changes.

The election of President John F. Kennedy that year introduced a new opportunity. Labor leader Esther Peterson, then a lobbyist for the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO and an early Kennedy supporter, became Director of the Women’s Bureau and Assistant Secretary of Labor for Labor Standards at the U. S. Department of Labor. She had been part of union women’s efforts to improve their wages and working conditions for decades, including support for the Women’s Status Bill. She quickly reconstituted the Bureau’s Labor Women’s Advisory Committee that had languished during the Eisenhower administration, recruited Kitty Ellickson from the Social Security Department of the AFL-CIO, and began drafting an argument for a commission on women.

Peterson was the highest-ranking woman in the administration. There were few other women in high profile appointments and none appointed to the Presidential Cabinet. Rather than making high profile appointments Kennedy turned to the Women’s Bureau agenda to show his support for women (Harrison, 1989:81). Peterson thought that legislation creating a commission would be opposed by conservative southern Democrats and Republicans in Congress who were backed by ERA supporters. To avoid a legislative fight she worked with Secretary of Labor Arthur Goldberg to draft an Executive Order that the President could issue unilaterally. According to historian Kathleen Laughlin (2000:79-80), who reviewed the Commission through the history of the Women’s Bureau, this was a strategy borrowed from the earlier civil rights movement.

The Commission would be administered by the U.S. Department of Labor and be wide-ranging in its membership and focus. Peterson promised that all issues, including the proposed equal rights constitutional amendment, would be examined objectively (Harrison, 1989:115). Marguerite Rawalt, a prominent lawyer and member of the National Woman’s Party, represented the ERA supporters. With skepticism on all sides, Peterson

hoped to bring together a consensus women's agenda for the first time since suffrage was achieved in 1920. The structure of the Commission, the role of union women, and the leadership of the Women's Bureau were key elements of Peterson's strategy.

### **Commission Structure**

President Kennedy established the President's Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) at a White House ceremony on December 14, 1961. Executive Order 10980 begins "Whereas prejudices and outmoded customs act as barriers to the full realization of women's basic rights..." and continues in the last Whereas "a Governmental Commission should be charged with the responsibility for developing recommendations for overcoming discriminations in government and private employment on the basis of sex and for developing recommendations for services which will enable women to continue their role as wives and mothers while making a maximum contribution to the world around them." See Appendix A for the full executive order (U.S. PCSW, 1963).<sup>A</sup>

The Executive Order identified six areas of focus affecting women: employment policies of federal contractors; federal social insurance and tax laws; labor laws dealing with issues such as hours, night work, and wages; legal treatment regarding political and civil rights, property rights, and family relations; new and expanded services, including education, counseling, training, home services, and child care; and government employment policies and practices to assure nondiscrimination on the basis of sex and enhance constructive employment opportunities for women.

Esther Peterson was very clear on the importance of involving a wide range of women and men in the work of the Commission. She considered having Eleanor Roosevelt as chair critical to the Commission's ability to be taken seriously. She served as executive vice chair, and Professor Richard Lester, an economist from Princeton University with a distinguished career in industrial relations and public policy, was vice chair. The Commission was composed of 26 members, 11 men and 15 women. Four cabinet secretaries from the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare were joined by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and John Macy, Chair of the Civil Service

Commission. Two Democrats and two Republicans served from the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. Fourteen citizen commissioners were drawn from women's organizations, business, labor, and education. Education, for example, was represented by Mary Bunting, president of Radcliffe College, and Henry David, president of the New School for Social Research. Dorothy Height, representing the National Council of Negro Women, joined Norman Nicholson, Kaiser Industries, and Margaret Mealey, the National Council of Catholic Women. See Appendix B for a complete list of Commissioners (U.S. PCSW, 1963).<sup>B</sup>

Seven working committees focused on civil and political rights, education, federal employment, home and community, private employment, protective labor legislation, and social insurance and taxes. Each was chaired by a Commission member and included a technical secretary. The committees had between nine and fifteen additional participants. The committees each produced reports and made recommendations to the full Commission. In addition, four consultations involving another 141 people were convened to focus on: private employment opportunities, new patterns in volunteer work, portrayal of women by the mass media, and problems for African American women. Issues for minority women were to be addressed in every area of the Commission's work. The consultation, however, confirmed that any problems for women were worse for African American women (Cobble, 2004:173-74). An additional 21 people, primarily government officials, also attended meetings or made presentations.

The day-to-day life of the Commission was orchestrated by a secretariat comprised of 30 professionals and two administrative staff and was managed by executive secretary Kitty Ellickson. Fifty organizations, ranging from the Alliance of Unitarian Women to Zonta International, assisted with the work of the Commission. In total, over 300 individuals and organizations, in addition to six government agencies, contributed to the deliberations of the President's Commission on the Status of Women. See Appendix C for a complete list (U.S. PCSW, 1963).<sup>C</sup> Union women were central to this effort.

## Union Women

In 1937 Eleanor Roosevelt wrote in her syndicated *My Day* column that the only way to improve wages and working conditions was through legislation and unionization. The Commission addressed both strategies. The role of union women was particularly significant in carrying out what Cobble calls the labor feminist agenda, which meant having equality at work and the ability to care for the family at home and in the community. Four women exemplified the partnership that emerged after the war, based on New Deal coalitions and the Women's Trade Union League. In this model more formally educated women worked closely with factory workers and labor leaders on issues of concern to working women, all with the blessing of Eleanor Roosevelt. They didn't always agree, but they formed an influential coalition that worked closely with the Women's Bureau, often behind the scenes. A closer look at key coalition members Esther Peterson, Kitty Ellickson, Mary Callahan, Caroline Davis, and Eleanor Roosevelt follows.

Esther Peterson was in the key leadership position. In her autobiography *Restless* (1995), she describes her early years with her Mormon family in Utah. She moved east to attend Columbia Teachers College, where she met and married Oliver Peterson, who introduced her to the labor movement. While teaching physical education at a private girl's school in Boston, she soon became active in the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women in Industry and taught young working women at the YWCA. She became an organizer for the teachers' union and eventually joined the education staff of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA). While raising four children, Peterson went to Washington with her husband and became a lobbyist for ACWA.

Always politically astute, Peterson began to work closely with the new young Congressman John F. Kennedy. After several years in Sweden and Brussels, where her husband was one of the new labor attachés after World War II, she returned to Washington, DC and became a lobbyist for the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO. Senator Kennedy welcomed her back. She was impressed with his ability to listen and learn and his commitment to labor issues. She was one of the first labor leaders to endorse Kennedy for President. She and Arthur Goldberg, a labor lawyer with roots in the CIO and the United Steelworkers of America, worked tirelessly on the presidential campaign. After the

election, when asked what she wanted, she quickly responded “the Women’s Bureau.” She wanted to restore union women to a position of influence within the U.S. Department of Labor and in the Kennedy Administration. (Also see O’Farrell and Kornbluh, 1996:58-83, and Cobble, 2004:34).

Katherine (Kitty) P. Ellickson was a crucial staff person. Kitty grew up in a Jewish family in Manhattan and graduated from Vassar College with a degree in economics. She also taught in the Bryn Mawr Summer School and worked for the Mine Workers Union, the National Labor Relations Board, and in the research Department of the CIO. Both she and Peterson negotiated part-time work arrangements when their children were young and were aware of the privilege they enjoyed having husbands who supported their work and incomes to allow for good child care. When the AFL and the CIO merged in 1955, Ellickson joined the labor organization’s Social Security staff. Peterson convinced her to take a leave of absence from the AFL-CIO and join the PCSW as executive secretary. Both women were experienced, pragmatic, and committed to the advancement and well-being of housewives, as well as workers (Cobble, 2004:35-36,160).

Organized labor had two official representatives on the commission. One was William Schnitzler, Secretary Treasurer of the AFL-CIO. The other was Mary Callahan, Executive Board member of the International Union of Electrical Workers, AFL-CIO. Mary was born and raised in Philadelphia. As a young widow with a small child, she went to work in one of the growing electronics factories and became a founding member of Local 105, United Electrical Workers-CIO. She became a shop steward, trustee, and was elected secretary-treasurer of her local for forty years. Remarried and with two children, she became one of only two women on the International Executive Board, where she coordinated collective bargaining for local unions and employers in the radio, television, and parts industries. She pioneered negotiating benefits like maternity leave during World War II and supported expanding protective labor laws to men, because “Everybody should have a relief period on the job. Everybody should have a lunch period.” She became chair of the IUE’s first Women’s Council (O’Farrell and Kornbluh, 1996:126-128).

Mary Callahan was impressed that there were hundreds of people involved in the Commission and that the issues covered everything having to do with women “from cradle to grave.” At first she thought she had nothing in common with most of the other

commissioners. She never expected to sit down with Eleanor Roosevelt, Margaret Hickey, editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, Mary Bunting, president of Radcliffe College—women from business, the professions, and universities. She acknowledged disagreements and arguments, but there was agreement on the overall goals. Callahan thought the Commission agreed that “This country could not overlook its woman power (O’Farrell and Kornbluh, 1996:127).”

Caroline Davis served as one of several advisors to the PCSW. She directed the Women’s Department at the United Automobile Workers from 1948 until her retirement in 1973. She came from a poor Kentucky mining family and dropped out of school at age 15 to work in a glass plant. When the family moved to Indiana she got a job in an auto parts plant, along with her father and soon-to-be husband. She helped organize her plant, was on the first bargaining committee, and became president of the mostly male, 500-member UAW Local 764. As a staunch supporter of UAW president Walter Reuther, he asked her to head the UAW Women’s Department in 1948 (Cobble, 2004:39-40).

Davis had always fought her own battles and wasn’t sure she wanted to focus on women. She soon learned far more about the discrimination women faced in the industry, however, and was particularly moved by stories from African American women who said they had more trouble because of their sex than their color. But union women weren’t always in agreement. Davis served on the Commission’s Committee on Private Employment, chaired by Lester, where she argued for stronger sanctions against employers, saw no differences between race and sex discrimination, and objected to laws that limited the hours women could work or the amount of weight they could carry, which could be used to bar them from good jobs in male dominated workplaces like auto plants (Cobble, 2004:171).

Finally, Eleanor Roosevelt was a critical part of Esther Peterson’s plan for the Commission. Peterson had known the former First Lady since the 1930s when she joined her on the campaign trail, guitar in hand, and accompanied women from the Hudson Shore Labor School to picnics at the Roosevelt home at Val-Kill. Peterson also hosted Roosevelt when she came to Sweden as part of her work at the United Nations. Esther Peterson claimed Mrs. Roosevelt as a wonderful role model (Peterson, 1995:188). Kennedy and Roosevelt had a long and rocky relationship, but she did campaign for him and he very

much wanted the support she brought as an influential and visible leader in the Democratic Party and the international human rights community (O'Farrell, 2010:183-86).

Peterson made the case that Eleanor Roosevelt would bring the PCSW the serious attention it deserved. Roosevelt was also a very well-known supporter of labor unions and working women. As a newspaper columnist she had very publicly joined the American Newspaper Guild and was a member for over 25 years. She was a keynote speaker at the AFL-CIO merger convention in 1955, and her union card was in her wallet when she died. She had long stood with union women in opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment. While she gradually dropped her opposition to the ERA, she never actively supported the amendment, thought it wouldn't make much difference, and that it was critical to find ways to protect the most vulnerable working women. Roosevelt was in declining health, but this was truly her world coming full circle with working women: from workplace inspections with the Consumers League in 1905, to education with the Women's Trade Union League in the 1920s, through years of support in the White House and at the United Nations, to her last official duty as Chair of the President's Commission on the Status of Women.

### **The Women's Bureau**

The PCSW represented one of the high points of the Women's Bureau's influence for both political appointees and career staff. Created within the U.S. Department of Labor by Public Law No. 259 in 1920, the Bureau's duty was to "formulate standards and policies which shall promote the welfare of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment" (U.S. Department of Labor, WB, 2012). Under the leadership of Mary Anderson, a shoemaker by trade, the Bureau began conducting studies of working conditions in such industries as the candy, fruit-growing and canning, cigar and cigarette, telephone, leather glove, and shoe industries and in cotton mills, laundries, department stores, and private households. It addressed working conditions for minority women and women in the Federal government. It argued for policies and standards to benefit working women at the state and federal levels, including the Fair Labor Standards Act and the Equal Pay Act.

Documenting women's working conditions and wages was a central strategy for making improvements. Bureau political appointees developed policy and testified before Congress, while career staff carried out research, drafted legislation, reviewed regulations, and educated and collaborated with women all across the country. Working closely with unions, some of its proudest accomplishments were state protective laws limiting women workers' hours, night work, and the weight they could lift, as were efforts to decrease the wage gap between women and men. (For a history of the Women's Bureau see Laughlin, 2000.)

Anderson directed the Bureau for 25 years, regardless of changing administrations. Frieda Miller became director in 1943 from her position as New York State Industrial Commissioner. Trained at the University of Chicago in law and economics and with close ties to the labor movement, she also was part of the Women's Trade Union League and had taught at the Bryn Mawr Summer School. The Bureau's labor connection ended when President Eisenhower was elected. He appointed as director Alice Leopold, a college graduate who came from a business career with experience as a state Republican legislator. The Bureau's Labor Advisory Committee became inactive, and, under an antiregulatory administration, the legislative initiatives stopped. Leopold stressed individual initiative and focused the Bureau more on women in fields such as medical and health services, science, social work, and mathematics.

Shortly after Esther Peterson was appointed director of the Women's Bureau she was also named Assistant Secretary for Labor Standards, the only Women's Bureau director to hold an assistant secretary position. Under her leadership the Bureau's budget and staff increased from 64 employees in 1960 to 100 employees in 1963 and from one to eight field staff (U.S. Bureau of the Budget, 1960, 1963). A major goal for Peterson was to bring the labor coalition back to a position of influence. She quickly reconstituted the Labor Advisory Committee and they began discussion of a commission.

If the Bureau and the Commission were to be effective, however, Peterson thought it was critical that the mission be very broad, covering issues for working women and housewives, and that the Commission assess the effectiveness of protective labor laws and the possible need for a constitutional equal rights amendment. She was open to flexibility and compromise, but she did seek an alternative to the ERA. Alice Paul, however, the

founder of the National Woman's Party and chief architect of the Equal Rights Amendment, saw Esther Peterson's appointment and the Commission as being "set up to defeat the adoption of the amendment" (Harrison, 1989:122).

### **The Commission At Work**

The first meeting of the PCSW was held at the White House. President Kennedy welcomed the group and renewed his commitment to their mission. Eleanor Roosevelt then framed that mission as finding ways to make use of "all our manpower—and that includes womanpower." She highlighted the problems of rapid economic and social changes, unemployment, economic instability, and automation and called for full employment. Within this framework the Commission would look at women's problems at all levels of government, in industry, and at home. They would gather the data, make recommendations, and educate the public (O'Farrell, 2010:201).

The full Commission met eight times over two years. The first comprehensive background paper was presented by historian Caroline Ware, a Commission member. She laid out the improvements in women's health and longevity, changes in technology and production, increased consumption and levels of living, urban and suburban differences, and the democratization of society, which she concluded was moving towards equality. She reviewed the changing expectations for women in education, childbearing, homemaking, and employment. She recommended that the Commission look at those who must work, those who choose careers, women combining both, the role of volunteers, and the lack of women in policy-making positions. She called on comparisons to Sweden and Canada to broaden the debate and asked "May we not, in short, do more to fit work to the capacities and needs of people and not always to fit people to the requirement of work (Ware, 1962:41)."

The Commission and the Women's Bureau worked on different levels and tasks with two early successes. Ending widely accepted discrimination in pay between women and men was a goal of the Women's Bureau and the PCSW. Staff worked on legislation to guarantee equal pay for work of comparable value. Peterson, staff of the U.S. Department of Labor, and members of the Commission worked closely with Congress. Several months

before the Commission's final report was issued President Kennedy signed into law the Equal Pay Act of 1963 guaranteeing equal pay for equal work. Of the several compromises involved, the most critical was the loss of comparable worth--the ability to compare jobs that were comparable, but not equal. As an amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the Equal Pay Act also excluded many workers, although the FLSA was later amended to include more workers. Yet this was a very important step. For the first time the concept of equality for women in the workforce was articulated by the federal government (Harrison, 1989:104).

A second area where the PCSW and the Women's Bureau could report on progress was employment with the federal government. Sex discrimination was firmly rooted in the civil service system in 1864 when Congress allowed for the hiring of female clerks at half the lowest government wage. Women became an increasingly large part of the federal workforce, but they were concentrated in the lowest-paying occupations. At the request of the Federation of Federal Employees, one of the first studies carried out by the Women's Bureau found that only 40 percent of the examinations for positions in the Federal government were open to women and that the prevailing entrance salaries paid to women were much lower than those paid to men. Ten days after *Women in the Government Service* (U.S. Department of Labor, WB, 1920) was submitted, the Civil Service Commission passed a ruling opening all examinations to both men and women (U.S. Congress, 1920:20,27,88; Henry, 1923:179).

In 1960, however, there was a general policy that allowed agency heads to specify the sex of workers for specific jobs "men only" or "women only." John Macy, at that time chair of the Civil Service Commission, served on the PCSW. President Kennedy directed him "to review policies and procedures to ensure that selection was made solely on merit without regard to sex" (Harrison, 1989:145). The old policy was reversed and women were soon appointed to jobs from which they were previously excluded.

Over 300 people worked on the PCSW during a two-year period. Papers were commissioned, hearings held, meetings convened, testimony given, and reports submitted (U. S. PCSW Meeting Minutes, U.S. PCSW Reports). Progress on equal pay and in federal government employment set the stage for the final report. Betty Friedan acknowledged the

Commission's importance, but she would move far beyond the report's recommendations by the end of the decade.

## **The Report**

Eleanor Roosevelt stressed that the Commission report should have concrete recommendations for action. Harkening back to her early days with the consumer movement, she saw the Commission as gathering much-needed facts that would provide background for and inspiration to the groups working on these important issues. She held no illusions that a report would change the world. Rather, the information they gathered would act as "a stimulus...to all the people who are already working and who want to work in the future" (O'Farrell, 2010:201).

There was disagreement, however, even among the carefully chosen commissioners and committee members. In addition to the debate over equal rights and protective labor laws, there were challenges to any kind of regulation of private employment, questions about the appropriateness of child care centers, and questioning of traditional assumptions about the roles of women and men. There was disagreement over whether discrimination based on sex should be treated the same as discrimination based on race. Some felt that not enough was known about sex discrimination and that some forms of discrimination based on sex were acceptable; others disagreed. Peterson (1995:109) recalled that the most difficult recommendation to agree on was one sentence about women having the opportunity for "education about sex and human reproduction in the context of education for family life." Some commissioners wanted access to legal abortions, yet the sale of contraceptives was still illegal in several states. Esther Peterson later called the report the "art of the possible (Cobble, 2004:168)."

In the end, the Commission came to consensus and made recommendations in seven substantive areas in the following order: education and counseling, home and community, employment, labor standards, basic income, law, and citizenship. The report recognized the importance of personal changes for women and men, the roles of schools, employers, unions, and community organizations, and the actions of government institutions. Harrison (1989:142) concluded that while the Commission reflected many of

the tensions of the times, the total package of recommendations “resulted in a blueprint for change that, if implemented, would significantly enlarge the range of choices for American women.”

### **Education and Counseling**

“Nothing,” the report stated, “...is of greater importance than improvement in the quality of early education available to all of the Nation’s youth.” The PCSW called for increased education from kindergarten through college and for increased financial support for and flexibility in educational systems to accommodate the educational needs of young women and the schedules of adult women. It called for the federal government to increase research and data collection on the education of women and men and the dissemination of findings on such research and data collection.

Perhaps most important for wage-earning women was the call for improved counseling for girls and women in high school and adult education, including vocational education, and by the government-funded U.S. Employment Service. Chart 6 in the report showed how “Jobs Women Hold Reflect Training They Have Had.” Professional workers, for example, were most likely to have one or more years of college, whereas private household workers had no years of college. This required more and improved counselor training programs to reach girls from low-income families and families of color, as well as those able to attend college. The Commission pointed to the persistent assumptions about “women’s roles” and “women’s interests” and the need to educate and motivate women about alternatives. It also concluded that “Counseling based on obsolete assumptions is routine at best; at worst, it is dangerous.” Counseling for women had to change.

### **Home and Community**

Ever aware of women’s traditional roles as homemakers and mothers, the Commission did not challenge these roles, but sought to support them given the reality of women’s employment. Of particular importance were women’s roles in carrying out child care and domestic work. Despite its regular reference to the importance of homemakers,

the Commission's call for reform in the area of family support was compelling for working women.

First and foremost, the Commission documented the lack of quality child care. It affirmed that "child care facilities are essential for women in many different circumstances, whether they work outside the home or not." It argued that whether by force or choice women who work "should have child care services available." It cited a 1958 survey that found 400,000 children under 12 whose mothers worked full-time and had no arrangements for the children's supervision. Child care, as well as after-school care, was needed, especially for children in low-income neighborhoods and from migrant families. Costs were to be covered by parent fees scaled to the ability to pay, by voluntary agencies, and by public appropriations. PCSW, however, did not support legislation limited to child care for those on public assistance as a way to force low-income women into the workforce (Harrison, 1989:157-158).

The report called for professional counseling for families in distress, whether from illness or desertion, single parenthood, or delinquency. Social workers and skilled homemakers were to provide temporary support. The Commission further concluded that tax treatment for child care should be expanded to increase the income caps, allow for multiple children, and raise the age of child coverage. PCSW also recommended comprehensive provisions for health and rehabilitation services.

The section of the report on domestic workers addressed the need to reorganize ordinary home maintenance services. This drew on the consultation report for African American women, which also called for unionization of household workers (U.S. PCSW, Consultation Report, 1963:32). While the Commission noted that the number of women employed in household work had declined from 18 percent of employed women in 1940 to 8 percent in 1950, there were still more than two and a half million women in household work in 1963. This was historically low-paid work without standards for hours or working conditions, without collective bargaining, and not covered by protective legislation. The Commission encouraged both private and public agencies to develop specialties, training, placement, and monitoring of household skills to meet modern labor standards.

## Women in Employment

The report carefully acknowledged that women work “both in their homes, unpaid, and outside their homes, on a wage or salary basis.” Women, like men, worked outside the home primarily to earn money, although for some people work had the additional, often very important “value as self-fulfillment.” In 1962 there were 23 million working women, and 17 million worked full-time. One in three workers was a woman, and one-third of married women were working, a steadily increasing part of the labor force. The report noted that there were 431 women geologists and geophysicists, but the largest concentration of women was in the clerical field --7 million women. The Commission concluded that “The difference in occupational distribution of men and women is largely responsible for the fact that in 1961, the earnings of women working full time averaged only about 60 percent of those of men working full time.”

Employment in the private sector was critical. The PCSW gathered information from employers about their hiring and promotion decisions and reviewed existing research. Employers cited higher rates of sickness, absenteeism, and turnover among women as reasons to employ men rather than women. Research did not support the employers, however, but found factors such as age, job stability, and length of service more important than being male or female. At the Commission’s request, the U.S. Employment Service issued a directive to public employment offices to refer applicants on the basis of qualification regardless of gender. It “urged” private employers to reexamine their policies and stress qualifications, not “general attitudes,” when hiring women.

The Commission argued for a separate Executive Order for women, not combining sex discrimination with race discrimination under the existing Executive Order 10925. Caroline Davis led the debate against the recommendation in the Committee on Private Employment. Based on her experience and that of the UAW, she felt the Commission was being too generous to private employers by recommending voluntary actions and not acknowledging what it would take to make them change. She also felt that there was no difference in employment discrimination between women and people of color (U.S. PCSW,

Committee Report, 1963:15-18). At the same time, however, other members of the Commission resisted any regulation of the private sector at all. There was considerable debate and compromise, but Caroline Davis submitted the only dissenting opinion to a committee report (Cobble, 2004:148-149).

The Commission, however, with guidance from the administration, concluded that not enough was known about sex discrimination, that it was significantly different from race discrimination, and that the impact of family responsibilities on working women could not be ignored. PCSW recommended that “Equal opportunity for women in hiring, training, and promotion should be the governing principle in private employment. An Executive Order should state this principle and apply it to work done under federal contracts.”

The Commission hoped to make the Federal Service a showcase for the employment of women. Because some changes to employment with the federal government were made before the report was issued, the Commission, in the report, stressed the importance of accommodating part-time workers. The Commission concluded that part-time work was discouraged under the existing system and new imaginative procedures needed to be facilitated by the Civil Service Commission and the Bureau of the Budget.

As in the private sector, women were concentrated in the lowest grades of federal work, whether part-time or full-time. A study was conducted of state practices, and similar recommendations were made for the states. Studies of the federal government and the Foreign Service Officer Corps made it “possible, for the first time, to substitute facts for conjecture with respect to separation rates and their causes.” Women had higher quit rates than men, often related to family responsibilities, and men had higher advancement rates, not related to age or educational levels. The Commission turned to attitudes and cultural barriers. One commissioned study found men to be much more likely than women to think that men were better supervisors than women and better in nonsupervisory jobs. The Commission documented negative attitudes among men and the need to diminish prejudice against women. These studies offered firm data that could be of assistance to the private sector, as well as the public sector, in challenging barriers to women’s advancement.

The Commission concluded that “While the President’s directive, by requiring equal consideration of men and women for promotions, will improve the promotion rate of

women, the Civil Service Commission and top management of the individual agencies must give continuing attention to insuring that advancement is based solely on merit.”

For women in the military, the report commended the uniformed services for opening many jobs to women and recommended an end to restrictions on the number of officers in the women’s departments, such as the Nurse Corps. It stopped far short of recommending that women be fully integrated into the military. The Secretary of Defense acted on the Commission’s limited recommendations.

### **Labor Standards**

The Commission stated unequivocally that “the effectiveness of unions in achieving improved working conditions, increased dignity, and essential protections has long been amply demonstrated. Because the right to organize and bargain collectively has been established in federal law, we call for state laws to protect the rights of all workers to join unions and bargain collectively.” It noted, however, that nearly 30 years after the right to organize and bargain collectively was recognized in the Federal National Labor Relations Act, “only a little over 3 ½ million of 24 million women in the labor force are union members.”

The PCSW turned to legislation. A floor on wages through minimum wage laws and a ceiling on hours were unevenly instituted on a state-by-state basis. The Commission called for research and reporting on the effects of such laws to determine future changes. It criticized the exemption of many occupations that employed women from the Fair Labor Standards Act, which provided for a minimum wage and overtime pay for more than 40 hours of work a week. It argued that workers in hotels, motels, restaurants, laundries and some retail, agricultural, and nonprofit organizations should come under the coverage of the federal law and that state laws should be expanded to include women and men in all occupations.

As many women had argued for decades, the Commission concluded that the best way to keep people working 8 hours a day and 40 hours a week was to provide overtime of at least time and a half for jobs covered by federal and state law. It recommended one

exception--for women in executive, administrative and professional positions, where such limitations might negatively affect their opportunities for employment and advancement.

Citing state equal pay laws enacted since 1919, the Commission endorsed the policy of equal pay for comparable work at the state level. It lost this fight at the federal level in the Equal Pay Act, but the states could adopt the comparable worth standard. The federal legislation was an important beginning, not an end, for the 27.5 million men and women covered.

The Commission argued for greater flexibility in the state protective laws. Just as it recommended flexibility in who was covered under state hours laws, it also recommended reassessing limits on the amounts women could lift (weight limits) and the hours they could work at night. It argued for regulations on these issues at the state level for both men and women, set by appropriate regulatory bodies.

The PCSW maintained strong opposition to what it called “exploitative industrial homework,” also known as “piecework,” where any person produces goods for an employer in or about where they live. Industrial homework is regulated by the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Commission advocated that “gaps in protection should be closed” and that new types of undesirable homework should be prevented. The use of clerical, editorial, and research skills, however, as well as programs for those homebound for physical or psychological reasons, should be flexible. The Commission noted that many of the women who were without the protection of adequate federal or state laws or collective bargaining contracts and thus highly vulnerable elements in the labor force were women of minority groups, and the Commission reinforced the need for decent standards for all workers regardless of race.

### **Security of Basic Income**

Building on the Social Security system, the Commission recommended increased benefits for widows and the dependents of single women. It called for extending the federal-state unemployment insurance system to cover several excluded categories that primarily employed women, namely employees of small businesses and non-profit organizations. It also recommended that state laws should cover state and local

government employees; that coverage for agricultural and household workers should be explored; and that data should replace outdated facts in providing benefits for women, allowing for qualification for work during pregnancy to be determined by job requirements and the women's abilities, and that compensation be allowed when women were temporarily jobless due to family moves. The Commission believed that this last group could be supported through the state general unemployment fund, rather than charged against the account of the former employer.

The lack of maternity benefits needed to be addressed. The federal system and 46 states ignored loss of income due to childbearing. The Commission cited the fact that maternity leave was provided in 70 other countries. It clearly called for paid maternity leave or comparable insurance benefits for working women. How to accomplish this was left up to employers, unions, and governments.

### **Women Under the Law**

In this section of the report the Commission took up the issue of the Equal Rights Amendment. It found that equality of rights for all persons was basic to a democracy. Under the guidance of Pauli Murray, an African American Yale-trained civil rights lawyer (Murray, 1987:347-354), it concluded that protection for women was already provided for under the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> amendments to the U.S. Constitution. States and the federal government were already prohibited from depriving anyone of life, liberty, or property "without due process of law and from denying to any person the equal protection of the laws." The PCSW acknowledged the Equal Rights Amendment as one way of achieving greater recognition of the rights of women, but preferred to pursue this goal through legal cases, ultimately to be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court. Left open was the possibility of a constitutional amendment at a later time. Meanwhile it encouraged all levels of government to review laws that might discriminate against women and to continue public education to achieve full equality of rights. This was a major breakthrough in finding a way for two very disparate groups of women activists to possibly work together.

Further, the Commission called on the United States to not only support equal rights around the world, but also to take a leadership role at the United Nations to pass

conventions that secure women's rights as central to human rights. While it did not single out conventions for economic and social rights, such conventions would clearly be part of the effort, with a direct reference to employment and worker rights.

### **Women as Citizens**

Finally, the legal and political rights addressed by the Commission were important for all women. Deficiencies in jury selection, as well personal and property rights that discriminated against married women, were to be eliminated. The Commission called for the "modernization" of state laws governing marriage and families. The report called on women as citizens to exercise their right to vote, run for public office at all levels of government, and for those in leadership to increase the number of women in political party leadership and in political appointments to policy-making positions in government. The Commission concluded by urging the president to establish, by executive order, a cabinet-level committee and a citizens committee to oversee the carrying out of all of these recommendations.

*American Women* was front page news. On October 12, 1963, *The New York Times* headline read "U.S. Panel Urges Women To Sue for Equal Rights." Reporter Marjorie Hunter summarized twenty-four recommendations, but she began the article with the Commission's recommendation to seek an end to discrimination through the courts and not through an equal rights amendment. This was followed by the call for two executive orders. One was to appoint a cabinet officer to oversee implementation of the recommendations. The second was to require that private employers with federal contracts provide women with equal opportunity in hiring, training, and promotion.

Esther Peterson was interviewed on the NBC "Today" Show, and the Associated Press offered a four-part series on the report. Most women's magazines were positive, but *The Wall Street Journal* called the proposal for child care "a tinge...collectivist" (Harrison, 1989:162). According to the 1964 Committee Progress Report, eighty-four thousand copies of the report were distributed, and translations were made in Italian, Japanese, and Swedish. Charles Scribner's Sons published hardback and paperback editions with an

introduction by noted anthropologist Margaret Mead. Across the country actions were underway to establish women's commissions in each of the 50 states.

At the recommendation of the Commission, President Kennedy quickly signed an executive order establishing two oversight committees to carry out the recommendations. Executive Order 11126 established a cabinet-level Interdepartmental Committee on the Status of Women to coordinate activities related to the report and appointed new Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz as chair. A Citizens' Advisory Council on the Status of Women, chaired by Margaret Hickey, Commission member and public affairs editor of the *Ladies Home Journal*, was created to advise the government committee and evaluate progress.

### **The Next Five Years**

The Commission's work can best be understood in the context of other events during the early part of the decade and the dramatic and unexpected events that followed in the next five years. The world began to change at an accelerated pace. *New York Times* columnist Gail Collins (2009) described this period as the beginning of "When Everything Changed." The birth control pill became available in 1960, giving women more control over their childbearing decisions. Nineteen sixty-three saw the publication of Betty Freidan's book *The Feminine Mystique*, touching thousands of women. How was it possible that middle-income educated women were dissatisfied with the life they had been told would be perfect: husband, children, and house complete with picket fence in the suburbs?

Shortly before the Commission report was released the historic March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom brought thousands of people to the nation's capital to peacefully protest racial discrimination. The march provided a national stage for Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech, but raised questions about women's roles in the civil rights movement. Commission advisor Pauli Murray wrote that she was shocked when A. Philip Randolph, labor chief and march leader, spoke at a luncheon just two days earlier at the National Press Club, which excluded women from membership. She was aware that there were few women on the stage that day (Murray, 1987:353).

Soon these events were overshadowed by the assassination of President Kennedy on November 21, 1963. Lyndon Johnson picked up the mantle, and Commission

recommendations were soon affected by the civil rights legislation and the “war on poverty” that emerged under his presidency. The next year brought the movements for civil rights and women’s rights closer together. Of particular importance to the impact of the PCSW were the State Commissions on the Status of Women and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Interdepartmental Committee and the Advisory Council provided a summary of policy changes and women’s progress during this period and ended their work with a five year report, *American Women, 1963-1968* (U.S. Interdepartmental Committee, 1968).

### **State Commissions**

In 1964 both the Interdepartmental Committee and the Advisory Council on the Status of Women began to meet. Four Council task forces --on labor standards, health and welfare, family law and policy, and social insurance and taxes--were formed. The newly forming state women’s commissions also began to meet. The first national conference of State Commissions on Women was a one-day event with 87 commission participants. Several more annual conferences followed, and by 1968 there was a three-day meeting with more than 400 participants, including the President, Vice-President, cabinet members, and members of Congress. Every state and some cities had formed commissions.

There is general agreement among historians that the Commission’s deliberations and the final report were important for two fundamental reasons. First, they brought national attention to the discrimination against women in a wide range of areas. In the tradition of the Women’s Bureau, the Commission gathered data, convened groups of stakeholders, and set benchmarks against which women’s progress could be measured. Through the Equal Pay Act, the Commission helped to develop and implement the first federal legislation to prohibit pay discrimination against women.

The second important impact was taking the model of the federal commission across the country to help establish state commissions. State commissions were based on the federal presidential commission and initially organized by the Business and Professional Women (BPW) with the help of the Women’s Bureau (Laughlin, 2000:85). As these commissions took root, they didn’t necessarily follow the directions set by the PCSW.

In fact, changing circumstances and laws often led them in different directions, but the founding networks for the newly emerging women's movement had been created. Historian Alice Kessler-Harris (2001:233) concluded that the Commission "started a dialogue about discrimination that would ultimately help to tie women's rights to a broader conception of civil rights," and through the state-based commissions, it "helped to develop a network of women, who provided the political muscle for continuing activity."

At the time, Esther Peterson did not make an argument for enlarging the Women's Bureau and giving the staff a stronger role in the implementation of the new equal pay legislation (Laughlin, 2000:85-90). Bureau staff proposed a stronger administrative role, but in the bureaucratic struggle that followed, enforcement went to the Labor Department's Wage, Hour and Contract Division. Nevertheless, prior to the June 11, 1964 effective date of the Equal Pay Act, the Women's Bureau participated in development of Departmental policies for administration of the Act and interpretation of its provisions. It also helped plan a national equal pay conference on the effective date of the new law (U.S. Department of Labor, 1964: 218). Women's issues were to be taken up in all divisions of the Department, and the Women's Bureau would have a consultation and review role.

The role of the Women's Bureau in the coordination of U.S. Department of Labor programs affecting women would be reaffirmed in a series of Secretary's Orders going back to at least 1972. The most recent Secretary's Order on this subject was issued in 2006 and provides that "DOL activities and programs that relate to, or may affect the participation of women in the nation's workforce must be coordinated with the Women's Bureau." More specifically, it delegates and assigns responsibility to DOL agency heads to coordinate with the Women's Bureau, including "Consulting with the Women's Bureau in the developmental stages of the preparation of policy materials (e.g., regulations, standards and other material for publication in the *Federal Register*, proposed legislation, Congressional testimony, statistical surveys, publications)." The Bureau also maintained its outreach and education activities with states and women's organizations across the country and provided critical guidance and support for the state commissions.

While the Women's Bureau staff did not have expanded responsibilities, they continued to impact policies affecting working women in part by assessing proposed regulations and legislation. In an interview, Ruth Shinn, former Chief of the Women's

Bureau's Division of Legislative Analysis, pointed to this review process as an important part of her work with the Bureau. The Women's Bureau also had an impact within the federal government in its consultative role. According to retired Women's Bureau staffer Ruth Nadel, when she joined the Bureau in 1968, she quickly found herself immersed in the child care issue. She traveled the country talking with companies and government agencies about how to establish child care centers for their workers, which she identified as one of the highlights of her career with the Bureau. She helped establish what is now the Esther Peterson Child Development Center at the U.S. Department of Labor, negotiated as part of the collective bargaining agreement with Local 12, American Federation of Government Employees. Madeline Mixer joined the staff in the late 1960s and became regional administrator in the Bureau's San Francisco regional office. She continues to be honored today by Tradeswomen Inc. for her support for increasing the number of women in apprenticeship and skilled trades jobs.

Women's Bureau national and regional office staff played an important educational role for women, advocacy groups, the state commissions, and state and local governments. Among other things, they brought people together, prepared and disseminated statistical and legal information on and for working women, and sponsored research on issues of concern to working women. For example, the PCSW called for improved counseling for girls and women. This was addressed by the Women's Bureau, which, along with the Office of Education of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, cosponsored the Midwest Regional Pilot Conference on New Approaches to Counseling Girls in the 1960s. The 114 participants from seven Midwest states included guidance and counseling personnel from private and public agencies and organizations. It also initiated and cosponsored with the Office of Education a conference on counseling girls for 121 school counselors, counselor-educators, members of state women's commissions, and Federal agency representatives in the mid-Atlantic region. The report of the conference was distributed to schools, libraries, counseling and guidance specialists, and others interested in the field. In addition, it conducted a session on counseling girls for the Washington conference of the American Personnel and Guidance Association (U.S. Department of Labor, 1966).

When the Labor Department was reorganized in 1967, the Women's Bureau became part of the Wage and Labor Standards Administration, losing its status as an independent unit, but the work continued. Laughlin (124) concluded that the Bureau's strength was its ability to link "government and the grassroots." The roles of the Bureau and the state commissions are demonstrated in the passage and implementation of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

## **Title VII**

Some of the most dramatic changes in employment for women, however, came not from the Commission, but from Title VII of the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act. Initially this critical piece of proposed civil rights legislation banned discrimination in employment based on race, religion, color, and national origin. In the final days of debate, however, Representative Howard Smith (D-VA) added sex discrimination to the list of prohibited behavior. Debate continues on whether Smith did this as a joke, an attempt to defeat the bill, or as a serious defense of women's equality (Kessler-Harris, 2001:240). Not questioned is that many in the civil rights community and women like Esther Peterson feared the addition of sex would cause the defeat of the legislation. Others saw an opportunity. The National Woman's Party and its allies supported the addition. Eleven of the 12 women members in the House spoke in favor of the amendment, and the two women in the Senate made a strong defense of the addition. With much last minute debate, the entire bill, with the amendment, was passed by Congress and signed by the President on July 2. Discrimination in employment based on sex was prohibited by federal law (Harrison, 178-180).

Long debates began around how to implement the law. The law established the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to develop guidelines, investigate complaints, and enforce the law. Those involved had given no thought to sex discrimination, yet an entirely new set of legal strategies and tools opened up to women. EEOC had little idea how to address the flood of complaints it received from women claiming sex discrimination in employment. In the first year the Commission reported that 37 percent of complaints charged sex discrimination (Kessler-Harris, 2001:246). This

sweeping legislation was far beyond what the President's Commission had recommended.

Women's Bureau staff assisted in preparing recommendations for the administration of Title VII. The Women's Bureau drafted memos behind the scenes to keep the state protective labor laws that applied to women only and set limits on such things as the hours they could work and the weights they could lift (discussed under Labor Standards) from being nullified by Title VII. The Interdepartmental Committee and the Advisory Council submitted a report to the EEOC supporting enforcement of Title VII, but preserving the state protective laws and extending them to men (Laughlin, 2000:94,109). EEOC Guidelines issued in 1965 still allowed employers to list jobs in sex segregated columns, and initial decisions maintained the protective laws (Harrison, 1989:188-89).

At the third national meeting of state women's commissions in 1966 women were becoming frustrated about the reluctance the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was showing toward enforcing Title VII to protect women. Betty Freidan, Pauli Murray, and several other women, including Dorothy Haener from the UAW and Catherine Conroy from the CWA, met in Friedan's hotel room and drafted a resolution criticizing EEOC for failure to enforce the ban on sex discrimination. The next day at the meeting of the state commissions, the group introduced the resolution, but it was quickly ruled out of order by Mary Dublin Keyserling, the new director of the Women's Bureau. This was a government meeting and they would not criticize another government agency (Laughlin, 2000:113).

At a table in front of the speakers, with napkins flying and dollars on the table, the National Organization for Women was formed. For its first year of operation, the mailings and other basic support work was provided by the UAW. Lawsuits and public pressure became major strategies of the women's movement no longer closely connected to allies at the U.S. Department of Labor, but connected to women in other government agencies, such as lawyers at the EEOC and the U.S. Department of Justice, as new legal strategies were developing. Yet the Commission networks were established, creating tensions, but ultimately pushing the women's agenda forward.

## The Five-Year Report

In 1968 the Interdepartmental Committee on the Status of Women issued a five-year report, *American Women 1963-1968*, which summarized the many changes that had taken place and assessed progress on the PCSW recommendations within the rapidly changing political and cultural environments. The Committee had established task forces on family law and policy, health and welfare, labor standards, and social insurance and taxes. Private citizens worked with government officials, and their reports and recommendations were published separately, but also formed the basis of the five-year report. Like the original Commission report, much of the work reflected in this five-year report was supported by the Women's Bureau. The Committee was chaired by Secretary of Labor Wirtz, and the vice chair was Assistant Secretary of Labor Peterson. Women's Bureau Director Keyserling served as executive vice chair.

The report covered changes in the same wide range of issues addressed in 1963, from education and counseling and employment and labor standards to health services, family planning, volunteer services, consumer affairs, personal and property rights, tax deductions for working mothers, and appointment to and running for political office. Expanding opportunities for minority women and low-income women remained important goals. The introduction noted "a time of social turbulence" and the "intangible" changes in the attitudes of women and men towards women's full participation in American life. The report reflected the larger legal and cultural changes that eclipsed the original recommendations as demonstrated in these highlights on employment issues.

Under the title "Constitutional Recognition," the report noted both successful and unsuccessful cases at the federal court level on expanding interpretation of the equal protection clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to include sex discrimination. This constitutional question continued to wait for a U.S. Supreme Court decision. On issues of employment and education the Committee reported that there were four million more women in the workforce and increases in women in almost all occupations, but especially in professional, technical, and clerical fields. Title VII was declared the biggest step toward providing equal opportunity for women in private employment through the legal, regulatory, and administrative framework.

The report acknowledged the importance of Executive Order 11375, amending the earlier executive order prohibiting race discrimination to include sex discrimination in federal employment and by federal contractors. The Committee supported this executive order despite the earlier recommendation for a separate executive order prohibiting sex discrimination. Fifteen state laws banning sex discrimination in employment were also highlighted as legislative and regulatory gains in the private sector. The Committee concluded, however, that changes in attitudes were necessary to show results.

In the section on Labor Standards the report concluded that Title VII “has added interest and impetus as well as manageable complications to the struggle for fair labor standards.” Court cases challenging protective labor laws were discussed, but the focus was on positive changes. Amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1966 expanded minimum wage coverage to 10 million left out workers: 7 million in retail trade, laundries, hotels, and motels, restaurants, hospitals, nursing homes, and large farms and 3 million in public sector employment. The percentage of White women covered, for example, went from 58 percent to 76 percent, while coverage of minority women rose from 27 to 45 percent. Not good enough, but progress. No progress, however, was made on extending overtime pay to these groups at the federal level. In both cases some progress was made at the state level.

Laws limiting the hours women could work and the amount they could lift were very much in the midst of litigation under Title VII, and equal pay cases were winding their way through the courts. The Committee continued to argue for flexibility in these laws and extending the laws to cover women and men. Few states had extended unemployment insurance coverage to small firms, household workers, farm workers or other excluded groups. For maternity leave the Committee began by noting again how little protection for women wage earners before or after childbirth the United States provided compared to other countries. Only two states and Puerto Rico provided cash benefits. Some advances were made under EEOC rulings. Health plans, for example, “granting maternity benefits to wives of male employees must include female employees as well.” Having paid sick leave, but unpaid maternity leave, however, was found not to be a violation of Title VII. The Committee renewed the call for a national policy with respect to maternity leave, including cash benefits and the right to return to your job.

The five-year report followed progress on the Commission's recommendations on education and counseling, which also had an impact on women's employment. The report noted that during the past several years, Federal assistance had been made available to increase guidance, counseling, and testing programs throughout the nation, covering students in public elementary and secondary schools, public junior colleges, and public technical institutions, and that efforts had also been made in the private and public sectors to provide more realistic counseling for women and girls. The ratio of full-time public secondary school counselors had improved; however counselor-student ratios in elementary schools and junior colleges remained high. Counseling centers had been established around the country, and professional organizations, community groups, and educational institutions had been encouraged and assisted by Federal agencies to conduct conferences on special counseling needs. Pilot projects and workshops had been undertaken by various organizations. Reaching a greater number of disadvantaged women and girls remained a major challenge, although progress was being made through a variety of manpower programs for youth and through adult education programs. Training sessions at institutions of higher education were conducted in an effort to increase the number of counselors trained to work in public employment offices.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (amended in 1967) reached low-income families and increased the number of young girls graduating from high school. The Higher Education Acts of 1963 and 1965 increased federal resources going to building classrooms and libraries and expanding community colleges that brought educational opportunities closer to where women lived. The number of women attending college and entering medical, legal, and other professional schools began to increase. Financial supports were also provided for grants, scholarships, fellowships, loans, and work-study arrangements, all of which made school more affordable for women, as well as men.

The Commission's call for more flexible educational programs for adult and low-income women was addressed by the historic Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and the Adult Basic Education Act of 1966. In 1967 basic grants for adult education in large cities, especially for English and math instruction, provided basic skills needed to improve employment opportunities for over half a million people, over half of whom were women. Pilot programs to improve counseling for girls and mature women were undertaken by

governments, educational institutions and professional organizations. The Women's Bureau was particularly helpful with these new counseling efforts. The five-year report highlighted the continuing need to reach "disadvantaged women and girls and motivating them to better equip themselves educationally."

The importance of early childhood education was successfully demonstrated by acknowledging the popular Head Start Program for low-income children. Increased Federal funds were made available for women in job training programs. But as the number of women steadily increased in the workforce, so did the need for child care. In March, 1967, the Committee noted that there were 10.6 million women workers with children under 18 years old, and 4.1 million of these had children under the age of 6. The number of children cared for in licensed child care facilities had increased from only 200,000 to 500,000. The report cited a host of homemaker services available to help sick or disabled women or those caring for sick, disabled, or aging relatives, but acknowledged that the increased number of programs were not nearly enough.

The Committee reported that progress in education and employment were further supported in the area of vocational education. The Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA), the Economic Opportunity Act, and the Vocational Education Act all opened up more on-the-job training, institutional programs, and skills training for women, although often in fields like beauty culture and nursing, where women predominated.

In 1965, as a result of several Women's Bureau consultations (U.S. Department of Labor), the National Committee on Household Employment was formed, with 23 voluntary organizations joining. The goal was to move domestic work, 98 percent women, "into the 20<sup>th</sup> century." Pilot programs were developed by the committee and funded by the Manpower Development and Training Act to recruit, train, counsel, and place household employees. The Committee specifically recognized the exploitation of women and girls immigrating from other countries and their particular vulnerability. State legislation was noted as one way several states were regulating private employment agencies that recruit workers across state and national borders, but the Commission concluded that much remained to be done "if household employment is to be reconstituted as an occupations with status and dignity."

Finally the five-year report concluded that “Increasing recognition was given to the need for women and girls to aspire to and to be accepted in nontraditional vocational training programs. But much remains to be done to remove remaining barriers.”

For the government, in 1967 the Civil Service Commission reinforced the 1962 regulations requiring agencies to promote equal opportunity, followed by the executive order adding sex to the list of bases (race, creed, color, or national origin) the federal government and government contractors and subcontractors could no longer take into consideration, along with expanding the part-time employment options for federal employees. For the military, the Committee noted that President Johnson signed a law in 1967 removing restrictions on women’s promotion to officer, and 19 women were promoted to colonel or captain. The focus continued to be opening more high-ranking opportunities for women in the departments where women traditionally served.

### **Progress and Problems**

The 1968 report completed the work of the Interdepartmental Committee and the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Many of the State Commissions on the Status of Women and the Women’s Bureau continued their work under a new administration. The conflict between the protective labor laws and the equal rights amendment was soon resolved. By 1969, pickets in front of EEOC offices, court cases, and political pressure led EEOC to reverse its sex discrimination guidelines on protective laws and rule that Title VII did in fact conflict with and override state protective laws that applied to women only. Court decisions supported the new EEOC guidelines. While some laws were extended to cover men, the goal for many labor women, those that limited women were overturned (Cobble, 2004:190). Continuing its educational role, in 1976 the Women’s Bureau issued the pamphlet “State Labor Laws in Transition: From Protection to Equal Status for Women (Walstedt, 1976).”

At the same time, the Equal Rights Amendment moved forward. In 1969 President Nixon appointed Elizabeth Duncan Koontz to lead the Bureau, the first African American woman to do so, and she turned much of her attention to supporting the ERA. NOW endorsed the ERA in 1967, causing many labor women to withdraw their memberships. By

1972 the Equal Rights Amendment passed both chambers of Congress and went to the states for ratification. The debate was fierce within the labor movement. Many union women continued to fear losing the hard won protections for women in low-paid jobs with terrible working conditions. They also wanted basic protections extended to men. Yet there were a growing number of women who saw the laws as restricting their opportunities, such as women in the auto plants. After the EEOC held that state protective laws and regulations that prohibited or limited the employment of women conflicted with and were superseded by title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the ERA increasingly won labor support and was endorsed by the AFL-CIO in 1973 (Cobble,2004:195). Thirty-five states passed the amendment, but it fell three states short of the number necessary to amend the Constitution. A campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment continues today, but with little momentum.

Other Commission recommendations remain relevant for working women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Commission created a base from which to measure progress for women in employment: child care, paid family leave, equal pay for equal work, equal pay for comparable work, occupational segregation, concentration in low-wage work, access to higher paid work, education, job training, and representation in the workplace. These are all issues identified by the Commission that remain problems today. (For an overview of the latest data on women and employment see the U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 2014; for employment and related issues see White House Council, 2011.)

For example, according to the Women's Bureau (2014) almost two-thirds of mothers with a youngest child under the age of six (63.9 percent) are in the workforce. The United States, however, still has no national legislation to fund child care for all children or to provide paid family leave. The U. S. remains the only major industrial country without a paid maternity leave policy.

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is the primary federal funding source dedicated to providing financial assistance to help low-income working families and families engaged in training or education activities access child care and to improve the quality of child care. As a block grant, CCDF gives funding to states, territories, and tribes to provide child care subsidies through grants and contracts with providers, as well as vouchers to low-income families. In FY 2012, the most recent year for which preliminary

data are available, an estimated 1.5 million children received child care assistance in an average month through child care subsidies funded under CCDF (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015).

Women are now more likely than men to graduate from high school, college, and graduate school, but the wage gap persists. Women who worked full-time in wage and salary jobs had median weekly earnings of \$706 in 2013. This represented 82 percent of men's median weekly earnings (\$860). Racial and ethnic differences persist. In 2013 Asian women earned 92.6 percent of what White men earned; White women earned 81.7 percent of what White men earned; Black women earned 68.6 percent of what White men earned; and Hispanic women earned 61.2 percent of what White men earned (Women's Bureau, 2014).

More jobs are open to women and occupational segregation has declined, but researchers have concluded that one major cause of the continuing wage gap is continued occupational segregation (Hegewisch, et al, 2010). Women are now 52 percent of all managers and professionals and over 30 percent of physicians and lawyers (U.S. Department of Labor, BLS, 2013a). Yet overall, women remain concentrated in lower-paying jobs. The fastest growing sector of the economy is home health care services, projected to grow 4.8 percent by 2022, adding almost 716,000 jobs (U.S. Department of Labor, BLS, 2013c). The median annual income for the nation's nearly two million home care workers, however, is \$20,050. The federal poverty level for a family of four is \$23,550 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). There are an estimated 1.9 million direct care workers in the U.S., with nearly all currently employed by home care agencies. Approximately 90 percent of direct care workers are women, and nearly 50 percent are minorities (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013). In 2011, almost 40 percent received government benefits, such as food stamps and Medicaid (U. S. Department of Labor, 2011).

In 2013 the U.S. Department of Labor announced a final rule extending the Fair Labor Standards Act's minimum wage and overtime protections to most of the nation's workers who provide essential home care assistance to elderly people and people with illnesses, injuries or disabilities. This change will result in nearly two million direct care workers—such as home health aides, personal care aides and certified nursing assistants—receiving the same basic protections already provided to most U.S. workers. The rule was

to be effective January 1, 2015, but was stopped by the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, and the District Court's ruling is now being appealed by the U.S. Department of Labor (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013; [www.dol.gov/whd/homecare/litigation.htm](http://www.dol.gov/whd/homecare/litigation.htm)).

Women continue to face barriers to enter and stay in higher-paying occupations. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (BLS, 2013c) construction work, for example, is also projected to be one of the fastest growing sectors, increasing 2.6 percent by 2022 and creating over 1.6 million jobs. Women have shown that they are interested in and capable of working in the skilled trades, yet in 2012 (BLS, 2013a), electricians were only 1.8 percent female and the median weekly earnings were \$932. Child care workers, on the other hand, were 94 percent female and the median weekly earnings were \$386 (BLS, 2013b). While the issues are complex, there is strong evidence to suggest that sex discrimination in the workplace and inadequate enforcement of the laws are important parts of the problem (Eisenberg, 1998; O'Farrell, 1999; U.S. General Accounting Office, 2005; Baker, 2008; LaTour, 2008; Hegewisch and O'Farrell, 2014). While Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer of Facebook (2013), argues that women need to "lean in" and overcome their own internal barriers to become more than 5 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs, research suggests that lack of training, isolation, hostile supervisors and co-workers, sexual harassment, and physical threats and assaults are likely to keep more women from the construction trades.

Perhaps the challenge most unanticipated by the union women on the PCSW is union representation. In 1963 the report stated that "the effectiveness of unions in achieving improved working conditions, increased dignity, and essential protections has long been amply demonstrated." Because the National Labor Relations Act was in place at the time of the Commission's report, the recommendation called for similar state laws. At that time one in three workers belonged to a union, and membership was beginning to grow in the public sector as well as the private sector. In 1974 over three thousand union women came together in Chicago and formed the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), a national organization for trade union women long sought by labor feminists (Cobble, 2004:201).

In 2014, 16.2 million wage and salary workers were represented by a union. This group includes both union members (14.6 million) and workers who report no union affiliation but whose jobs are covered by a union contract (1.6 million). In 2014, the union

membership rate—the percent of wage and salary workers who were members of unions—was 11.1 percent. Men had a higher union membership rate (11.7 percent) than women (10.5 percent) (U.S. Department of Labor, BLS, 2015).

Total union membership has declined from a high of 35 percent of the workforce 50 years ago to just over 11 percent today. In the private sector only 6.7 percent of workers belong to a union (U.S. Department of Labor, BLS, 2014). The labor laws have been weakened, providing only minimal penalties for violations. Corporate resistance to unions has grown dramatically. Workers, for example, are fired in one out of four organizing drives supervised by the National Labor Relations Board (Bronfenbrenner, 2009). Among public sector workers the union membership rate is 35 percent, but not all public sector employees have the right to collective bargaining and those who do are under attack.

On the positive side, far different from 1963, now women are almost half of the labor movement (U.S. Department of Labor, BLS, 2014). The AFL-CIO consists of fifty-seven unions and over 13 million members, almost half of whom are women. Liz Shuler, from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, is the first woman and youngest person ever elected secretary-treasurer. Randi Weingarten is president of the 1.5 million-member American Federation of Teachers. Among unions not part of the federation, for example, over half of the Service Employees International Union's (SEIU) 2.1 million members are women, and the president, Mary Kay Henry, is a woman. Women and men benefit from a union advantage. Women members of unions earn more than non-union women, with median weekly earnings in 2014 of \$904 compared to \$687 for non-union women, and the wage gap between male and female members of unions was nine percent. Union women are more likely than non-union women to have paid sick days, paid personal leave, short-term disability, dependent care reimbursement and child care (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). They have a voice in setting wages and working conditions, grievance procedures for resolving conflicts, and increased dignity and respect on the job.

On the other hand, far from securing the right to join a union at the state level as recommended by the PCSW, right-to-work laws that weaken unions are passing in such union strongholds as Michigan (Woods, 2014) and Wisconsin (Davey, 2015). In addition, a 2013 U.S. court of appeals decision struck down a National Labor Relations Board rule that employers subject to its jurisdiction would be guilty of an unfair labor practice if they did

not post on their properties and on their websites a “Notification of Employee Rights under the National Labor Relations Act” (*National Association of Manufacturers v. NLRB*). Eleanor Roosevelt saw the right to join a union as a human right (O’Farrell, 2010:129). A voice at work was essential to democracy and the strongest way to improve women’s working lives. Labor law reform is a women’s issue, and union women remain an important voice in the new call for action with far more participants and tools for change.

### **New Calls For Action**

Today it is no longer unusual for a woman to serve in the President’s Cabinet, and, for the first time, the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System is chaired by a woman—Janet L. Yellin. It is still unusual, however, to have a woman carpenter make the cabinets in your house. In 2008 Nancy Pelosi became the first woman Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, and U.S. Senators Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Patty Murray (D-WA) served as Chairwomen of the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Senate Budget Committee respectively. Many women, however, still clean houses for very low wages. There are women chief executives of major corporations, but far more women are struggling at the poverty level. Women have assumed leadership in unions, but union membership is declining.

Fifty years after the *American Women* Report was published there are new calls for action. One call for action starts with the White House Council on Women and Girls, created by President Obama through an executive order in 2009. Every federal agency and White House office is included on the Council, 23 in total, to coordinate and integrate women’s issues across the administration (White House Council, 2014). A White House Summit on Working Families was convened in 2014. The budgets of the agencies responsible for enforcement of the laws prohibiting sex discrimination in employment have been increased, and the White House National Equal Pay Task Force (2010) was created to coordinate and strengthen the equal pay enforcement efforts of four federal agencies: the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (White House Task Force, 2010).

Pat Shiu, director of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) (2012), told participants at a New York summit on women in construction that she had recommitted her agency to ending discrimination, hiring more investigators, improving training for compliance officers, increasing the number of construction reviews per year, and working on updated regulations. In February 2013, OFCCP rescinded two enforcement guidance documents on pay discrimination originally issued in 2006, an action that was intended to protect workers and strengthen OFCCP's ability to identify and remedy different forms of pay discrimination. The notice of final rescission also included new guidance for employers and other interested stakeholders setting forth the procedures, analysis and protocols OFCCP would utilize going forward when conducting compensation discrimination investigations (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013). In 2015 OFCCP proposed updates to the sex discrimination guidelines for federal contractors first issued and not revised since 1970 (U.S. Department of Labor, OFCCP, 2015).

The Women's Bureau (2014) continues to fund research; provide information on women's employment issues, such as equal pay; oversee grants to support state-level paid leave initiatives; support programs to increase women's access to the skilled trades; and reach out to the grassroots women's organizations using webinars and listening sessions, and working with other agencies within and outside the U.S. Department of Labor. Each year, the National Association of Commissions for Women brings together over 60 state, county and city commissions from around the country.

On Capitol Hill then Congressional Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (2013) announced "An Economic Agenda for Women and Families," and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (2013) put forward "An Opportunity Plan to Empower Women in the Workplace." Maria Shriver (2014) placed a focus on women living in or near poverty in *The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Pushes Back from the Brink*. The AFL-CIO (2013) at its biennial convention passed a resolution "Women's Initiative: Shared Values, Shared Leadership, Shared Prosperity." While these agendas differ to some degree in focus and specifics, they raise several core issues and potential legislative solutions: strengthening the fifty-year-old Equal Pay Act; increasing the minimum wage; investing in job training and education; restoring and enforcing employment rights, including the right to join a union; providing for paid family and medical leave; and adequate funding for affordable and high quality child care.

The number of women's advocacy organizations working on these agendas has greatly expanded beyond the Women's Bureau coalition of 1963. The National Council of Women's Organizations, an umbrella group in Washington, DC, claims over 200 member organizations representing more than 12 million women. The National Council for Research on Women has over 80 member research and education centers based primarily on college campuses. The National Organization for Women has been joined by new organizations like Oregon Tradeswomen, which provides job training in Portland, Oregon; Equal Rights Advocates in San Francisco, which offers legal advice and representation; and CLUW chapters and union women's committees, conferences, and education programs across the country.

The President's Commission on the Status of Women brought together a powerful coalition of people from very different walks of life. Under the leadership of union women working closely with the Women's Bureau, the Commission documented gender discrimination on the national and state level, contributed to executive and legislative solutions, and formed a network of state commissions that helped link diverse women to the newly emerging women's movement across the country. The goal of gender equity at work, at home, and in society, however, has not been achieved. The problems are complex and persistent. The outmoded barriers to women's equality that Eleanor Roosevelt identified in 1962 have not yet disappeared. Much work remains to be done, but there are powerful coalitions in place to work together. The "invitation to action" contained in the 1963 *American Women Report* has never has been more paramount.

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### **Appendix A: Executive Order 10980**

WHEREAS prejudices and outmoded customs act as barriers to the full realization of women's basic rights which should be respected and fostered as part of our Nation's commitment to human dignity, freedom, and democracy; and

WHEREAS measures that contribute to family security and strengthen home life will advance the general welfare; and

WHEREAS it is in the national interest to promote the economy, security, and national defense through the most efficient and effective utilization of the skills of all persons, and

WHEREAS in every period of national emergency women have served with distinction in widely varied capacities but thereafter have been subject to treatment as a marginal group whose skills have been inadequately utilized; and

WHEREAS women should be assured the opportunity to develop their capacities and fulfill their aspirations on a continuing basis irrespective of national exigencies, and

WHEREAS a Governmental Commission should be charged with the responsibility for developing recommendations for overcoming discriminations in government and private employment on the basis of sex and for developing recommendations for services which will enable women to continue their role as wives and mothers while making a maximum contribution to the world around them:

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States by the Constitution and statutes of the United States, it is ordered as follows:

#### **PART I—**

#### **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

SEC. 101. There is hereby established the President's Commission on the Status of Women, referred to herein as the "Commission". The Commission shall terminate not later than October 1, 1963.

SEC. 102. The Commission shall be composed of twenty members appointed by the President from among persons with a competency in the area of public affairs and women's activities. In addition, the Secretary of Labor, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chairman of the Civil Service Commission shall also serve as members of the Commission. The President shall designate from among the membership a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, and an Executive Vice-Chairman.

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SEC. 103. In conformity with the Act of May 3, 1945 (59 Stat. 134, 31 U.S.C. 691), necessary facilitating assistance, including the provision of suitable office space by the Department of Labor, shall be furnished the Commission by the Federal agencies whose chief officials are members thereof. An Executive Secretary shall be detailed by the Secretary of Labor to serve the Commission.

SEC. 104. The Commission shall meet at the call of the Chairman.

SEC. 105. The Commission is authorized to use the services of consultants and experts as may be found necessary and as may be otherwise authorized by law.

PART II—  
DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

SEC. 201. The Commission shall review progress and make recommendations as needed for constructive action in the following areas:

(a) Employment policies and practices, including those on wages, under Federal contracts.

(b) Federal social insurance and tax laws as they affect the net earnings and other income of women.

(c) Federal and State labor laws dealing with such matters as hours, night work, and wages, to determine whether they are accomplishing the purposes for which they were established and whether they should be adapted to changing technological, economic, and social conditions.

(d) Differences in legal treatment of men and women in regard to political and civil rights, property rights, and family relations.

(e) New and expanded services that may be required for women as wives, mothers, and workers, including education, counseling, training, home services, and arrangements for care of children during the working day.

(f) The employment policies and practices of the Government of the United States, with reference to additional affirmative steps which should be taken through legislation, executive or administrative action to assure nondiscrimination on the basis of sex and to enhance constructive employment opportunities for women.

SEC. 202. The Commission shall submit a final report of its recommendations to the President by October 1, 1963.

SEC. 203. All executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government are directed to cooperate with the Commission in the performance of its duties.

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PART III—  
REMUNERATION AND EXPENSES

SEC. 301. Members of the Commission, except those receiving other compensation from the United States, shall receive such compensation as the President shall hereafter fix in a manner to be hereafter determined.

JOHN F. KENNEDY  
THE WHITE HOUSE,  
December 14, 1961

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## Appendix B: List of Commissioners

Chairman: Eleanor Roosevelt (d. 1962)

Executive Vice Chairman: Esther Peterson, Assistant Secretary of Labor

Vice Chairman: Richard Lester, Department of Economics, Princeton University

### Public Servants:

Robert F. Kennedy, Attorney General

Orville L. Freeman, Secretary of Agriculture

Luther H. Hodges, Secretary of Commerce

Arthur J. Goldberg, Secretary of Labor (1961-1962)

W. Willard Wirtz, Secretary of Labor (1962-1963)

Abraham A. Ribicoff, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (1961-1962)

Anthony L. Celebrezze, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (1961-1963)

U.S. Senators George D. Aiken and Maurine B. Neuberger

U.S. Representatives Edith Green and Jessica M. Weis (d. 1963)

John W. Macy, Chairman of the Civil Service Commission

### Citizens:

Mrs. Macon Boddy

Mary I. Bunting, President, Radcliffe College

Mary E. Callahan, Executive Board, International Union of Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers

Henry David, President, New School for Social Research

Dorothy Height, President, National Council of Negro Women

Margaret Hickey, Public Affairs Editor, Ladies' Home Journal

Viola H. Hymes, President, National Council of Jewish Women

Margaret J. Mealey, Executive Director, National Council of Catholic Women

Norman E. Nicholson, Administrative Assistant, Kaiser Industries Corporation

Marguerite Rawalt, attorney and past president of the Federal Bar Association and the National

Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs

William Schnitzler, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO

Caroline Ware, Historian

Cynthia C. Wedel, Asst. General Secretary for Program, National Council of Churches of Christ

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## Appendix C: Contributing Organizations

Alliance of Unitarian Women  
Altrusa International, Inc.  
American Association of University Women  
American Bar Association, Family Law  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Federation of Labor and Congress of  
Industrial Organizations  
American Home Economics Association  
American Legion Auxiliary  
American Medical Women's Association, Inc.  
American Newspaper Women's Club, Inc.  
American Nurses' Association, Inc.  
American Personnel and Guidance Association, Inc.  
American Society of Women Accountants  
American Women in Radio and Television, Inc.  
Association of the Junior Leagues of America, Inc.  
B'nai B'rith Women  
Camp Fire Girls, Inc.  
Council of State Governments  
Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated  
The Fashion Group, Inc.  
General Federation of Women's Clubs  
Girl Scouts of the United State of America  
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.  
International Association of Governmental Labor Officials  
International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers  
League of Women of the Lucy League, Inc.  
National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc.  
National Association of Women Lawyers  
National Consumers League  
National Council of Catholic Women  
National Council of Jewish Women, Inc.  
National Council of Negro Women, Inc.  
National Council of Women of the United States, Inc.  
National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc.  
National League for Nursing, Inc.  
National Office Management Association

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National Woman's Party  
Phi Chi Theta  
Public Personnel Association  
Quota International, Inc.  
Soroptimist Federation of the Americas, Inc.  
Theta Sigma Phi  
United Church Women  
Women's Division of Christian Service of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
Women's National Press Club  
Young Women's Christian Association of the U.S.A  
Zonta International