

Standardizing Sex Discrimination: Clerical Workers, Labor Organizing, and Feminism

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### Abstract

Nine to Five, a labor organization founded in 1973 in Boston, became a national and visible advocacy group for working women who sought higher pay, promotional access, and greater respect from their superiors. Its advocates who wanted more bargaining power eventually formed a national office workers' union in 1981. The unionizing efforts on college campuses for greater pay equity and the negotiations in publishing houses for uniform personnel practices were high points for the office workers' movement in the 1970s and 1980s, a period labor historians traditionally describe as quiescent.

While standardizing workplace procedures helped to bolster some women into male-dominated positions, it also signified a weakening and narrowing of the office workers' movement. Legal mandates came to mean opportunities for mobility into male-dominated sectors; yet the possibility of pay equity for sex-segregated work collapsed in the private sector. State and corporate policies emphasized formal equality, which empowered some women to enter new fields and gain greater financial security. However, opportunity came to mean allowing women the same opportunities as men; thus, clericals remained low paid and clerical work remained dead end. Managers, including an emerging class of professional women, did not perceive the work that clericals performed as relevant for professional positions. Clericals did not always achieve their tangible demands such as systemic wage restructuring although they won selected battles such as securing written job descriptions, empowered themselves through collective action, and influenced public perceptions of appropriate workplace behavior. Nine to Five leaders had attempted to unite clerical women as an economic class even as gender-based state and corporate policies overwhelmed their efforts.

Feminism played an ambiguous role in clericals' campaigns, on the one hand encouraging women to organize and assert themselves; on the other, focusing attention primarily on access to men's jobs at the risk of slighting the problems of sex-segregated workers. The labor organizing efforts of clericals challenge histories that point to the emergence of antidiscrimination legislation and the growth of demographic diversity to argue for progress in the postwar office. This project exposes the limited access of pink-collar workers to fair pay and upward mobility.

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## Standardizing Sex Discrimination: Clerical Workers, Labor Organizing, and Feminism

### Introduction

The 1980 movie *Nine to Five* featured Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin and Dolly Parton as secretaries Judy Bernly, Violet Newstead, and Doralee Rhodes. They took revenge against their sexist boss Franklin Hart, played by Dabney Coleman, because he regularly mistreated female employees. He yelled at them, stole their ideas, refused to promote them, and sexually harassed them. The women joined forces to kidnap him and tie him up in his house, and then they assumed operation of their office. Following his escape and return to work, the board chairman commended Hart on the recent productivity increase that occurred at the company. Hart took credit for the improvement even though he was, in fact, being held captive while it happened. The three women were responsible for the progress. But luckily Hart received a promotion that sent him to Brazil, which relieved the women of having to work with him any longer. The movie ended by disclosing that Judy got married, Violet received a promotion to vice president, and Doralee became a famous singer.

*Nine to Five* was a hit: it was one of the top grossing movies of 1980, earning over \$100 million.<sup>1</sup> While many saw the film and laughed at its absurd take on the plight of clericals, less familiar was the actual organization 9to5 that served as inspiration for the movie. This dissertation traces 9to5, the National Association of Working Women, and its sister union, District 925 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), to illuminate clericals' postwar organizing efforts as they initially rose in the 1960s and 70s, doggedly persisted in the 80s, and then declined in the 1990s.

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<sup>1</sup> "9 to 5," Box Office Mojo, an IMDb company, accessed July 1, 2013, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=9to5.htm>. Domestic lifetime gross reported to be \$103,290,500.

Harvard secretaries and friends Karen Nussbaum and Ellen Cassedy founded 9to5 in 1973 to increase awareness of the low pay and lack of respect given to clerical workers. Cassedy said that before starting 9to5 with Nussbaum, she had “absorbed what was in the culture—that office work wasn’t really work, office workers were not true workers, [and] women’s work was not that important.”<sup>2</sup> Other women had similar experiences, and grassroots organizations similar to 9to5 developed in Chicago, San Francisco, New York, and other cities. In 1977, the local organizations formed a national alliance, 9to5, the National Association for Working Women, that launched coordinated campaigns to target certain industries (publishing or insurance, for instance) or to pursue issues of concern (examples included affirmative action and office automation). The women creating and advancing the 9to5 platform lobbied using the language of ‘rights and respect.’ Often they did not distinguish between tangible gains (such as pay, benefits, and promotions) and respect issues because they saw them as interrelated and possibly as inseparable. To gain the authority to negotiate wage contracts, Boston workers formed a union affiliate, Local 925 in 1975; in 1981, this local became District 925, a national clericals’ union and part of the growing SEIU.

By challenging unstated assumptions that devalued clerical workers, 9to5 helped to elucidate the connection between economic injustice and gender discrimination. Nine to Five’s organizing methods and direct actions changed women’s perceptions of themselves, their bosses, and their workplaces, providing a forum for discussion and activism. The organization influenced public attitudes of what a secretary should be expected to do for her boss. It helped to formalize clericals’ job descriptions and delineate appropriate boundaries so that women had some protection against bosses who demanded that they run errands and serve lunch. Nine to

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<sup>2</sup> Ellen Cassedy, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 6, 2005.

Five's flexible structure appealed to women who did not want to commit to union membership. Clericals could participate on certain campaigns or take part in selected activities without further requirements of involvement. Although 9to5 had limited power when confronting employers, never before had a labor organization been so effective with so few contractual gains or without formal bargaining channels.

This dissertation is the first comprehensive postwar history on clerical workers. It seeks to explain how 9to5 emerged as a national labor organization and what it accomplished for clerical workers. In addition, it asks why clerical work, a female-dominated job, remained low paid and dead end given the advent of the feminist movement and the existence of clerical unions. By examining the strategies, goals, and campaigns of 9to5, this project reveals why trade unions failed to take hold in private-sector offices; how feminists' goals could stifle the mobility of wage-earning women in sex-segregated jobs; and how corporations and the state created equal employment opportunity policies that excluded pay equity.

The feminist movement of the 1960s motivated office workers to come together to define their complaints; they prioritized higher pay, access to promotions, and respectful treatment. How workers organized and what grievances they stressed could vary by industry. In union campaigns on university campuses they had the most success in economic issues, often improving their pay scales or winning across-the-board raises. Clerical workers did not achieve systemic wage restructuring or other tangible demands in banks or insurance companies; in fact, they rarely were able to unionize in the private sector although some companies granted pay raises to preempt organizing. In the publishing industry, they won select noneconomic battles that influenced the nature of personnel policy so that employers began to institute job postings and provide paid job training.

The organizing strategies of 9to5 and 925 emphasized the importance of empowering workers. Nine to Five and District 925 aimed to build women's leadership experience so that they would feel comfortable confronting employers alone about interpersonal matters or collectively through unionizing. One University of Massachusetts clerical described office workers as needing to recognize that they were just as deserving of workplace rights as were industrial workers who were organizing. According to her view, until office workers started to see their problems as legitimate and worthy of complaint, employers would not acknowledge their concerns.<sup>3</sup> Not only did organizing increase public awareness about the problems of clericals, but it also helped women to recognize that their concerns were worthy of attention.

However, corporate and state actors were defining the boundaries of sex discrimination such that illegal treatment of women in the workplace meant not allowing them access to male-dominated professional positions. Whereas in the 1960s, the exact terms of sex-based employment discrimination remained uncertain, by the 1980s, employers and regulators could demarcate legal from illegal action. And clericals' primary claims—low pay and lack of promotions—did not constitute illegal conduct towards female employees. As companies formalized personnel processes and female professionals gained access to managerial positions, clericals' grievances concerning pay and promotions did not even seem unfair in some cases. Although legal and corporate policy enforced equal employment opportunity, no reevaluation of clericals' work experience occurred such that secretarial jobs would be considered training ground for management.

Although this dissertation is the first large-scale account of clerical work in the postwar period, historians have studied the nature of clerical work and the lives of clerical workers in the

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<sup>3</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with university secretary from the University of Massachusetts, #48, 1974-1975, MC 366, Box 2, folder 12, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

late 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In her account of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century civil service, historian Cindy Aron has shown that before clerical work became a female-dominated occupation, government clerks—both men and women—enjoyed the potential to advance even if women earned lower wages. Aron focused on the civil service as a site where male and female workers hesitantly adopted changing middle-class values.<sup>4</sup> Yet other historians demonstrate that clerical work became less desirable work by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, contextualizing the occupational changes as part of larger trends in business history. Histories have explained how clerical work, once a respectable position of apprenticeship, became a low-wage, unskilled job that was performed almost entirely by women.<sup>5</sup> Strategies to reduce costs in growing businesses led employers to rationalize clerical work. Historian Margery Davies has shown that as clerical positions supposedly required less skill, they became women's jobs that offered few promotions.<sup>6</sup> While Davies accounted for the feminization and rationalization of clerical labor in the private sector, this dissertation demonstrates that half a century later, the work remained sex segregated, routinized, and dead end. Despite office automation in the 1980s, which in many cases further rationalized clerical jobs, white-collar unions faltered in the private sector. While Davies explored the move towards Taylorism in the offices of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, this project

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<sup>4</sup> Cindy Aron, *Ladies and Gentlemen of the Civil Service: Middle-Class Workers in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford, 1987). Aron showed how women's presence influenced office culture and the transition from old to new middle-class values that affected men and women workers differently. New middle-class values included job security for men and economic independence for women. However, men were clinging to masculine notions of rugged individualism and women felt threatened by newfound economic independence. Ileen A. DeVault explored the emergence of a white-collar workforce in Pittsburgh, and the clerical sector's influence on class status. DeVault, *Sons and Daughters of Labor: Class and Clerical Work in Turn-of-the-Century Pittsburgh* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). crisis in how to define class

<sup>5</sup> Elyce J. Rotella, *From Home to Office: U.S. Women at Work, 1870-1930* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981); Sharon Hartman Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Lisa Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper: Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Engendering Business: Men and Women in the Corporate Office, 1870-1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> Margery W. Davies, *Woman's Place Is at the Typewriter: Office Work and Office Workers, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982).



shows that managers in the 70s and 80s attempted to undo the principles of scientific management to increase worker productivity and preempt union unionization on a large scale.

Historians describe the 1970s as the beginning of the end for trade unions, as organized labor became a weaker force for effecting political and economic change. Some historians have discussed decline by describing the transformations in 20<sup>th</sup> century liberalism, arguing that by the 1960s, rights-based pluralism had replaced the New Deal model of structural change.<sup>7</sup> Nelson Lichtenstein demonstrated that traditional unions held fast to the boundaries of collective bargaining, failing to adapt to the “rights consciousness” that racialized and gendered workplace justice in the 1960s.<sup>8</sup> Other histories have tied the decline of union membership and union political power in the 70s and 80s to deregulation, free-market conservatism, and outsourcing.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the overall percentage of unionized workers in the private sector decreased significantly in these decades.<sup>10</sup> And Jefferson Cowie established that the once politically-salient white, industrial working-class—especially the imagery of male unionism—faded from political and cultural view.<sup>11</sup>

While this dissertation acknowledges the overall hostile environment to unions that undercut union expansion, the percentage of organized workers who were women more than

<sup>7</sup> Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). “Rights consciousness” is discussed in Chapter Five.

<sup>9</sup> Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). Stein showed that the economic policies of the federal government encouraged deregulation in the 1970s, which further weakened the position of unions. Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen’s Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009). Phillips-Fein demonstrated that business executives supported free-market political and intellectual currents, resulting in the era of conservatism in the 80s that undermined union rights. Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA’s Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). Cowie explained that American manufacturing firms, which were traditionally strongholds of trade union support, moved production overseas by the end of the 80s in search of cheaper, union-free labor.

<sup>10</sup> The percentage of non-agricultural workers in private sector unions declined steadily from a high of about 38 percent in 1952 to 14 percent in 1986. Yet in the public sector, over a third of the workforce was unionized in 1986. Richard B. Freeman, “Contraction and Expansion: The Divergence of Private Sector and Public Sector Unionism in the United States” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1988), 63-64.

<sup>11</sup> Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

doubled from the 1950s to the end of the 1980s.<sup>12</sup> Historians are just beginning to explore how the increase in female unionization, the nature of women's organizing efforts, and the grievances they advanced affect traditional trajectories of labor history. Perhaps rights-based pluralism did not undercut all labor organizations and all unionizing efforts to the extent previously believed. Often women could be motivated to fight for economic justice by new ideas of fairness that had emerged from the social movements of the 60s and the feminist movement in particular. Historians are looking beyond the story of strikes, contracts, and membership numbers to tell more inclusive histories of labor activism that demonstrate women's interpersonal strategies of organizing. These accounts are giving voice to female workers who engaged in collective struggles against longstanding workplace and union policies that favored male workers. Demanding rights for women became intertwined with demanding fairness in the workplace as home health workers, waitresses, domestics, flight attendants, and secretaries showed that child care, maternity leave, and equal pay were labor issues, not just women's issues.<sup>13</sup>

Dorothy Sue Cobble has written briefly about clerical workers, and this dissertation does not diverge drastically from her worldview, which finds that many women fought for gender

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<sup>12</sup> Dorothy Sue Cobble, editor, "Introduction," *Women and Unions: Forging a Partnership* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 10. Cobble cited an increase from 17 percent in 1954 to 37 percent in 1988.

<sup>13</sup> Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein, *Caring for America: Home Health Workers in the Shadow of the Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Eileen Boris and Annelise Orleck, "Feminism and the Labor Movement: A Century of Collaboration and Conflict," *New Labor Forum* 20, no. 1 (2011), 33-41; Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It Out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Premilla Nadasen, "Citizenship Rights, Domestic Work, and the Fair Labor Standards Act," *Journal of Policy History* 24, 1 (January 2012), 74-94; Kathleen Barry, *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). Numerous other histories demonstrate that female wage earners joined, organized, or led unions, empowering themselves as both workers and women in the postwar period: Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Dennis A. Deslippe, "Rights Not Roses": *Unions and the Rise of Working-Class Feminism, 1945-1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Jane LaTour, *Sisters in the Brotherhoods: Working Women Organizing for Equality in New York City* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Susan Hartmann, "Chapter Two: Implementing Feminist Policy, The International Union of Electrical Workers," in *The Other Feminists: Activists in the Liberal Establishment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 14-52; Susan Rimby Leighow, "An 'Obligation to Participate': Married Nurses' Labor Force Participation in the 1950s," in Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 37-56.

equity as part of a class-based struggle to improve pay and working conditions.<sup>14</sup> It does, however, attempt to delve deeper into archival sources to demonstrate how examining the labor history of clericals can tell us about much more than their organizing efforts (although it does show us that the rights consciousness of the 1960s could promote collective action among certain demographic groups just as it could hinder organizing efforts among others). Exploring the organizing efforts of 9to5 and 925 provides a window into how changing legal and corporate policies were solidifying to define sex discrimination—and how that definition affected all women in the corporation, from bottom to top.

The union movement that did survive the onset of rights-based pluralism adapted its strategies to appeal to the growing clerical and service sectors, whose workers mostly were women, immigrants, and people of color. Women constituted 50 percent of all members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in the 70s and 80s, a union known for adapting its strategies to accommodate workers in unorganized industries.<sup>15</sup> Thus, 9to5 and its union counterpart, SEIU District 925, represented an alternative model to the traditional trade union organization that required membership; clericals could engage with 9to5 without having formal ties to it. Nine to Five leaders cared just as much about empowering nonmembers as they did about raising their own membership numbers.

Examining the efforts of clericals and their organizations alters the declension narrative of labor history. While it remains less powerful than it was decades ago, what remains of unionism has been shaped by the new workforce, composed of women and minorities in the service and clerical industry. Although office worker campaigns that gathered momentum in the

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<sup>14</sup> Dorothy Sue Cobble, “‘A Spontaneous Loss of Enthusiasm’: Workplace Feminism and the Transformation of Women’s Service Jobs in the 1970s,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 56 (Fall 1999), 23-44; Cobble, “Chapter Eight: An Unfinished Agenda,” in *The Other Women’s Movement*, 206-222.

<sup>15</sup> Cobble, *Women and Unions*, 11.

1970s and continued into the 1980s may not have succeeded in organizing a large percentage of private-sector clericals, the tactics of 9to5 and 925 gave way to new forms of worker organizing by the 1990s.<sup>16</sup>

Historians have argued that 1960s feminism originated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century from the suffrage battles waged by white, educated women<sup>17</sup> Traditionally historians have used the wave metaphor to periodize feminism; they categorize a first wave ending around 1920 and a second wave starting around 1960.<sup>18</sup> More recently, historians have challenged this narrative in two ways: first, by demonstrating that feminism was not dormant in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; and second, by showing that a variety of actors—women of color and of varying class status—struggled on a variety of stages to achieve gender equity. Scholars have shown that women in the labor movement fought continuously throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century for gender-based rights in their unions and at their workplaces.<sup>19</sup> Others have looked to female lobbyists and policymakers to show that activists in the 40s and 50s sustained political activity on behalf of women's

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<sup>16</sup> John J. Sweeney and Karen Nussbaum, *Solutions for the New Work Force: Policies for a New Social Contract* (Cabin John, MD: Seven Locks Press, 1989); Dan Clawson, *The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2003); Dorothy Sue Cobble, editor, *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2007); Jo-Ann Mort, editor, *Not Your Father's Union Movement: Inside the AFL-CIO* (New York: Verso, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> On feminism emerging from the woman movement in the 1910s, see Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987). Feminism did not end but actually began after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Cott shows that during the 1910s and 1920s, questions that would define the contemporary movement for women's rights emerged: how to define sex equality while recognizing women's biological difference and how to unite women as a social movement while recognizing various distinctions among them.

<sup>18</sup> Sara Evans, *Tidal Waves: How Women Changed America at Century's End* (New York: Free Press, 2003). Evans also accounts for a third wave in the 80s and 90s. For a rich discussion of the wave model, see Kathleen A. Laughlin, Julie Gallagher, Dorothy Sue Cobble, Eileen Boris, Premilla Nadasen, Stephanie Gilmore, and Leandra Zarnow, "Is It Time to Jump Ship? Historians Rethink the Waves Metaphor," *Feminist Formations* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2010), 76-135.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of revisionist accounts to the women's movement and to the labor movement, see "Roundtable on Dorothy Sue Cobble's *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America*," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 2, issue 4, 43-62. For examples of books, see Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Working Class Women's Activism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century U.S.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*; Hartmann, *The Other Feminists*; Nancy Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935-1975* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). For a collection of articles, see Alice Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

rights.<sup>20</sup> Many of the women who were active in midcentury did not refer to themselves as ‘feminists’ even though they used strategies and pushed for federal policies that avowedly feminist groups such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) would adopt in the 1960s.<sup>21</sup> Still other scholars have discovered the grassroots activism of black and Latina women who fought for adequate income and dignity through the welfare rights movement.<sup>22</sup>

This dissertation continues the revisionist project that uncovers women’s activism and influence outside of traditionally feminist channels. To be sure, the mainstream feminist movement did help to propel the development of 9to5. The feminism of the 1960s exposed that socially-constructed gender norms were not biological facts to which women must adhere. With the feminist movement promoting this distinction between sex and gender, both those identifying as feminists and as non-feminists began to see gender roles differently. The messages of feminism proliferated so that various groups of women internal and external to the movement were becoming increasingly cognizant of the gender-based issues that most affected them.<sup>23</sup> In particular, clericals started to perceive longstanding workplace problems such as low pay, lack of promotions, and disrespect from superiors as more than treatment from a bad boss or normal operations in their office. Nine to Five leaders wanted to convince other workers that their

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<sup>20</sup> Cynthia Harrison, *On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women’s Issues* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women’s Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Harrison focused on the politics of women’s issues at the federal level during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, with attention to the presidents and female policymakers who helped to form a national agenda on behalf of women’s rights. Rupp and Taylor focused on the actions of the National Woman’s Party as it sought to form coalitions of support around the Equal Rights Amendment.

<sup>21</sup> Harrison, *On Account of Sex*, 211.

<sup>22</sup> Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005); Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Felicia Kornbluh, *The Battle for Welfare Rights*;

<sup>23</sup> Ruth Rosen, “Chapter Eight: The Proliferation of Feminism,” *The World Split Open: How The Modern Women’s Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 263-294. I am referring here to the ‘new feminism’ of the 1960s that emphasized the distinction between sex and gender while telling women that they did not have to follow certain life paths because of their sex.

individual, and often economic, problems were in fact part of a systemic pattern of sex-based workplace discrimination.

In addition, the women's liberation movement fostered consciousness-raising groups where women gained greater awareness of the institutional nature of gendered bias.<sup>24</sup> These grassroots discussion groups were decentralized in nature, allowing participants to define the agenda and express themselves in a welcoming environment. As more women gained greater 'consciousness' of the way that ingrained gender norms disadvantaged them politically, economically, and socially, women's liberation groups started to move from discussing ideas to taking action.<sup>25</sup> Nine to Five exemplifies the trajectory of a consciousness-raising group, beginning as an informal lunchtime gripe session and developing into a more structured, activist organization. Like many organizations of the women's liberation movement, it formed outside of preexisting channels, borrowing elements of prevailing institutions—unionism and feminism—for its strategies and operations.

Like many female activists in this period, Nussbaum started to gain awareness of women's oppression from her involvement in other progressive causes. She described Students for a Democratic Society as "meetings where mostly boys would argue with boys. . . and girls would stand around in circles around them and listen to them."<sup>26</sup> And she was not involved with

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<sup>24</sup> Although naming the first consciousness-raising group might be impossible because of their fluid nature, we can date groups back to 1966 and 1967. Most likely the first ones were in Chicago, New York, and Washington D.C, and Boston. Maren Lockwood Carden, *The New Feminist Movement* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1974), 63-64; Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 20.

<sup>25</sup> Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*; Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1999); Rachel Blau Dupressis and Ann Snitow, eds., *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberation* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Karen Nussbaum, interview by Kathleen Banks Nutter, transcript of video recording, December 18, 2003, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection, 9. On feminism and women's liberation as emerging from the Civil Rights Movement and New Left see Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Random House, 1979); Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and Its Relation to the Policy Process* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1975); Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (New York: Dell

NOW, which she perceived as prioritizing the needs of professional women who were fighting for access to male-dominated positions. Nussbaum formed 9to5 to fill a void in the women's rights and labor rights movements: it aimed to provide working women with the opportunity to define their own issues and form their own campaigns.<sup>27</sup> Eschewing a top-down organizational model, 9to5 leaders focused largely on empowering office workers so that they could stand up to their own bosses.

While they shared many of the same problems such as lacking promotional opportunities, enduring sexual objectification, and needing paid maternity leave, clericals often perceived feminists as women who were entangled in theoretical battles. Clericals saw themselves instead as concerned with their standard-of-living and their ability to make ends meet. For instance, one clerical who worked as a temporary admitted that she perceived feminism as engaging in the “philosophical business of whether you should wear a bra or not, or shave your legs or not. I quite frankly couldn't care less about that.”<sup>28</sup> Many clericals were looking for direct, economic benefits; they felt distant from much of the discourse associated with feminism—whether it came from the media or the movement itself.<sup>29</sup>

Although the issues of feminists and clericals often overlapped, changing legal codes and cultural norms that offered opportunities to women in an array of previously-restricted fields did not ameliorate the problems of clerical workers. This project exposes the limited access of pink-collar workers to fair pay and upward mobility as 9to5 sought to use legal remedies to attain

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Publishing, 1999). On the legal implications of the race-sex analogy, see Serena Mayeri, *Reasoning from Race: Feminism, Law, and the Civil Rights Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 17, 19-20. Nussbaum said that when she went to Boston she was not involved in more mainstream organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW). She recalled that she and her friends were “much more part of a more radical movement.”

<sup>28</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with Kelley temporary clerical, #46, 1974-1975, MC366, Box 2, folder 11, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>29</sup> As clerical work itself became increasingly proletarianized, growing numbers of clericals were fighting to earn living wages to support themselves and their families. Harry Braverman, “Chapter 15: Clerical Workers,” *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Free Press, 1974), 203-247.

raises and respect for clericals. Policy histories of women's work view the postwar period as an era of continuous advancement for women. Title VII became more ingrained in the legal and corporate culture, which ended an era of gender-based protective legislation.<sup>30</sup> However, pay inequity and lack of mobility continued to plague clerical workers. Thus, the trajectory of the clerical sector undermines histories that portray workplace progress as increasing opportunities for minorities and women.<sup>31</sup> To be sure, the equal employment opportunity (EEO) policies of the 1960s and 70s forced employers to formalize their personnel procedures to uphold formal equality between men and women. However, Title VII and the executive orders of affirmative action also gave employers significant discretion to influence the meaning and implementation of EEO policy.<sup>32</sup> EEO policy became a useful tool for women who wanted access to male-dominated positions (both professional and blue collar), but the law provided few remedies for sex-segregated workers. Despite the movement for comparable worth in the 1980s that made some inroads in the public sector, in the private sector women had no recourse for unfair pay scales other than through collective bargaining.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Several books addressed the importance of Title VII for women's equality at work. See Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Leo Kanowitz, *Women and the Law: The Unfinished Revolution* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969); Hugh Davis Graham, *The Civil Rights Era: Origins and Development of National Policy, 1960-1972* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). For public policy debates before Title VII concerning equality versus protection see Harrison, *On Account of Sex*.

<sup>31</sup> Accounts of increasing workplace opportunities for minorities and women include Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*; Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> Frank Dobbin, *Inventing Equal Opportunity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). Dobbin argued that personnel took charge at a time of declining union power. And "what personnel made popular gradually became lawful" (5). The courts have fostered the spread of similar equal opportunity policies across firms and industries by upholding the "best practices" of prominent employers. Jennifer Delton argued that in the postwar period corporations propelled, not obstructed, racial integration of their workforces. Delton, *Racial Integration in Corporate America, 1940-1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>33</sup> Linda M. Blum, *Between Feminism and Labor: The Significance of the Comparable Worth Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Vicky Lovell, Heidi Hartmann, and Misha Werschkul, "More than Raising the Floor: The Persistence of Gender Inequalities in the Low-Wage Labor Market," in Cobble, *The Sex of Class*, 35-57.



Women constituted most of the new union members and their participation changed the nature of the union movement.<sup>34</sup> However, in the 1980s prevailing management literature stressed cooperative employee relations instead of adversarial approaches. Normative ideas of union-management collaboration emerged from the quality of work life (QWL) movement of the 1970s. Certain projects took hold in the 80s because they improved workers' productivity and helped to develop trust between employers and employees.<sup>35</sup> These best practices improved some noneconomic aspects of the workplace by standardizing personnel procedures, providing formal methods for complaints, and enriching daily tasks. But they undercut clericals' claims for economic justice, especially given the hostility of the Reagan Administration toward organized labor.<sup>36</sup>

By the 1990s, clerical workers remained devalued both economically and culturally, lacking legal remedies or unionization capabilities. A greater class distinction developed between those staying in clerical or other sex-segregated jobs and those using their available resources to move. New opportunities for educated, professional women allowed them to progress into higher-paying, male-dominated jobs. They became brave pioneers confronting unknown territory, exercising ambition and assertiveness that for so many years had been defined as inappropriate behavior for women. However, for working women who lacked the education, network, desire, or flexibility to move to newly-available professional positions, remaining in sex-segregated jobs meant struggling for living wages and for respect for their skills. And staying in clerical work could be perceived as antithetical to women's rights since

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<sup>34</sup> Overall union membership was declining even though the number of women as a percentage of all union members was increasing in the 1980s. Ruth Milkman, "Two Worlds of Unionism: Women and the New Labor Movement," in Cobble, *The Sex of Class*, 69.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Schuster, "Cooperation and Change in Union Settings: Problems and Opportunities," *Human Resource Management* 23, Issue 2 (Summer 1984), 145-160.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph McCartin, *Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers, and the Strike that Changed America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

the job description of the private secretary involved adapting to a man's needs. "The women's movement has made women embarrassed to be secretaries," a Katharine Gibbs graduate told sociologist Rosabeth Moss Kanter.<sup>37</sup> Respect for the paths of professional women continued the devaluing of the work and status of clerical women.

This dissertation contains five chapters. The first chapter, "Constructing Pink-Collar Activism: The Roots of 9to5 and SEIU District 925," challenges existing scholarship about the 1970s and 1980s as a period of union decline. On the contrary, clerical organizing increased in part because of the emergence of 9to5. Nine to Five, a labor organization of clerical workers founded in 1973 in Boston, became a national and visible advocacy group for working women who sought higher pay and greater respect from their superiors. Its advocates who wanted more bargaining power eventually formed a national office workers' union in 1981 as part of the growing Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Thus, the feminism of the 1960s and 1970s initially propelled the office workers' movement, as women realized that their daily efforts in the office were undervalued.

In Chapter Two, "Respect Through Raises: Examining Grassroots Movements for Pay Equity on University Campuses," I examine a specific industry and a specific issue, university workers and pay equity, where clerical campaigns prospered. Although clericals did not see their battles as part of a larger feminist movement, they nevertheless linked low pay and low status with their positions as sex-segregated laborers. Chapter Three, "Organizing for Upward Mobility: Publishing Women and Personnel Practices in the 1970s," argues that publishing clericals, who were likely to be college educated and focused on attaining editorial positions,

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<sup>37</sup> Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "Where You Stand in the Power Play," *Working Woman* 2, no. 10, October 1977, 29. Finette McCotter had worked as a secretary for 10 years, and claimed she wanted to be called a secretary not an administrative assistant. "People are always trying to promote me. . . I love what I am doing."

helped to transform corporate policies and practices in their industries. Although they usually did not prioritize wages, these women won job postings, pushed for job descriptions, and advocated for job training. On some issues, employers appeased workers to prevent unionization and to comply with federal and state equal employment policies. Localized negotiations in various offices between employees and employers contributed to the expansion and formalization of human resource practices. Although the standardization of workplace procedures arguably helped to move some women into male-dominated positions, it signified a weakening and narrowing of the office workers' movement. Legal and fair workplace practices came to mean employer-provided opportunities for upward mobility while arguments for comparable worth rarely affected pay scales in the private sector. Thus, the efforts on college campuses and the discussions in publishing houses were some of the high points for the office workers' movement.

This dissertation transitions into a story of decline for clericals in chapters four and five, arguing that increased legal and cultural attention to antidiscrimination displaced focus from the economic plight of sex-segregated workers. Chapter Four, "Privatizing Fair Employment: Labor Law and Sex-Segregated Work," challenges recent scholarship about workplace inclusion by showing that government policy ignored the main priorities of the office workers' movement. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration failed to categorize office workers' ailments resulting from automation as hazardous health and safety issues worthy of government protection. State and corporate equal employment opportunity (EEO) policies emphasized formal equality, which empowered many women, giving them opportunities to gain professional prestige and financial security. However, to become a secretary remained a dead-end job; affirmative action did not mandate wage adjustments for clericals or enforce internal mobility

measures for those at the bottom of the office hierarchy. Instead, affirmative action became a measure of underutilization, meaning that companies had to set goals to bring women or minorities into previously-restricted fields but they did not have to remedy the crowding of women in low-paid clerical positions.

The last chapter, “Redefining the Office: Employee Relations and Individual Ambition,” shows that changing management strategies undercut clerical women’s economic claims at the same time that the new-found esteem for professional women continued the devaluing of the work and status of clerical women. New ways of thinking about worker productivity and the health of corporations challenged the economic demands of clericals who thought they deserved fair compensation. Also new cultural admiration for women moving into formerly all-male professions highlighted the class distinctions among women workers. Many women used their networks and resources to move into higher-paid, male-dominated positions. However, women who lacked the means for mobility continued to work in the devalued jobs that women had long performed.

Known not only for her acting career but also for her political activism, Jane Fonda was the driving force behind the *Nine to Five* movie project. She became interested in the job problems of clericals, and supported the 9to5 labor organization. Her celebrity status helped to draw crowds of up to 1,000 to 9to5 events.<sup>38</sup> To gather vignettes for the movie, she interviewed forty 9to5 members in Cleveland, asking them if they liked their bosses or if they ever thought of getting even with them. Some of the women had such negative feelings toward their bosses that

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<sup>38</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, Press release, “Jane Fonda Speaks to Office Workers: 9to5 Hosts Event,” Sept. 28, 1979. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 80. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

they responded with answers such as, “I wouldn’t mind poisoning his coffee.”<sup>39</sup> This dissertation offers a window into the work lives of these clericals and traces the efforts they made to change their workplace conditions.

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<sup>39</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “‘Automation May Increase Discrimination’: A Conversation with Karen Nussbaum,” *Office Administration and Automation*, April 1983, p. 34, Box 14, folder 87, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

## Chapter One: Constructing Pink-Collar Activism: The Roots of 9to5 and SEIU District 925

That was the kind of impulsiveness that was around in those days...they created the Harvard Square Waitresses Organizing Committee, went on strike, and stayed on strike for a year. The whole thing was hopeless [but] I began to realize the potential that existed in...confronting the employer with the power of women's rights.

--Karen Nussbaum describing the genesis of the 9to5 idea as she participated in regular picket duty during a waitresses' strike in Cambridge, Massachusetts.<sup>40</sup>

When forming 9to5, an organization for women office workers in 1972, co-founder Karen Nussbaum remembers, "we never used the term *feminist*."<sup>41</sup> "I wanted to work with women in their own lives—not as part of a women's movement organization, but with women as workers."<sup>42</sup> Nussbaum and the other nine clerical workers who started the new labor organization sought to bring awareness to the workplace problems of Boston area clericals, which included low pay, lack of promotions, and mistreatment from superiors. Nine to Five leaders wanted to convince other workers that their individual, economic problems were part of a systemic pattern of sex-based workplace discrimination. To appeal to the majority of clericals, however, they would have to distinguish themselves carefully from two movements that apparently aligned with their cause: feminism and unionism. Nine to Five would attempt to create an organization that was not explicitly "feminist," meaning that it did not partner with other existing second-wave groups or label itself a feminist organization. Nor would 9to5 initially become a formal labor union that was engaged in collective bargaining and registered with the National Labor Relations Board. The 9to5 founders had to contend with clericals'

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<sup>40</sup> Karen Nussbaum, interviewed by Ann Froines, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 16, 2006.

<sup>41</sup> "Karen Nussbaum: In Conversation with Dorothy Sue Cobble and Alice Kessler-Harris" in Mary S. Hartman, editor, *Talking Leadership: Conversations with Powerful Women* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, 1999), 136.

<sup>42</sup> "Karen Nussbaum" in *Talking Leadership*, 137.

notions about feminism and about unionism, ideas that evidenced and even fueled class disparities among women office workers.<sup>43</sup>

Nine to Five was not technically a labor union, which limited its power when confronting employers. However, never before had a labor organization been so effective with so few contractual gains or without formal bargaining channels. The women creating and advancing the 9to5 platform lobbied for ‘rights and respect.’ Often they did not distinguish between tangible gains (such as pay, benefits, and promotions) and respect issues because they saw them as interrelated and possibly as inseparable. Although most clerical workers were not part of its ranks, 9to5 achieved large-scale change by challenging unstated assumptions that devalued clerical work and degraded clerical workers. By making gender inequities more apparent through their organizing methods and direct actions, 9to5 helped office workers see themselves, their bosses, and their workplaces differently. Many clerical workers already associated some of their work problems—the requirement that they wear skirts or the constant flirtation and harassment that they endured from male superiors—with their gender. But 9to5 helped to bring greater awareness to these issues and to provide a forum for discussion and action. Moreover, many clericals had long been concerned about overtly economic issues like pay and promotions since these problems were pressing and critical to their families’ basic needs. Nine to Five sought to link sex- and class-based issues, showing workers that perceptions of women and gender norms were inseparable from their economic problems.

This chapter examines the conceptual and structural foundations of pink-collar activism, exploring the founding of 9to5 in 1972 and the formation of its union counterpart, SEIU District 925, in 1981. Section one discusses the leaders’ roots in leftist politics, examining the social and

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<sup>43</sup> The Introduction more fully explains how 9to5 contended with clerical workers’ notions about feminism and unionism, exploring the historiography regarding both movements.

political events that shaped Karen Nussbaum as she came of age during the 1960s. Progressive movements influenced the ideological origins of 9to5: it became a decentralized organization that was built and guided by participants' ideas of justice, equity, and fairness. Section two examines the creation of 9to5's unique labor strategy that sought to empower office workers as it was organizing them. As 9to5 was moving from discussion to action, it gauged the attitudes of office workers around Boston via surveys to help shape its agenda. Survey results demonstrated that 9to5 leaders and rank-and-file office workers could have different concerns, resulting from their viewpoints, workplace experiences, and career goals. Section three moves forward a few years to explore the creation of a national clerical workers' union to respond to certain pockets of resistance arising across the country. Although many clerical workers admitted that they perceived unions as inappropriate spaces for respectable, white-collar women, some wanted the clout of a traditional trade union behind them despite the anti-union environment of the 1980s. Nussbaum used the growth and publicity of the 9to5 organization to spur trade union interest in clerical worker campaigns, resulting in several national unions expressing interest in a 9to5 partnership. She chose to align with the SEIU, an emergent union that was embracing the changing demographics of the workforce. SEIU District 925 leaders hoped that the growing visibility of 9to5—and the popular *Nine to Five* movie— would propel the union campaign.

### Karen Nussbaum's Activism and the Roots of 9to5

Nine to Five began as a grassroots organization that formed because women office workers were frustrated with how they were being treated at work. Many of the women who initially became leaders of 9to5 and of District 925—including Karen Nussbaum and Ellen Cassedy—had past involvement with other progressive organizations or had been raised by



parents who had ties with such organizations or with trade unions.<sup>44</sup> As a result, 9to5 had theoretical and tactical origins in the social and political movements of the 1960s. Both Nussbaum and Cassedy, who became friends as college students at the University of Chicago in 1968, came of age during a period of intense activism on behalf of various but related causes. Many collective activities united young progressives including the anti-Vietnam war movement; the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power movements, Cesar Chavez's farm workers' movement, the effort to buttress third-world peoples against despotic regimes, and a burgeoning feminist movement. Those involved in the leftist pursuits of the 1960s shared certain values and ideals such as the importance of free speech and freedom of assembly, a distrust of existing authority figures, a greater appreciation for individual rights, and the creation and maintenance

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<sup>44</sup> Ellen Cassedy, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 6, 2005; Cassedy was involved in consciousness-raising groups, student strikes during college (majoring in women's history) and the Women's Assembly in Boston. As a teenager she helped to raise money for the March on Washington in 1963 and went there with her parents who were ardent civil rights activists. She also went to a march against the Vietnam War by herself at age fifteen. Ellen Bravo, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, September 25, 2006; Bravo organized a conference on domestic violence, was involved in Civil Rights Movement and anti-war movement in graduate school, taught women's studies, and her mother was in a union. Kim Cook, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, May 10, 2005; Cook was active in the women's movement in college and was in consciousness-raising groups, her mother was a union leader, Cook interned with Equal Rights Amendment-National Organization for Women of Illinois, worked for a women's center. Neal Culver, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, May 11, 2005; Culver had done some organizing against the Vietnam War and his family was involved in the labor movement (some relatives in Industrial Workers of the World and some were socialists). Andrea Gundersen, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, September 27, 2006; Gundersen had been active in the women's movement, antiwar movement, environmental movement, movement for reproductive rights, and the McGovern campaign. Also her mother and grandmother were both active in the League of Women Voters. Bonnie Ladin, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, March 9, 2007; Ladin worked for a Campaign for Economic Democracy and her family had been involved in the labor movement. Doreen Levasseur, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, February 23, 2005; Levasseur had participated in the antiwar and women's movements in college and her mother and grandfather were in unions. Judy McCullough, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, November 4, 2005; McCullough had done some Civil Rights and antiwar protesting. Jackie Ruff, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, November 7, 2005; Ruff had been involved in antiwar activities and international rights issues like farmworkers in other countries in college. Debbie Schneider, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, November 3, 2005; Schneider had been an antiwar demonstrator and mother was in a teachers' union. Janet Selcer, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, February 1, 2005; Both of Selcer's parents were union members and she grew up helping to make union posters.

of a pluralistic society.<sup>45</sup> Nussbaum and Cassedy participated in these progressive movements and espoused the principles of equity and fairness that were inherent in them.

Karen Nussbaum, born in 1950, was raised in a Jewish family that encouraged activism on behalf of social justice and a concern about civil rights.<sup>46</sup> She grew up in the affluent, white Highland Park suburb of Chicago, and her parents made sure that she and her two siblings were aware of contemporary problems that were gripping the nation.<sup>47</sup> Myron (Mike) Nussbaum met his wife Annette Brenner at Von Steuben High School in Albany Park, a part of Chicago that attracted a diverse ethnic population including the Brenners and the Nussbaums who were both families of recent Jewish immigrants. After Mr. Nussbaum served in World War II, the two married and had three children. Mrs. Nussbaum chose to work at a time when many of her economically-comfortable contemporaries were staying at home. Often she was the only woman on the commuter train into the city in the morning as she went to work for organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the Environmental Protection Agency.<sup>48</sup>

Annette Nussbaum's political activism served as a model for her daughter. She was a local director of the Eugene McCarty presidential campaign and she recruited speakers to come

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<sup>45</sup> This paper references the left-leaning movements of the 1960s because these were the ones in which Nussbaum and other 9to5 members were engaged. However, recent work challenges the idea that the 1960s was a time of rebellion for the Left only. Beginning in the 1950s, white, middle-class Americans from the Left and the Right began to "romanticize the outsider." Political conservatives and Christian evangelicals, as well as students in the New Left, could claim outsider status to assert new identities and to exist as part of an emerging collective milieu. Grace Hale, *A Nation of Outsiders: How the White Middle Class Fell in Love with Rebellion in Postwar America* (New York: Oxford, 2011). Also on the 1960s, see two collections, Alexander Bloom & Wini Breines, *Takin' It To the Streets: A Sixties Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford, 2002) and David Farber, editor, *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>46</sup> Karen Nussbaum, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 16, 2006.

<sup>47</sup> Karen Nussbaum to Dick Cordtz, June 19, 1981, SEIU District 925 Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Box 4, Folder 7 (accessed June 4, 2010); Virginia Groark, "Annette Nussbaum, 79: Activist, Fun-loving Mom, Grandma," *The Chicago Tribune*, April 7, 2003, Obituary section.

<sup>48</sup> Virginia Groark, "Annette Nussbaum, 79: Activist, Fun-loving Mom, Grandma," *The Chicago Tribune*, April 7, 2003, Obituary section.

to the area for rallies against the Vietnam War.<sup>49</sup> Nussbaum remembers that while her parents supported reform through party politics, they were not involved in workplace reform or union activity, an area that she would explore further in her early twenties.<sup>50</sup> Nussbaum had acquired certain values from her upbringing, particularly from her mother's work. But eventually she would apply them to women's concerns in the workplace, bringing together the ideals of the 1960s movements and the goals of industrial unionism.

As Nussbaum became a young adult she felt strongly that she should act to remedy social problems. She describes herself as "coming of age when the whole world was blowing apart." She believed that "social justice was something that you should fight for."<sup>51</sup> In high school, she started an organization that invited radical speakers to give presentations at the school. She participated in peace demonstrations in the city of Chicago as her brother resisted the draft.<sup>52</sup> Although she lost, Nussbaum ran for class president in high school, largely because "no girl had ever been president" and she "hated the guy who was running."<sup>53</sup> During high school she aspired to become a social worker.<sup>54</sup> When Nussbaum entered the University of Chicago in 1968, she was eager to find new opportunities for activism.<sup>55</sup> She continued her involvement in radical activities, joining the Black Panther Support Committee, a radical sect of the Civil Rights

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<sup>49</sup> Karen Nussbaum, interview by Kathleen Banks Nutter, transcript of video recording, December 18, 2003, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection, 1-4; Virginia Groark, "Annette Nussbaum, 79: Activist, Fun-loving Mom, Grandma," *The Chicago Tribune*, April 7, 2003, Obituary section.

<sup>50</sup> "Karen Nussbaum" in *Talking Leadership*, 137.

<sup>51</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 5-6.

<sup>53</sup> Karen Nussbaum, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 16, 2006.

<sup>54</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 5-7.

<sup>55</sup> "Karen Nussbaum" in *Talking Leadership*, 137.

Movement. She traveled to New Haven to protest the imprisonment of Bobby Seale, who was accused of aiding in the torture and murder of another Black Panther.<sup>56</sup>

While she gained energy from many progressive organizations of the 1960s, Nussbaum found faults with the organizational structure and culture of some of them. While attending the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, she went to a Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) meeting and noticed that the members adhered to traditional gender roles: “boys would argue with boys for hours and [they] were giving incredibly long speeches to each other and girls would stand around in circles and listen to them.” Male control over the organization’s platform was just “what it was like in those days.” The culture of SDS repulsed Nussbaum.<sup>57</sup> Rather than take part in SDS, she devoted time to other organizations that gave her and other women more decision-making power.<sup>58</sup>

In 1970 Nussbaum left the University of Chicago to travel to Cuba along with about 700 other American students. She participated in Venceremos Brigade, an effort to defy the U.S. government’s blockade of Cuba and help revive the sugar cane industry there.<sup>59</sup> Cuban farmers were suffering because of this economic blockade, and these young Americans showed their support of Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution by helping to cut sugarcane. Nussbaum was

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<sup>56</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 10, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 9. Also see footnote 19..

<sup>58</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 14-15. In the body of literature about women in mixed-gender organizations of the New Left and the Civil Rights Movement, scholars and participant-writers have explained that the structure of these organizations often did not foster women’s leadership. These associations often propelled traditional gender roles for men and women. Men led the organizations and created the strategies while they relied on women for day-to-day administrative tasks that kept the groups functioning. Many women became more aware of sex-based oppression through these mixed-gender pursuits of the New Left, leading them to embrace women-only groups for progressive activities and discussion. See for instance, Chapter One of Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 23-50; Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women’s Liberation Movement* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970); Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Random House, 1979). Evans argues that as SNCC and SDS replicated the inequitable gender norms that were found in the broader society, female activists challenged sex-based oppression by creating a women’s liberation movement.

<sup>59</sup> Judy Nicol, “U.S. Student’s Close-Up of Cuba,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 16, 1970, Section D5.

energized by the revolutionary spirit in Cuba and further determined that political and social change was possible.<sup>60</sup> Nussbaum saw herself and the other young adults in Cuba as helping with other people's struggles instead of just studying about them. She was unwilling to be "tolerant of immoral views" by failing to act.<sup>61</sup>

After her trip to Cuba, Nussbaum moved to Boston to pursue her passion: social activism. She felt that "academic advancement was not the most interesting thing happening" in the early 1970s; instead, Nussbaum wanted to be "totally engaged in trying to fix things that need[ed] fixing."<sup>62</sup> And she was willing to reject academia to achieve her goals, leaving a top college where she had been earning As and Bs.<sup>63</sup> She took a job at Harvard University as a clerk-typist to support herself.<sup>64</sup> In addition, Nussbaum was developing her own leadership skills.<sup>65</sup> Working part time for the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice, an anti-war organization, she gained experience giving speeches, running meetings, and raising money. Her main task though was to organize high school students, and after some practice she felt very capable at her job.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, Nussbaum and her three female roommates acted on their own accord too, and advanced the anti-war cause by constructing and handing out leaflets on street corners.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 10, 12-14.

<sup>61</sup> Judy Nicol, "U.S. Student's Close-Up of Cuba," *Los Angeles Times*, August 16, 1970, Section D5.

<sup>62</sup> "Karen Nussbaum" in *Talking Leadership*, 137.

<sup>63</sup> Judy Nicol, "U.S. Student's Close-Up of Cuba," *Los Angeles Times*, August 16, 1970, Section D5.

<sup>64</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 14.

<sup>65</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 14-15. For more on women's liberation emanating from the New Left see Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 23-50. Echols explains that SDS and SNCC were two of the most significant organizations of the New Left and white women gained invaluable organizing experience in them even though women's oppression was not a priority for the organizations. Also see Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970) and see Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Random House, 1979).

<sup>66</sup> Karen Nussbaum, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 16, 2006.

<sup>67</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 14.

In the early 1970s, Nussbaum began to turn her attention specifically to women's issues. But she was not interested in the platform of the National Organization for Women; rather, she was involved in what she referred to as "a more radical movement." For instance, she participated in the occupation of a Harvard-owned building, where a number of Harvard staff women barricaded themselves inside to protest the absence of a women's center and the lack of affordable childcare in Cambridge. After a few weeks, their efforts resulted in the formation of the Cambridge Women's Center in 1972.<sup>68</sup> In addition, Nussbaum and her three roommates initiated and participated in women's-only groups that sought to educate and empower women in their communities. They held courses in their living room on various topics ranging from auto mechanics to political theory to emergency medicine. She says that her group, "Female Revolutionary Education," was not at all extraordinary; such female groups "were happening everywhere and we weren't particularly the biggest or the best or the most interesting thing."<sup>69</sup> In fact, several women's liberation organizations emerged in Boston in the late 1960s: Bread and Roses, an early socialist-feminist group of educated women and female graduate students; Cell 16, which encouraged women abstain from sex and reject feminine style; and the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, which in 1973 published the first commercial book on women's health, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 18; Biographical Entry of Tess Ewing, "Cambridge Women's Heritage Project," Cambridge Women's Commission and Cambridge Historical Commission, accessed October 23, 2010, [http://www.cambridgema.gov/cwhp/bios\\_e.html](http://www.cambridgema.gov/cwhp/bios_e.html).

<sup>69</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 14-15. Nussbaum provided the example of a woman in Boston who had provided karate lessons to help women become physically and emotionally stronger.

<sup>70</sup> Although Bread and Roses was short lived (1969-1971), the organization participated in several activities in Boston including studying women's history, lobbying for a women's center, and advocating for equal pay. It split because some women wanted to prioritize class inequality while others perceived sex as the main source of oppression. See Priscilla Long, "We Called Ourselves Sisters," in Rachel Blau Duplessis and Ann Snitow, editors, *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberation* (New York: Crown Publishing, 1998), 324-337. Cell 16 believed that women should liberate themselves from sex-role stereotyping by not wearing makeup and by not conforming to feminine fashion norms. Women should abstain from sex with men to spend time on pursuits that would promise lasting social and cultural value. For more on the theory and actions of Cell 16 see Echols, *Daring to*

A local strike of waitresses in Cambridge in the early 1970s began to make Nussbaum aware of the connection between women's issues and workers' issues. In 1972 eight waitresses at Cronin's Restaurant went on strike to protest insulting treatment from their employer. The women formed the Harvard Square Organizing Committee. Nussbaum took picket duty on Wednesday nights. While walking she began to realize that the women's movement was changing working-class women's expectations of what was fair policy and practice on the job. She believed that there was great potential in "combining the desire for women to be first class citizens in the workplace . . . with women's rights."<sup>71</sup> Nussbaum wanted to channel the energy and rhetoric of women's rights and labor rights into one movement. She stated in 2003:

The women's movement had as its targets cultural values or public services, or legal rights. But there wasn't really a demand [for women's equality] as workers—there was demand about opportunity for better jobs, but not quite in this way, about how you would use the power of an institution on the job, to demand change for women and in which women could become more powerful.<sup>72</sup>

She believed that "the women's movement was bubbling among working-class women" as seen by the ways they were voicing opposition to their working conditions. Nussbaum perceived the women's movement as engaged in legal and cultural battles that were affecting professional women as they were fighting for access to male-dominated professions.<sup>73</sup> However, she saw a gap in the existing women's movement because working-class women, who often worked in low-paying, female-dominated fields, lacked advocates and networks.<sup>74</sup> Informed by the larger

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*Be Bad*, 139-202. For more on the women's collective that wrote a pamphlet that eventually became *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973) see Kathy Davis, *The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves: How Feminism Travels Across Borders* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), which uses the records of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective from the Schlesinger Library.

<sup>71</sup> Karen Nussbaum, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 16, 2006.

<sup>72</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 20.

<sup>73</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 19.

<sup>74</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 19-20.

women's movement, these women sought better pay and broadened opportunities, whether or not that meant that they wanted men's jobs.

Rather than take a leading role in an existing organization, Nussbaum initiated her own group that could respond to the needs of women, like herself, who were clustered in female-dominated fields.<sup>75</sup> She had spent much of her life leading small gatherings and taking part in large-scale demonstrations. These activities had provided her with the necessary skills to form a flexible organization that would empower its members and adapt to the changing problems they were facing.<sup>76</sup> Similar to the women who broke away from the New Left to begin their own consciousness-raising groups, Nussbaum wanted to construct a grassroots organization that would serve and adapt to the needs of its clerical worker members.<sup>77</sup>

She and her close friend Ellen Cassedy gathered ten like-minded women in 1972 to start the Harvard Office Workers Group. They met weekly at lunch and discussed the disrespect they encountered from students and professors and the financial strain they endured as clerical workers.<sup>78</sup> Cassedy and Nussbaum had become friends when they met at the University of Chicago in the late 1960s. Cassedy grew up in Baltimore and Long Island with parents who were ardent civil rights activists. They encouraged her to raise money for and attend the March on Washington in 1963 when she was only thirteen. Also as a teenager, Cassedy participated in

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<sup>75</sup> Other labor organizations that focused on clerical workers existed at this time including a West Coast organization called Union WAGE. The Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers will be discussed in Chapter Two. Section Three of Chapter One discusses District 65 and the Office and Professional Employees International Union.

<sup>76</sup> Doreen Levasseur, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, February 23, 2005; David S. Broder, *Changing of the Guard: Power and Leadership in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 144-145.

<sup>77</sup> Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970); Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Random House, 1979).

<sup>78</sup> Ellen Cassedy, Karen Nussbaum, Debbie Schneider, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 1, 2005. According to Nussbaum on page one of the transcript, not all of the initial ten women worked at Harvard. One was a secretary in a shoe factory, another in a hospital, a couple in universities, and some in insurance companies.



several demonstrations for causes such as fair housing and the anti-war effort. She left Chicago to finish her undergraduate degree at the University of California, Berkeley, where she participated in the nascent women's studies program, joined consciousness-raising groups, and graduated with a major in women's history. After college she moved to Boston, becoming active in anti-war work and in a multi-issue, single-day conference called the Women's Assembly. For income, she took a job alongside Nussbaum as a clerical worker at Harvard, giving the two good friends common experiences to fuel their activism and mobilize those around them.<sup>79</sup>

According to Nussbaum, the inchoate Harvard Office Workers Group lacked a long-term plan and "didn't really know how to move things ahead."<sup>80</sup> In its first year, the group protested a wage freeze at Harvard that limited pay raises to five percent increases. Despite obtaining 250 signatures on their petition and meeting with the head of personnel, the women were unsuccessful in getting the freeze rescinded. They did, however, sway the university to publish a description of Harvard wage policies in the *Harvard Gazette*, which promoted greater transparency regarding salary structures.<sup>81</sup> But also in the organization's first year, members realized that they were part of something bigger, part of a movement of workers who were resisting unfair office practices that affected women in sex-segregated jobs. Nussbaum remembers that "there were isolated little bubbles of insurgency everywhere," for at Harvard and

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<sup>79</sup> Ellen Cassedy, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 6, 2005. Although they shared similar values about injustice, Nussbaum and Cassedy had vastly different temperaments and personalities. Whereas Nussbaum was a natural leader who was eager to take action, Cassedy describes herself as "developing new muscles and going against the grain of what [she'd] been brought up to do" in her work on behalf of 9to5. As a child, she was afraid to call a theater to inquire about the time of a movie, usually employing the aid of a written script. In college she began to feel more comfortable asserting herself in the Berkeley atmosphere. But still she would have preferred a more traditional arrangement whereby she and the other women would ally with the powerful men there. Eventually though she came to appreciate and value her relationships with other women in consciousness-raising groups. As 9to5 would develop, Cassedy would stay in the background and do work such as speechwriting. Nussbaum was to become the recognizable face of the organization. Ellen Cassedy, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 6, 2005.

<sup>80</sup> Karen Nussbaum, *Talking Leadership*, 138.

<sup>81</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, "High Prices-Low Wages," 9to5 Newsletter for Boston Area Workers, Vol.1, No. 4, Summer 1973, Box 1, folder 20, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

at other office places, women's groups were forming in the 1970s around unfair work conditions.<sup>82</sup>

Women in other office groups also had presented petitions to their bosses and personnel officers, indicating that leading issues of concern included higher pay and greater respect.<sup>83</sup> Another Harvard office workers' group constructed a memo, "Re: Alterations in the Job of Secretary," that requested a range of improvements. Women were interrupted during their lunch hours to make photocopies; they were not considered for promotion to the position of research assistant; and they wanted significant raises of one thousand-dollars (which was about a 20 percent increase). While management granted them a raise, the women still felt defeated. Management refused to negotiate about the other issues regarding career paths and professional respect.<sup>84</sup> Clericals were not viewed as capable of promotion into substantive positions or as deserving uninterrupted time to themselves during the workday.

Perhaps nothing symbolized the problem of respect more than the issue of making and getting coffee. During the first few meetings of the original 1972 Harvard group, Nussbaum noted:

[The women] talked endlessly about the issue of who got the coffee. I know it sounds ridiculous, but women did not want to feel they were office wives. They were real workers with real jobs, and making coffee symbolized the lower-class status of women as workers.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Karen Nussbaum, *Talking Leadership*, 138-139.

<sup>83</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; "Nine to Five Job Survey" returns, 1973-74. 79-M16--81-M121, folder 74. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Nine to Five's comprehensive survey of clerical workers' problems in 1973-74 showed that often workers wanted to be shown greater respect through tangible gains, an issue that will be addressed more in Chapters Two and Three.

<sup>84</sup> Karen Nussbaum, *Talking Leadership*, 139.

<sup>85</sup> Karen Nussbaum, *Talking Leadership*, 138.

Refusing to make coffee was becoming a symbol of resistance for the office workers' movement.<sup>86</sup> Women felt that they deserved treatment as professionals who were contributing to administrative operations. Instead, many bosses treated their assistants as servants who were responsible for unclaimed chores and duties.

Ordering a woman to make coffee relegated her to the position of office wife, which meant that because the secretary was a woman, she should be responsible for unassigned domestic chores around the office. Bosses had long directed their personal secretaries to do chores that wives traditionally would perform at home, such as serving coffee or lunch, hanging up coats, or taking shirts to the dry-cleaners. Yet in the 1960s, some clericals began perceiving these demands as unprofessional and degrading because only women had to do them. Feminists' messages were emphasizing the disadvantages that traditional gender roles were having on women.<sup>87</sup> While women had enjoyed authority over domestic affairs, some secretaries were challenging assumptions that assigned domestic-type chores to them. Office workers began to name the problem and demand a solution.

To institute change, Nussbaum took a leadership role, using her organizing skills to help construct a grassroots movement.<sup>88</sup> Recalls Nussbaum, "There was no organizational form for working women to express themselves in the women's movement but the ideas of women's equality [were] everywhere."<sup>89</sup> Nussbaum, Cassidy, and other clerical friends including Marilyn Albert who worked at a hospital and Penny Kurland who worked in an insurance company began

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<sup>86</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Draft of speech for national convention, 1978. 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 2, folder 65. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>87</sup> See, for instance, Pat Mainardi, "The Politics of Housework," in Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 447-454.

<sup>88</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 17. Nussbaum says that when she went to Boston she was not involved in more mainstream organizations like the National Organization for Women (NOW). She recalls that she and her friends were "much more part of a more radical movement."

<sup>89</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 19.

to vocalize their workplace grievances. Nussbaum says that over the course of a year “we told each other our stories about how we got to be where we were . . . and then we talked about what kind of an organization we wanted to create. And out of that, we built 9to5.”<sup>90</sup>

She did not join a second-wave group or a labor union, believing that at this moment neither would serve the purpose of women office workers.<sup>91</sup> Like the initial radical feminists who split from the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left, Nussbaum also pursued her own agenda through grassroots organizing, utilizing strategies and values from previous movements. Since no other social movement seemed receptive to women’s complaints, Nussbaum created a framework that would respond to their needs. Nussbaum recalled that, in the early days of 9to5, the approach was “a practical organizing that met people where they were with the kinds of issues that they had.”<sup>92</sup> The immediate needs of office workers would dictate the form and function of the organization.

Although Nussbaum was lobbying on behalf of equitable treatment for women workers and creating an association to advance women in sex-segregated jobs, she did not identify herself with the mainstream feminist movement during her early years in Boston.<sup>93</sup> Still, the onset of the second-wave feminist movement was essential to the work Nussbaum would accomplish. Not only was it changing baseline attitudes about gender norms, but also it was affecting the attitudes of clericals. For instance, before she started 9to5, Nussbaum noticed that another woman in her office was reading Robin Morgan’s *Sisterhood is Powerful*, an anthology of historic and revolutionary feminist essays published in 1970.<sup>94</sup> Nussbaum claims that she had never read the

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<sup>90</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 20.

<sup>91</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 20.

<sup>92</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, 22.

<sup>93</sup> “Karen Nussbaum” in *Talking Leadership*, 136-137.

<sup>94</sup> Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women’s Liberation Movement* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970).

book herself, but she was struck by the fact that this colleague, a woman who did not identify as an activist, was reading this feminist manifesto:

I began to realize that the ideas of women's liberation had seeped down almost everywhere, and though the women in the office would have rejected being part of a women's organization, or identifying with the media's image of women's liberation, they were questioning what was happening to them.<sup>95</sup>

Nussbaum perceived second-wave feminism as affecting all women, whether or not they were taking part in formal organizations or identifying themselves with the movement. She believed that the ideas of the feminist movement were shifting women's expectations of what they deserved at work.

#### The Tactics of 9to5 and the Model of the Midwest Academy

The ten women who started 9to5 spent their first year talking about their problems as office workers and planning the future strategy and structure of their organization.<sup>96</sup> In addition during this first year, they reached out to fellow office workers by publishing a newsletter for and about office workers in the Boston area. At first the organizers used their connections in left-wing organizations to disseminate the newsletters to colleagues in the anti-war movement and women's groups. They also handed out leaflets at the Women's Assembly in Boston, which was a multi-issue women's conference that Ellen Cassedy led and organized.<sup>97</sup> But enlightening other activists was not their goal. What they wanted was to get the newsletter directly into the hands of more office workers. The group decided to split up and distribute these leaflets at

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<sup>95</sup> "Karen Nussbaum" in *Talking Leadership*, 138.

<sup>96</sup> Karen Nussbaum, Ellen Cassedy, Marilyn Albert and Penny Kurland were four of the ten, but I have not found the other names in the archives or oral histories.

<sup>97</sup> Ellen Cassedy, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 6, 2005; 9to5 Records, Brochure for Women's Assembly on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 79-M16—81-M121, Carton 1, folder 3, Schlesinger Library; Issues at the conference included winning girls at a local high school the right to wear slacks, supporting a local strike of waitresses at Cronin's Restaurant, and trying to get women's history courses and a women's center at a local college.

different subway stations and outside of the biggest insurance companies in Boston.<sup>98</sup> Within several months, they had distributed 5,000 copies, which prompted readers to call 9to5 and request subscriptions to the newsletter.<sup>99</sup>

To gain publicity, the 9to5 founders made a conscious effort to identify and understand fellow office workers in several ways. When handing out newsletters, they dressed in office attire instead of wearing jeans.<sup>100</sup> Cassedy remembers, “we were very very careful to make sure that whoever spoke for the organization . . . had to look representative of our base.”<sup>101</sup> The 9to5 women were cognizant of their vocabulary as well, avoiding theoretical or polarizing language. Instead, they wanted to talk to the workers about real problems that were happening in their offices.<sup>102</sup> Workers provided feedback that helped to shape the content of future issues. They encouraged more articles about topics such as ridiculous errands that bosses demanded of them and workers’ attempts to petition management for pay increases. Reader response letters quickly showed their distaste for articles advocating other causes like the anti-war movement or the lettuce boycott initiated by the United Farm Workers.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ellen Cassedy, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 6, 2005.

<sup>99</sup> 9to5 Records, Speech of Karen Nussbaum, 1973, 88-M9—89-M104, Carton 2, folder 47, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>100</sup> Ellen Cassedy, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 6, 2005.

<sup>101</sup> Ellen Cassedy, Karen Nussbaum, Debbie Schneider, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 1, 2005.

<sup>102</sup> Ellen Cassedy, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 6, 2005; Karen Nussbaum, *Voices of Feminism Oral History Project*, 23.

<sup>103</sup> SEIU, District 925 Records, Box 1, Folder 20, Reuther Library. The early issues of their newsletter did not always hide their allegiances to other social movements. The first newsletter, December 1972/January 1973, had an article, “Some Costs to the War,” which criticized the Nixon’s Administration’s fiscal policies. The second newsletter ran pieces about a ceasefire agreement in Vietnam and an advocacy organization called the Indochina Peace Campaign. By the third issue, 9to5 was encouraging readers to boycott lettuce on behalf of the United Farm Workers and reporting on the conditions of the jails for prisoners of war in Saigon. Nine to Five soon narrowed their focus, however, as seen by their willingness to print a reader response letter in the fifth issue. This clerical enjoyed the newsletter but demanded an end to certain features: “stop writing about Vietnam and lettuce,” she admonished them.

Staying focused on the common problems of clericals, and not on other progressive causes, would ensure that the organization would appeal to as many office workers as possible. Women from a wide variety of class and educational backgrounds composed the clerical workforce of the 1960s and 70s. Because of the limited opportunities for women in male-dominated professions, clericals with some high school education could be working beside clericals with a four-year undergraduate degree. Cassedy remembers that when 9to5 was gaining momentum, the leaders strove “to make sure that our public face was inviting to the whole range, from those people who were there to express themselves [to] those people who were just getting by, and so on.”<sup>104</sup> Because clericals made wages that were hovering around the poverty line, many relied on their next paychecks for food and rent.<sup>105</sup> These women did not have much leisure time for activism, and—unlike the founder of 9to5—they were not as engaged in the political and social causes of the New Left. While clericals shared certain economic realities regardless of their class or educational backgrounds, low wages harmed some workers more than others.

Despite the meager pay that clericals received, the newsletter, with its tendency towards the anecdotal and editorial, tended to emphasize disrespect as one of the worst, if not the worst, workplace concern. Articles, which were written by the founders of 9to5, conveyed a variety of frustrations: boredom at work, lack of control over job duties, and exclusion from decision-making at the office. Yet, disrespect was essential to most of the complaints. Wrote a Boston woman, “it’s not so much the work you do (though there are some jobs that are just plain

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<sup>104</sup> Ellen Cassedy, Karen Nussbaum, Debbie Schneider, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 1, 2005.

<sup>105</sup> Nine to Five issued many reports on wages and the cost of living to show that Boston clerical workers made substandard wages relative to clericals in other major U.S. cities. For instance, in 1977, using a poverty line of \$6200, over fifty percent of file clerks in the Boston insurance industry made less than poverty-level wages. 9to5 Records, “Office Work in Boston: A Statistical Study,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 79-M16-81-M121, Box 5, folders 127, Schlesinger Library.

deadly), but how you're treated that determines how you feel about your job.”<sup>106</sup> Other articles spoke about not feeling human at work. Sometimes clericals felt as if they were machines: “I am not a person, but a machine, much like the ones in my office, who gets the routine work done for them so they can run around making important decisions.”<sup>107</sup> Other times they felt dehumanized by bosses who called them anything but their names. One woman wrote into the newsletter saying:

I am not a “puss,” or a “chick,” a “broad,” or a “dear”: I am a WOMAN and I have a name, a full name of my own. I can easily remember the names of all twelve men I work with, and they can remember each others' names—why can they not remember mine?<sup>108</sup>

Many women identified with feeling less than human as clericals and felt frustrated by the way their bosses and management treated them.

The creators of the newsletter wanted women to realize that they were not alone in feeling angry or frustrated about their workplace problems. The first issue in the winter 1972-73 declared that although clerical workers in offices big and small might gripe to one another within their buildings, “most of us are unaware of the forceful current of shared feelings about our work, our status, and our lives.”<sup>109</sup> A two-page spread in the fourth issue displayed a map of the United States to show readers the pockets of resistance that existed nationwide. For instance, in San Francisco, workers at Equitable Insurance Company were unionizing, and in cities like

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<sup>106</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Working Downtown,” 9to5 Newsletter for Boston Area Office Workers, Vol. 1, no. 1 December 72/January 73, Box 1, Folder 20, Reuther Library.

<sup>107</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Hospitality,” 9to5 Newsletter for Boston Area Office Workers, Vol. 1 no. 2 Feb/March 1973, Box 1, Folder 20, Reuther Library.

<sup>108</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Joyce C. Weston, “girls till we retire,” 9to5 Newsletter for Boston Area Office Workers, Vol. 1 no. 4 Summer 1973, Box 1, Folder 20, Reuther Library.

<sup>109</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Every Morning...,” 9to5 Newsletter for Boston Area Office Workers, Vol. 1, no. 1 Dec 72/Jan 73, Box 1, Folder 20, Reuther Library.



Chicago, New York, Detroit, and Hartford, working women were producing their own newsletters to speak out about issues that were important to them.<sup>110</sup>

Yet distributing a newsletter had limitations because, according to the 9to5 leaders, “it could only raise issues.” Newsletters increased awareness regarding clericals’ workplace problems but did not solve them. Nine to Five decided to develop its organization further in late 1973, establishing a more formal network that could take action against specific employers.<sup>111</sup> The first official meeting, attended by about 50 women, took place in November of 1973. General meetings followed on every other Monday.<sup>112</sup>

Nine to Five leaders learned how to move beyond discussion and towards direct action from the strategies of leading community organizers. In 1973, Cassedy, on behalf of the fledgling 9to5 organization, attended the recently-founded Midwest Academy. Activists from the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-war movement started this school in 1973 for those interested in remedying social injustice. They had lessons to share from their experiences on the ground, having learned how to increase public awareness for their cause, how to move towards direct action, and how to foster relationships with potential allies.<sup>113</sup> The co-founder of this school, Heather Booth, had participated in the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), a training program started by Saul Alinsky—one of the leading community-organizing strategists in the United States. Booth was the only woman at the IAF, and, as a feminist in the program, she realized that this seemingly progressive association fostered the belief that women could not be

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<sup>110</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “what’s happening...” 9to5 Newsletter for Boston Area Office Workers, Vol. 1, no 4 Summer 73, Box 1, folder 20, Reuther Library.

<sup>111</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, 9to5 Newsletter for Boston Area Office Workers, Vol. 2, no. 1, Dec. 73/ Jan 74, Box 1, Folder 20, Reuther Library.

<sup>112</sup> 9to5 Records, Speech by Karen Nussbaum, 1974, 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 2, folder 47, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>113</sup> 9to5 Records, Speech by Joan Quinlon, 9to5 Leader, 88-M96—89-M104, Carton 2, Folder 47, Schlesinger Library.

trained to be organizers.<sup>114</sup> She became active with a group that was trying to combine the goals of the labor and women's movements, countering the traditional wisdom of schools like the IAF. Like Nussbaum and Cassedy, this group of mostly women wanted to empower other women to lead their own movements for workplace change.<sup>115</sup> Booth eventually cofounded the Midwest Academy, which had three guiding principles: to organize to win concrete improvements; to encourage people to lead and empower themselves; and to hold those in power more accountable for the subjugation of others.<sup>116</sup>

Cassedy's experience with Booth and the Academy gave practical direction to the 9to5 organization and helped it become more visible. Booth praised Cassedy for the 9to5 newspapers, but then she quickly asked, "what are your activities?"<sup>117</sup> At that point 9to5 did not have any activities other than meeting to discuss workplace problems and publishing the newsletter. In addition to Monday meetings, the young organization began to offer courses on certain Wednesdays to educate office workers about labor organizing and leadership skills. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9to5 facilitated a workshop at the Boston YWCA, offering free legal advice and counseling to women for their workplace problems. Furthermore, 9to5 disseminated a survey to clericals in early 1974 to gauge the status of office workers and to determine their most pressing problems.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> According to the *Jewish Women's Archive*, Heather Booth founded movements for women's rights on college campuses and began JANE, an early organization for abortion counseling. "Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution," <http://jwa.org/feminism/html/JWA004.htm>, accessed April 2, 2013.

<sup>115</sup> Heather Booth, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, June 2, 2010.

<sup>116</sup> Heather Booth, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, June 2, 2010.

<sup>117</sup> Ellen Cassedy, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 6, 2005.

<sup>118</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, 9to5 Newsletter for Boston Area Office Workers, Vol. 2, no. 1, Dec. 73/ Jan 74, Box 1, Folder 20, Reuther Library.

Cassedy described her attendance in this program as “the big turning point for us . . . a real eye-opener for all of us, because we had trouble seeing beyond telling our stories to each other, and getting people to come and all gather in the same room.”<sup>119</sup> A couple of lessons from the Academy proved especially helpful for 9to5. They learned that they needed to have targets or enemies, and for 9to5 those usually were the bosses or supervisors in their companies. At times the targets could be the federal or state government. Also, women who composed the ranks of office workers were a diverse lot in terms of age, race, class, and education level. Cassedy realized that 9to5 would have to try to appeal to as many types of different office workers as possible. This task would not be easy, but by having leaders who tried to address issues that affected all workers, 9to5 could attempt to form a large coalition across demographic variances.<sup>120</sup> These women knew that they were experiencing unfair treatment, but until now the solutions to these problems had been “‘murky at best,’” according to an early 9to5 leader. Nine to Five would help to empower workers, who had probably not been politically active before, to address their workplace problems.<sup>121</sup>

The organizing strategies that became integral to the 9to5 platform separated this advocacy group from traditional industrial unions. Unions counted on a majority vote to attain representation from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB); as a result, industrial labor leaders cared largely about membership.<sup>122</sup> Although 9to5 leaders also cared about gaining

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<sup>119</sup> Ellen Cassedy, Karen Nussbaum, Debbie Schneider, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 1, 2005.

<sup>120</sup> Ellen Cassedy, Karen Nussbaum, Debbie Schneider, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 1, 2005.

<sup>121</sup> Massachusetts History Workshop Records, Ann Elizabeth Donner, “The Future of Women Office Workers in Trade Unions,” p.47, 1981, MC365, Folder 9, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>122</sup> Although the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) was founded (in 1974) at almost the same time as 9to5, Nussbaum and Cassedy remember that they were trying to create something different from CLUW, which they perceived as trapped within the male-dominated union movement. In their oral history, Nussbaum and Cassedy claim that various factors made their strategies and goals different. CLUW was run by women a generation older than them and 9to5 sought to have its own base from which women could rise to top leadership positions.

members, they wanted industrious, committed members. They perceived organizing as a relationship-building process, viewing 9to5 as a conduit to teach women leadership skills and to foster networks of like-minded women.

From the Midwest Academy, 9to5 learned the strategy of the recruitment lunch, which was a one-on-one lunch meeting of a 9to5 member and a prospective member. Publishing worker and future 9to5 leader Debbie Schneider wanted to join but when she called the organization she was told, “you can’t just join, you have to have a recruitment lunch.”<sup>123</sup> Nine to Five sought to identify “people who did things . . . leaders and activists.” Nussbaum described this strategy as fostering “personal engagement” among organized workers. A 9to5 member might meet with a worker several times before that worker would sign on to do anything with the organization. To encourage women to join, 9to5 might give them organizational responsibility or tasks in their workplace.<sup>124</sup> It wanted workers to feel integral to the group’s success. Nine to Five saw itself as instilling leadership skills in working women. The lunch strategy sought to increase women’s consciousness of the injustices in their workplaces, motivating them to act to change the situation.

As 9to5 leaders fostered awareness, membership, and action through lunches with clericals, they also developed their organization by gathering data and issuing reports on office work in the Boston area. The first 9to5 report, the “Statistical Study of Boston Area Employment,” detailed pay inequity and sex-segregated employment practices in offices around

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Nussbaum and Cassidy set out to “transform the labor movement” while they perceived CLUW as quickly becoming “a bureaucratic labor organization that was captured by the AFL-CIO as opposed to changing, transforming the AFL-CIO.” Ellen Cassidy, Karen Nussbaum, and Debbie Schneider, interviewed by Ann Froines, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 1, 2005.

<sup>123</sup> Ellen Cassidy, Karen Nussbaum, Debbie Schneider, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 1, 2005.

<sup>124</sup> Karen Nussbaum, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 16, 2006.

the city.<sup>125</sup> The report, released in November 1973 at a public meeting with the Boston Chamber of Commerce, used government data to bolster 9to5's complaints about pay and promotions. Boston men were receiving more than two times the annual median wage received by Boston's working women: \$8,290 versus \$4,031.<sup>126</sup> Although men and women on average had 12.3 years of education, Boston's women were clustered in the lowest-paid clerical occupations. Nine to Five leaders perceived the needs of the city's clerical work force, 74 percent of whom were women, to be exceptionally acute because of the cost of living in Boston. Of the fifteen largest cities in the United States, Boston ranked highest in standard of living while it ranked thirteenth in salaries paid to office workers. Additionally, 9to5 claimed that various Boston area employers were violating federal and state equal employment laws. In fact, according to the study, 618 employees in the past seventeen months had been underpaid by \$466,500 as determined by the Equal Pay Act of 1963.<sup>127</sup> This report used government data to confirm that 9to5's claims—that female office workers suffered from low pay because of sex discrimination—rested on legitimate ground.

In 1973 and 1974 the organization collected its own quantitative and qualitative data, distributing the "9to5 Job Survey" to clericals throughout Boston. This anonymous survey gathered key information about income, benefits (health insurance, pensions, sick leave), and overtime pay. The survey also asked women if they worked within their job descriptions, if they were offered job training, and if unions had organized their workplaces. On the back of the survey, the respondent had an opportunity to select one more "key issues or problem areas": salaries, promotions, job training, health benefits, sex discrimination, pension, overtime, sick

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<sup>125</sup> 9to5 Records, Speech by Karen Nussbaum, 1974, 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 2, folder 47, Schlesinger Library. About 120 women attended this public forum.

<sup>126</sup> Forty-one percent of Boston's women worked for wages, according to 9to5's report.

<sup>127</sup> 9to5 Records, "Statistical Study of Boston Area Employment," by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, November 1973, 79-M16-81-M121, Box 5, folders 127, Schlesinger Library.

leave, union, vacation, racial discrimination, coffee breaks, maternity leave, day care, job description, and other. Then there was a “Comments” space for qualitative feedback. Employees could provide their addresses if they wanted to request more information about the organization.<sup>128</sup>

Although most of the respondents reported similar earnings of between \$5,000 and \$8,000 dollars per year, the extent to which they criticized their jobs and the way in which they expressed their remarks varied widely from employee to employee.<sup>129</sup> Some women, but not many, declared that sex discrimination, meaning the subordination of female employees relative to male employees, caused their problems at work. For instance, one temporary agency worker wrote, “Sex discrimination goes hand in hand with secretarial work.” Another secretary recognized sex-segregated work patterns at her company: “No women in higher levels, yet we represent approx. 80% of workers at home office which is where I’m employed.” A clerical worker at Gillette reported similar problems in her office. “Most executives are men. I only know of two women supervisors in this whole division. . . . Once a secretary at Gillette, always a secretary!”<sup>130</sup> These women linked their offices’ organizational structures with traditional gender norms that relegated women to certain lower-status positions in the paid labor force.

Not all clericals perceived their workplace problems as rooted in sex discrimination.<sup>131</sup> For instance, a secretary at Boston College wrote that “a lot of talent gets bypassed” although she did not mark “sex discrimination” as a key problem at her office. In another example, a service

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<sup>128</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>129</sup> Only one respondent reported no complaints with her job at Gillette. Many respondents did not write in comments but they did check certain issues as being workplace problems. A few said that they liked their current positions better than past positions but that they still had many issues with the operations in their workplaces.

<sup>130</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>131</sup> Although many completed surveys are included in the 9to5 papers at the Schlesinger Library, no tally sheet existed, compelling me to make my own conclusions from my observations. Folder 74 contained at least 25 completed surveys.

representative at New England Telephone stated that she was “treated like a child” even though she did not mark sex discrimination as a key problem.<sup>132</sup> Failing to mark sex discrimination for problems concerning promotions and respect suggests that these two women did not connect their particular job concerns to institutionalized bias against female employees. Their use of gender-neutral language also suggests that they were detaching their own gender identities from their job problems as clerical workers. The family-wage ideal held that a woman should depend on a male breadwinner for sustenance, which allowed employers to maintain low pay scales for and to curtail the mobility of clerical workers.<sup>133</sup> Women, particularly married women, could work as clericals without upsetting traditional notions of domesticity and femininity. Thus, some women did not recognize or acknowledge that gender norms were disadvantaging them. They saw their situations as unfair but not as unfair because they were women.

Yet what exactly would they have considered to be sex discrimination? In the 1960s and 1970s, the social and legal definitions of sex discrimination were evolving and no consensus existed about what comprised sex-based bias. Some workers described what was becoming recognized as sex discrimination but they were reluctant to apply the label to their own situations. A woman identifying herself as a clerk at Boston University stated, “[there] is no outward sex discrimination [in the office], however women are treated like idiots.” She continued to explain that women in her office “are given low wages and no respect . . . and need a union desperately. Please help.”<sup>134</sup> Apparently, if administrators did not directly state that they were disadvantaging an employee because she was a woman, then she did not consider

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<sup>132</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>133</sup> Alice Kessler-Harris, “Introduction,” *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3-18.

<sup>134</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library.

workplace problems to be sex discrimination. At a large engineering firm in Cambridge, Massachusetts, an accounts clerk wrote that sex discrimination “could be” a problem because almost all of the firm’s five-hundred female employees were secretaries or clericals. She continued, however, that the absence of women in engineering, drafting or computer services sections “may be a function of low numbers of women engineers or draftsmen that feel like working for the Bridge Co. rather than active sex discrimination.” This employee also realized that the treatment of women in her office was suspect, but she was not sure if sex segregation counted as sex discrimination. These two accounts exemplify a transitional moment: new ideas, which suggested that women should not be granted privileges or denied opportunities because of their sex, were influencing the way that individual women, even those not associated with the feminist movement, saw workplace attitudes and norms. Whereas many clerical workers had perceived their employment problems as inequitable before the 1960s, the feminist insistence that sex was not destiny prompted many working women to wonder if gender accounted for their unfair treatment in the office.<sup>135</sup> Definitions of job fairness were shifting because of changing attitudes about appropriate roles for women.

However, some clericals still perceived policies that reinforced gender differences as distinct from not just sex discrimination but also from their economic problems. Most all respondents checked salary as a key issue of concern regardless of whether or not they marked

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<sup>135</sup> For literature on the changing attitudes of women and about women, see work by Dorothy Sue Cobble, Sara Evans, Ruth Rosen, Annelise Orleck, Serena Mayeri, and Kathleen Barry. Their work provides a variety of perspectives about the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s, demonstrating that both those organized into markedly feminist associations as well as those advocating for their own rights apart from the mainstream movement contributed to increased progress and opportunities for women. Furthermore, when publically defining “sex discrimination,” the federal government could not always settle on boundaries of legal and illegal. It did not fully enforce Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed private employment discrimination based on sex, race, and religion, among other characteristics. By the early 1970s, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which was established by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to interpret and enforce Title VII, was burdened with several problems preventing efficient operation including a backlog of cases and an inability to enforce its decisions. See Alfred W. Blumrosen, “Labor Arbitration, EEOC Conciliation, and Discrimination in Employment,” *The Arbitration Journal* 24, no. 1 (1969), 88-105.



sex discrimination on the survey.<sup>136</sup> For instance, when marking her primary job problems, a clerk for the Ritz Carlton Hotel Corporation chose raises and promotions but did not select sex discrimination. This clerk made only 120 dollars per week and did not receive cost-of-living raises. She would have been at risk of falling below the poverty line if she lost her job or if she became ill, explaining why raises and promotions mattered to her. In addition, however, she noted that a certain sex-specific regulation concerned her even though she did not check “sex discrimination” on the survey. Her only written comments were “a woman cannot wear pants,” showing that this Ritz Carlton policy disturbed her, and she wanted to record it as a workplace problem.<sup>137</sup> But was the company’s dress code an example of sex discrimination? Perhaps she viewed the regulation as an inconvenient part of her job although she did not classify different treatment of male and female employees to be sex discrimination. Thus, two conclusions can be drawn from her survey answers. First, rules that enforced traditional gender norms about masculinity and femininity were not necessarily considered to be discriminatory even if they were seen by some as undesirable. Second, she probably did not perceive her low wages to be related to the sex-specific corporate dress policy. Economic issues were separate from gender-based concerns.

For another secretary, a sex-specific company dress code was an economic burden, not just an annoyance. This legal secretary described a job offer she turned down: “At New England Deaconess Hospital they wanted me to work 8:30 – 5:00 (1/2 hr lunch) and dress ‘like a lady’ for \$130 per week.”<sup>138</sup> She resented not just the low pay but also the expectation that part of her job duty would be to fulfill a required dress code that would subtract further from her paycheck.

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<sup>136</sup> In fact, salary was probably the most common problem that the workers noted.

<sup>137</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>138</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library.

While the Ritz Carlton employee above disliked the fact that the no-pants rule applied only to women, the legal secretary seemed more bothered that an employer would impose a uniform without paying for it. She may or may not have resented that the dress code enforced femininity upon female workers, but she definitely resented the fact that it reduced her financial freedom.

For some women, the connection between gender norms and economic opportunities was clear. They perceived the behaviors and attitudes about women workers as directly limiting their raises and benefits, which determined monthly food and rent money. A receptionist at Boston University (BU) noted that most women university workers were clericals, not necessarily by choice, and that they did not earn sufficient salaries. She declared that secretaries suffered from “separate and unequal provisions” at BU since so many of them were relegated to clerical work while male staff had more opportunities.<sup>139</sup> Another secretary who worked for the Boston Red Sox Association wrote that her raises were “infrequent and not in line with cost of living increases.” Even though her office employed no female professionals, she understood that “the nature of the industry makes it discriminatory towards females. Its [sic] a male-oriented field and . . . the industry’s biggest followers are male and therefore most activities are geared to the male.”<sup>140</sup> This secretary recognized that her sex was limiting her occupational choices, restricting her to a job where she struggled to make ends meet.

Other women who had more comfortable economic situations and higher levels of education emphasized their desires to receive promotions. These working women felt overqualified for their jobs. They noticed that men had begun their careers much higher on the ladder. As these women were seeking promotions, they perceived sex discrimination as

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<sup>139</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>140</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library.

preventing them from getting to the same positions that male workers were attaining. A woman who worked at MIT Press saw her problems as both economic (she wanted a higher salary) and as rooted in sex bias. She wrote, “My main gripe is that inspite [sic] of my experience and college training in editorial work, I have to start at the bottom. I’m fighting but it’s pretty hopeless.” Because she cared about her title as well as her pay, she was angered that she had to start—and stay—in a clerical position while men with the same or lesser qualifications began their careers at higher levels. Another woman who was an associate editor at Houghton Mifflin wrote about her inability to attain a promotion as she watched men ascend. She claimed that sex discrimination was “very obvious” because when she would ask for a promotion, since she was already “doing the work of that category, the male response [was], ‘Oh, you have to stay at the stage you’re in now for at least two years. That’s the usual time.’”<sup>141</sup> She cared about the promotion and her job title in large part because she was not receiving the commensurate salary for the job she was performing.

For women clerical workers, not all promotions came with a raise. Numerous women reported that a promotion meant more responsibility without more pay. Managers rewarded workers for their competence by giving them tasks outside of their job descriptions. A secretary for residential housing at Hampshire College received a nominal promotion, meaning she was given more responsibilities without receiving greater compensation. At an industrial accident office for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, a senior stenographer described the same problem: “When you are known to be a capable employee, extra responsibilities are put on you. Although this makes my job more meaningful, the pay does not compensate for the additional

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<sup>141</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library.

pressure.”<sup>142</sup> A faculty secretary at Harvard Business School wrote a similar comment on her survey. She explained, “if you are capable, you are handed more responsibilities which you do because it makes your job more meaningful. Your superior assumes additional assignments knowing that you can handle the added workload—[I would] like to be paid for this.”<sup>143</sup>

In other cases, women who were working outside of their job description were seeking more respect from their employers. A supervising clerical at the Massachusetts Teachers Association felt “a general lack of respect for myself and the women who work with me . . . and our services are taken for granted.” Although the women had successfully lobbied for a company policy that prohibited employers from asking clericals to fetch lunch or coffee, “they still ask us to do so.” Another secretary at the New England River Basin Commission said that the job in which she had been working for six months, was not at all that had been described to her. It was “boring, tedious . . . and could be performed by 8<sup>th</sup> grade grad and not by woman with Masters degree.”<sup>144</sup> Both of these women sought acknowledgement of their professional skills in workplaces, where accurate job descriptions carried little weight. Their comments demonstrate why many clericals wanted to secure their duties in writing. Other clericals felt trapped by the imprecise language—particularly the “miscellaneous” clause—that employers often included in job descriptions. A clerk in a hospital lab said that she hated “having to do [the] personal work of employer.” She went on to describe her frustration:

“What bothers me most about secretaries and clerical workers, is that they cannot say ‘No, I won’t do that, [it’s] not part of my job.’ The employee is at the whim of the

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<sup>142</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>143</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>144</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library. Citation covers both quotations from different women on separate surveys.

employer, and because of this, she can be fired for just such a refusal, and has no recourse under the law. Beware of the ‘miscellaneous’ clause in the job description.”<sup>145</sup>

This clerk felt powerless over her daily duties, cornered by a vague job description and by the possibility that she could be dismissed for asserting herself. This miscellaneous clause appeared in other clerical workers’ job descriptions as well. A clerk in the registrar’s office at Boston University reported that her description had “a catch-all phrase: and other assigned tasks.” A secretary at Turner Fisheries used the same language: “my job description is a catch-all.”<sup>146</sup> Employers used these phrases to allow them to demand any task from their office wives while remaining within the limits of corporate policies.

Still other woman did not have any job descriptions. At a securities regulation firm, the secretaries were “unclassified in job descriptions.” Such terminology meant that secretaries had no clear way to advance. Instead of perceiving them as skilled at a variety of tasks that were asked of them, the firms’ managers saw secretaries as not competent at anything in particular. A secretary at the Associated Foundation in Boston reported that “[there] are no job descriptions.” She was responsible for a variety of duties in this four-person office, and she gained no clear benefits from working in a small office instead of a large corporation. For instance, her employers gave her two weeks of vacation instead of four because she was classified as “non-professional.” She felt that her bosses had little respect for her, believing that “my time is more valuable than yours so you should place phone calls, arrange appointments, make coffee, etc.” Another small-office secretary for a non-profit law firm wrote that she “[had] no real job description . . . [just] a shitload of work—about 10 lawyers I have to work with.” Yet she was

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<sup>145</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>146</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library.

not leaving anytime soon. “This job is a jewel compared to others I interviewed for. . . . At Blue Cross & Blue Shield—on the application they asked me when I had my last period!”<sup>147</sup>

Nine to Five leaders had three motives when conducting their surveys: first, to learn more about office workers’ concerns; second, to increase workers’ self-awareness by having them think and write about their job problems; third, to start to form a base of support by spreading the 9to5 name and providing workers with their contact information.<sup>148</sup> Nine to Five used the survey material to inform their own public platform so that workers would identify with the activities and goals of the organization. From workers’ responses, 9to5 shaped an Office Workers’ Bill of Rights to help summarize and standardize clerical workers’ frustrations and provide written justification for action.<sup>149</sup> Not only did surveying help them assess a variety of office workers’ needs and attitudes, but also it forced clericals to reexamine the specific policies at their own workplaces. One 9to5 member said she joined the organization because 9to5 came into her workplace, Travellers Insurance, and distributed newsletters and surveys.<sup>150</sup> This woman claimed that the surveys were influencing the views of those around her at work. In her unit she noticed that on days when 9to5 came to Travellers to conduct surveys, women were more aware of the negative aspects of their jobs. Furthermore, workers were more likely to challenge their supervisors.<sup>151</sup> A woman who organized fellow workers at Macmillan Publishing articulated the

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<sup>147</sup> 9to5 Records, “9to5 Job Survey,” by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>148</sup> Massachusetts History Workshop Records, Ann Elizabeth Donner, “The Future of Women Office Workers in Trade Unions,” p.43, 1981, MC365, Folder 9, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>149</sup> Janet Selcer, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, February 1, 2005.

<sup>150</sup> Not many other workers in her company had interest in joining because they cared mainly about pay and did not think that membership would facilitate a higher paycheck. Also, they believed their supervisors would create a more hostile work atmosphere for them if they were active in it.

<sup>151</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with Travellers Insurance employee, #17, 1974-1975, MC366, Box 1, folder 4, Schlesinger Library.

importance of surveys for increasing worker awareness: “a lot of people feel like they don’t have any real clear-cut complaints until they start putting things down on paper.”<sup>152</sup>

As 9to5 began to institute its strategies of direct action campaigns and on-the-job organizing, it moved into new territory, leaving behind its beginnings as a lunchtime discussion group.<sup>153</sup> It offered clerical workers both an organizing agenda and a fluid structure, both of which the workers themselves could help to shape. Nine to Five was becoming a forum for increasing the awareness of unfair working conditions; at the same time it was developing concrete plans and goals to provide remedies.<sup>154</sup> Whereas established labor and feminist organizations had preexisting structures and programs, 9to5 was a new model that the clerical workers were building themselves. Founding member and leader Janet Selcer recalled: “we were making it all up. We were really making it up. It is one of my fondest memories.”

### Creating a National Secretaries’ Union

Because traditional labor histories have focused on the activities of blue-collar, male, industrial workers, white-collar worker organizing has been understudied. However, since the clerical workforce feminized in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, white-collar women began collectively resisting unfair working conditions, forming bookkeepers, stenographers, and accountants unions.<sup>155</sup> The American Federation of Labor (AFL) issued charters to some of these locals in

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<sup>152</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with Macmillan employee, #24, 1974-1975, MC366, Box 1, folder 6, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>153</sup> Strategies of 9to5 have been compared and contrasted to the Women’s Trade Union League of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century because both sought to improve working conditions through organizing working women and bringing greater public awareness to their problems. Massachusetts History Workshop Records, Ann Elizabeth Donner, “The Future of Women Office Workers in Trade Unions,” p.48, 1981, MC365, Folder 9, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>154</sup> Massachusetts History Workshop Records, Ann Elizabeth Donner, “The Future of Women Office Workers in Trade Unions,” pp.43, 187-190, 1981, MC365, Folder 9, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>155</sup> Sharon Hartman Strom also describes some of the organizing activities of male clerical workers at the turn of the century and the organizing of telephone operators in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) in the 1910s. See Sharon Hartman Strom, “We’re no Kitty Foyles’: Organizing Office Workers for the Congress of

cities including Chicago, New York, and Boston. Yet the AFL remained focused on industrial unionizing because in manufacturing sectors membership rates were higher and tangible gains more apparent. Because these unions existed as locals, they operated independently from one another and formed agendas depending on constituents' needs. Within each city or region, clerical women initiated and led much of the organizing and managing of the unions themselves. For instance, as early as 1911, 300 young women in Chicago formed a stenographer's union; among their demands: minimum wage of \$12 per week, unemployment pay, and employer-funded night classes.<sup>156</sup> Eventually in 1945 the AFL granted a charter to a collection of the existing bookkeeper, stenography, and accountant locals from across the nation. Named the Office Employees International Union (OEIU), upon its founding it boasted 22,000 members. The AFL also housed public-sector clericals by the 1930s and 1940s when many civil servants joined the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).<sup>157</sup>

While some early 20<sup>th</sup> century clericals were affiliated with AFL locals, others joined the ranks of the newly-created Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which arguably was more receptive to organizing women.<sup>158</sup> In 1937, the CIO granted a charter to the United Office and Professional Workers' of America (UOPWA), composed of mostly female, private-sector clericals. Suffragist, labor leader, and civil rights activist Florence Luscomb led UOPWA organizing campaigns and served as president of the Boston UOPWA local. The UOPWA had

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Industrial Organizaitons, 1937-1950," in Ruth Milkman, editor, *Women, Work, and Protest: A Century of U.S. Women's Labor History* (New York: Routledge, 1985), 211-212.

<sup>156</sup> Massachusetts History Workshop Records, Sharon Strom, Introductory comments to conference, April 24, 1982, MC365, Folder 2, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>157</sup> Massachusetts History Workshop Records, Sharon Strom, Introductory comments to conference, April 24, 1982, MC365, Folder 2, Schlesinger Library; Office & Professional Employees International Union, "Our History," <http://www.opeiui.org/AboutOPEIU/OurHistory.aspx>, accessed April 3, 2013. Chicago Federation of Labor Secretary Mollie Levitas became an advocate for incorporating clerical workers into mainstream union channels. She called for an international union of office workers at an AFL convention in 1936. The OEIU would become the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) in 1965.

<sup>158</sup> Strom, "We're no Kitty Foyles" in Milkman, *Women, Work, and Protest*, 212-213. However, Strom gives examples of how the CIO still perceived women as temporary, supplementary workers.



some organizing successes in banks, direct-mail houses, and insurance companies in the 1930s and 1940s, as did other CIO unions for white-collar workers such as the United Federal Workers and the State, County, and Municipal Workers of America, which both organized in the public sector.<sup>159</sup>

But these CIO organizations were short lived and all three were defunct by the 1950s. Starting in the late 1930s, the CIO allowed certain large industrial unions (the United Steel Workers and United Rubber Workers) to claim industrial clericals that the UOPWA had organized.<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, the UOPWA also lost contracts in the second half of the 1940s because during the emergence of the Second Red Scare, its leadership was sympathetic to the beliefs of the Community Party. Unions within AFL that were competing for the same workers, such as OEIU or AFSCME, were outperforming the CIO affiliates in organizing campaigns.<sup>161</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, the OEIU, which would become the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) in 1965, continued to organize clerical workers although at times it resembled a professional association as much as or more than a bread-and-butter union.<sup>162</sup>

By the late 1960s and 1970s, however, clerical organizing was experiencing a rebirth, because of the effect of both macroeconomic trends and the influence of feminism on workers. The political and economic environment in the 1970s, particularly the movement of

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<sup>159</sup> Massachusetts History Workshop Records, Sharon Strom, Introductory comments to conference, April 24, 1982, MC365, Folder 2, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>160</sup> Strom, "We're no Kitty Foyles" in Milkman, *Women, Work, and Protest*, 213.

<sup>161</sup> For instance, the UOPWA leadership refused to sign the Taft-Hartley non-Communist affidavits and the membership supported this decision; however, their position on this issue undermined their position within the CIO and contributed to some of their lost contracts as they were competing with the OEIU in the AFL. Mark McCulloch, *White Collar Workers in Transition: The Boom Years, 1940-1970* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983). Sharon Hartman Strom, *Political Woman: Florence Luscomb and the Legacy of Radical Reform* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); Ellen Cantarow with Susan Gushee O'Malley and Sharon Hartman Strom, *Moving the Mountain: Women Working for Social Change* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1980).

<sup>162</sup> Strom, "We're no Kitty Foyles" in Milkman, *Women, Work, and Protest*, 226. Some clericals continued to join unions along industry instead of craft lines, becoming part of the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the United Electrical Workers (UE). And within the public sector, AFSCME continued to gain membership in these decades.

manufacturing jobs overseas and the neoliberal policies that supported this type of global expansion, meant that established trade unions were looking for new industries to organize to keep themselves afloat. Private-sector union membership fell from 36 percent in 1956 to 18 percent in 1986.<sup>163</sup> Furthermore, starting in 1979, and continuing through the 1980s and 1990s, waging a successful strike became harder than it ever had been before, as exemplified by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) strike. In 1981 President Ronald Reagan refused to negotiate with the union, firing three-fourths of the nation's air-traffic controllers. Public opinion supported Reagan's actions, demonstrating the scale and scope of anti-union sentiment.<sup>164</sup>

As unions were being forced to reexamine their agendas, female office workers were facing low pay and routinized tasks while also being treated without respect by bosses and managers. With the broader feminist movement telling women to reexamine their personal relationships and their professional aspirations, clericals became increasingly aware of the inequitable conditions that they endured day after day. Only a select few were beginning to break into the male-dominated professional world, leaving most women in dead-end jobs with little promise of pay raises or promotions. Working women around the country were starting lunchtime gripe sessions and waging grassroots campaigns to protest low salary scales and wage

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<sup>163</sup> Richard B. Freeman, "Contraction and Expansion: The Divergence of Private Sector and Public Sector Unionism in the United States," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1988), 64. Although public-sector unionism grew in the same period, from 12 percent to 36 percent, nearly 85 percent of non-agricultural workers traditionally have been part of the private sector, meaning that private-sector trends greatly overwhelm any corresponding changes occurring in the public sector.

<sup>164</sup> Joseph A. McCartin, "Solvents of Solidarity: Political Economy, Collective Action, and the Crisis of Organized Labor, 1968-2005," in Donna T. Haverty-Stacke and Daniel J. Walkowitz, editors, *Rethinking U.S. Labor History: Essays on the Working-Class Experience, 1756-2009* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 217-239. In addition, several broad economic and political factors account for the weakening state of unions and the reduction in number of strikes. Unemployment, or "stagflation" threatened the well being of many Americans in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The globalization of supply chains and expansion of free trade that had begun in the 1970s destabilized job security for many manufacturing workers, laborers who historically had been highly organized.

ceilings. Particularly in university communities, discontent clericals were looking for union affiliation to help them gain pay raises.

Several unions became increasingly interested in what they perceived as a new wave of organizing in a growing industry. While major unions had organized clericals before, none had done so by establishing a national clerical workers' division. In the 1960s and 70s, unions organizing clericals included OPEIU, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and the Communication Workers of America (CWA). Public sector employees were organizing under several unions including the American Federation of Government Employees, the National Association of Government Employees, the National Federation of Federal Employees, the National Treasury Employees Union, and AFSCME.<sup>165</sup>

Two additional labor organizations were operating in the 1970s with strategies and goals similar to those of 9to5. In the northeast, women from several universities including Columbia, Harvard, and Boston University were joining District 65 of the United Auto Workers (formerly of the Distributive Workers of America).<sup>166</sup> Margie Albert, a legal secretary, led District 65.<sup>167</sup> In her opinion, clericals needed to unionize because the mainstream women's movement focused its energy on shifting women into management positions but not on helping clericals who wanted to improve the nature of their current positions.<sup>168</sup> Although the impetus to organize often came from feminist ideas, according to Albert, workers' most pressing concerns were not necessarily

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<sup>165</sup> See Women's Work Project by Julie Boddy, Judy Flora, Lyn Goldfarb, Kathy Monk, Elizabeth Schneider, Kathy Schoen, Bob Sherry, Nancy Wiegersman, *Women Organizing the Office* (Washington D.C.: Women in Distribution, 1978).

<sup>166</sup> In Chapter Two of this dissertation, other unions mentioned that organize university clerical workers include District 65 (of the Distributive Workers of America, then of the United Auto Workers in 1979), UNITE HERE, AFSCME, and OPEIU.

<sup>167</sup> "Women Office Workers Oppose Discrimination," *New York Times*, Oct. 28, 1973, page 39. Also Albert was one of the founding members of Women Office Workers, the New York City affiliate of Boston's 9to5, and she was an early leader in the Coalition of Labor Union Women. Albert believed that the fervor of the women's liberation movement was influencing clericals to ask themselves why they had to endure such unfair workplace practices. See Margie Albert, "Something New in the Women's Movement," *New York Times*, Dec. 12, 1973, p. 47.

<sup>168</sup> "Women Office Workers Oppose Discrimination," *New York Times*, Oct. 28, 1973, p. 39.

gender specific.<sup>169</sup> Most clerical workers strove to achieve the same end goal that had been bringing other unionized workers together for years: higher wages.<sup>170</sup> On the West Coast, Union Women's Alliance to Gain Equality, or Union WAGE, began in California in 1972 to help unionized women fight for increased rights at work and within their locals. Its founders perceived unionization as the remedy for low-paid women workers who were clustered into clerical and service jobs. Union WAGE challenged the strategies and goals of the ongoing feminist movement, perceiving mainstream feminism as catered towards the middle class and as blind towards class oppression. Yet by the 1980s, Union WAGE decided to dissolve in part because of the unfavorable climate for unionizing.<sup>171</sup>

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) also was organizing clericals. Local 925 was an SEIU affiliate that Boston 9to5 leaders had begun in 1975 to give bargaining power to workers who wanted to unionize. Nine to Five leaders, including Nussbaum, oversaw some of the first 925 campaigns although the two organizations operated separately. Local 925 won significant battles including organizing the first university workers in the city (Brandeis), the first major publishing house (Allyn & Bacon), and the first legal services program (Foley, Hoag, & Eliot). Because Local 925 had affiliate status, it had significant autonomy from the SEIU

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<sup>169</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with District 65 organizer, #45, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 2, folder 11, Schlesinger Library. Although the District 65 organizers identified with feminism, "it doesn't mean we are day and night talking feminist issues as such...A lot of women in offices do not identify with the women's liberation movement."

<sup>170</sup> Ann Crittenden, "Interest in Unionizing Increases Among Female Office Workers," *New York Times*, July 9, 1979, Section A14.

<sup>171</sup> Diane Balser, *Sisterhood & Solidarity: Feminism and Labor in Modern Times* (Boston: South End Press, 1987), 92-94; 96-99; 103-108; 126-131. On page 92 Balser explains that Jean Maddox founded WAGE. She had worked as a clerical and then joined Local 29 of the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) in California in 1952 and in 1969 she became its president. Regarding feminism, WAGE thought that the feminist women were too quick to blame and alienate men instead of trying to ally with them. They lobbied against the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and instead proposed an amended ERA that would extend protective legislation to men. They gained notable support in their campaign in California but ultimately did not succeed. Also see Chapter Four: The New Left's Labor Feminism in Kieran Walsh Taylor, "Turn to the Working Class: The New Left, Black Liberation, and the U.S. Labor Movement (1967-1981)" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2007).

national leadership to conduct its own affairs. This affiliate status appealed to clericals who valued independence from central authority, but it did not provide much funding for campaigns. After assessing the benefits and drawbacks of having a sister union with affiliate status, 9to5 leaders decided they wanted more financial support, which also meant committing more broadly to a national union.<sup>172</sup> Envisioning a coast-to-coast organizing movement that would augment the growing national scope of 9to5, Karen Nussbaum began to search for an international union that could best accommodate an expansive clerical division.<sup>173</sup> Instead of just having affiliate status with a union, Nussbaum wanted to form a clerical workers' division, or district. A district would have broad reach to organize across the nation and it would have access to a union's financial and human resources.

Nussbaum aligned with the SEIU to create a national clerical workers' division, District 925, in 1981. Given the weakening state of unions in the 1970s, the birth of a national clerical's union in 1981 seems exceptional. However, because 9to5, the National Association of Working Women, was gaining recognition and influence, aligning with Nussbaum appealed to the unions.<sup>174</sup> The consciousness-raising activities and direct action campaigns that 9to5 was performing meant that the unions would have less work to do on their own. Furthermore, trade union membership was declining as the publicity and membership of 9to5 was increasing. Over one-third of working women would engage in office work at some point in their lives, promising

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<sup>172</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, "Confidential: Report to the International President on Local 925 Organizing Strategy," October 15, 1977, Box 3, folder 4, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. Regarding finances, the 1977 budget for Local 925 was 1000 dollars per month for basic expenses plus three organizers' salaries. Also 9to5 leaders knew that the time was ripe to align more strongly with organized labor since opportunities for promising clerical drives existed in many different cities such as Philadelphia, Detroit, Columbus, and Newark where they had heard that clericals were looking for union affiliation.

<sup>173</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, "Confidential: Proposal to Unionize Clerical Workers," ca. 1979-1980, Box 5, folder 24, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>174</sup> Tessa Melvin, "Alternative to Unions Suggested," *New York Times*, January 24, 1982. A lawyer specializing in preventative labor relations was quoted in this article as saying that unions were "going the way of the dinosaurs," suggesting that they were looking for new members to organize.

the struggling unions about 16 million possible female members. In the 1970s, over 50 percent of all new union members were women; if unions wanted to survive, they would have to appeal to a changing workforce demography.<sup>175</sup>

Nussbaum realized that, given the state of trade unions and the realities of office work, she had some power to negotiate the placement and conditions of a clerical division. Her position as leader of 9to5 gave her credibility and name recognition among many unions that were hoping to woo 9to5. Prior to her public commitment to the SEIU, which resulted in District 925, she had corresponded with the Communications Workers of America (CWA), which already was engaged with organizing campaigns in Chicago. CWA had a contract with Women Employed of Chicago to conduct an educational campaign about unionizing, hoping to debunk myths that kept clericals from joining unions.<sup>176</sup> With this partnership in place, Nussbaum considered broadening the collaboration between 9to5 and CWA. In the summer of 1979, Nussbaum wrote to a CWA official that she would be “interested in discussing . . . some ways to work together, and [she agreed] that such discussions should be confidential.”<sup>177</sup> In 1980, Nussbaum sent a proposal to create a clerical division the following year and planned to meet with CWA President Glenn Watts.<sup>178</sup> Although she never made a commitment to the CWA, Nussbaum knew that this union had serious interest in organizing the masses of unorganized

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<sup>175</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum, “Can Women Save the Labor Movement?” *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, September 5, 1982, Box 14, folder 81, Reuther Library. More specifically from 1967 to 1982, over 50 percent have been women.

<sup>176</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Confidential: Proposal to Unionize Clerical Workers,” ca. 1979-1980, Box 5, folder 24, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>177</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Nussbaum to Patsy Fryman, CWA, August 9, 1979, Box 2, folder 11, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>178</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Nussbaum to Bob Muscat, CWA, with proposal attached, July 15, 1980, Box 2, folder 11; Letters from Fryman to Nussbaum, March 13, 1980; May 6, 1980; June 6, 1980, Box 2, folder 11, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

clerical workers.<sup>179</sup> Perhaps she was keeping her options open pending confirmation of a commitment—and adequate funding—from the SEIU.

The national leadership of the Office and Professional Employees Union (OPEIU), impressed with Nussbaum's vision of an office workers' union movement, also displayed interest in organizing clericals. Yet Nussbaum would have to contend with the relationships emerging between local working women's groups and OPEIU locals. Similar to the way in which Women Employed in Chicago had promised to push union drives towards CWA, the Working Women's chapter in Cleveland wanted to organize its clericals with the OPEIU. But, according to chapter leader Day Pierce, Cleveland Working Women (CWW) was displeased with Nussbaum's vision for a national union. Pierce wanted to keep her group locally managed and did not want outsiders, even District 925 organizers who were trained to empower workers, to invade her domain in Cleveland.<sup>180</sup> Likewise, the OPEIU, an AFL-CIO affiliate that had been organizing office workers since the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, wanted control of the union drives in Cleveland.<sup>181</sup> Referring to itself as "the exclusive AFL-CIO White Collar Union," the OPEIU moved several staff members to Ohio from other localities to take advantage of

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<sup>179</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Fryman to Nussbaum, July 21, 1979, Box 2, folder 11, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. Fryman wrote that she was "delighted you [Nussbaum] saw the article in the New York Times concerning my Union's interest in organizations such as Working Women. I am more than delighted with your response. I am indeed interested in discussing with you your plans in how CWA and Working Women might cooperate in a joint effort."

<sup>180</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memos from Denise Mitchell to Janice Blood, February 24, 1982 and March 2, 1982 re: Publicizing the District 925/SEIU Link to 9to5 TV Show, Box 5, folder 39, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>181</sup> In one letter from Nussbaum to John Geagan of the SEIU, she warns that OPEIU is conducting a drive for 300 insurance workers in Cleveland and that the OPEIU wants to discuss cooperative efforts with CWW. Furthermore, the 9to5 organization in Rhode Island is talking to two non-SEIU unions. In places where clerical organizing is ripe, Nussbaum wants Local 925, under SEIU affiliation, to do the organizing and signing. Nine to Five affiliates have already done a lot of the work of increasing awareness of the clericals and their sister union should benefit from such activity. SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Nussbaum to John Geagan, SEIU, September 26, 1978, Box 3, folder 4, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

progressive fervor in Cleveland.<sup>182</sup> And CWW was an engaged chapter that was well established. In 1980 CWW launched a six-month banking campaign, facilitating government investigations into violations of equal employment opportunity laws at four large banks.<sup>183</sup> The Labor Department's investigation of National City Bank (NCB) in particular lasted over a year and gained much press attention even in national publications like the *Wall Street Journal*.<sup>184</sup> CWW members passed out leaflets, held rallies, and pressured major corporate stockholders of NCB to compel the bank to disclose employment records and practices.<sup>185</sup> Unions like the OPEIU wanted to become the bargaining units for these established campaigns since they would have to do less organizing work and would have a greater chance of success.

Ultimately Nussbaum and SEIU leaders agreed to continue the alliance between the National Association of Working Women, specifically Local 925, and the SEIU. In the late 1970s, the SEIU was proving to be an ally to women workers, committed to launching campaigns in unorganized sectors.<sup>186</sup> Yet, the SEIU needed some prodding to agree to extend its support to a national clerical campaign and Nussbaum was just the person to do it. In 1977, Nussbaum began seeking more funding for union drives outside of Boston, aware that SEIU officials were monitoring the outcome of a Local 925 drive among Boston University librarians to gauge the potential success in large-scale clerical organizing. This sort of monitoring made the distinction between 9to5 and traditional unions very clear. While the SEIU, like all trade

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<sup>182</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from G.V. Borcaro, Jr., OPEIU to Nussbaum, March 31, 1980, Box 2, folder 17, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>183</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Cleveland Working Women, *Working Woman's News*, January/February 1980, Vol. 5, no. 1, Box 1, folder 28, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>184</sup> See SEIU District 925 Collection, Box 1, folders 28 and 29 for articles and press releases on the National City Bank case from 1980-1981 including *Wall Street Journal* articles from July 29, 1980 and February 2, 1982.

<sup>185</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, John Fuller, "Church Call: National City Is Asked for Job Practices Data," *Plain Dealer*, March 12, 1981, Box 1, folder 29, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>186</sup> Geri Palast, interviewed by Stacey Heath, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, July 14, 2006.



unions, emphasized winning members and contracts, 9to5 focused on the consciousness raising and publicity that resulted from drives.<sup>187</sup> Nussbaum understood that “clericals [would] not be organized in the next year. But the long run investment can’t be beat. If the SEIU backs away from clerical organizing now, they [would] be throwing away much more than one local in Boston.”<sup>188</sup>

While her ultimate goal was to secure a national office workers’ chapter, Nussbaum’s more pressing need in the last years of the 1970s was to obtain financial assistance for ongoing clerical campaigns that were seeking help from Local 925. SEIU organizing director John Geagan was willing to lend Nussbaum funding for one campaign at the University of Pittsburgh, which had started in the summer of 1977 and would promise 2000 potential clerical members if it succeeded.<sup>189</sup> Nussbaum also made Geagan aware of the ongoing drives that the SEIU was losing to other unions, reporting that the clericals at Syracuse decided to affiliate with the United Auto Workers (UAW). Furthermore, the SEIU-affiliated Syracuse librarians were decertifying and joining the UAW, too.<sup>190</sup> By early 1978 Geagan had granted Nussbaum her own SEIU credit card to support her travels to places like Pittsburgh where Local 925 was involved in

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<sup>187</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum notes from meeting with Kim Fellner, September 6, 1977, Box 3, folder 4, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. On Nussbaum’s focus on consciousness raising and publicity, see letter from Nussbaum to Glenn, March 31, 1978, Box 3, folder 4. She wrote to Glenn, “Though winning elections and contracts is as painstaking as ever, we are succeeding in our ‘consciousness-raising’ work of bringing the issues of women office workers out into the public and mobilizing support. In addition to the Wall Street Journal article (of Feb. 24, 1978), we had a nationally syndicated AP story, and I recently appeared on the Phil Donahue Show as a guest. One of our people even appeared on *To Tell the Truth*.” Nussbaum’s emphasis shows the larger influence of District 925 on the SEIU and labor unions in general as stated by many of the 925 Legacy Project oral history subjects.

<sup>188</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Report to the International President on Local 925 Organizing Strategy, October 15, 1977, Box 3, folder 4, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>189</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum, Memo to John Geagan re: Local 925 organizing efforts out-of-state, December 26, 1977, Box 3, folder 4, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. For more on the unsuccessful drive at the University of Pittsburgh, see Anne Hill, interviewed by Ann Froines, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, December 6, 2005.

<sup>190</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Nussbaum to Geagan, January 7, 1978, Box 3, folder 4, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

elections against union-busting administrators.<sup>191</sup> By the fall of 1978, however, Geagan curtailed Nussbaum's access to additional funding for ongoing clerical drives. Nussbaum complained to him that office workers in Washington D.C., Cleveland, Rhode Island, and Los Angeles were contacting her for assistance in unionizing. Frustrated, she had to direct them to other unions and institutions. Nussbaum wrote, "Since I couldn't get any authorization from SEIU, I had to advise them to go elsewhere."<sup>192</sup>

Starting in 1977, Nussbaum began correspondence with various SEIU leaders to gain their support for a national clerical campaign. She needed some internal female allies when trying to lobby George Hardy, SEIU President from 1971 to 1980, to expand Local 925 into a national, well-funded SEIU sector. In Nussbaum's words, "the big hurdle [would] be George."<sup>193</sup> She aligned with Elinor Glenn, Rosemary Trump (who would become the first female on the SEIU Executive Council), and Marilyn Alexander, eliciting their support for her vision during their attendance at a National Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) Convention in Washington D.C. in 1977. Like Nussbaum, they felt strongly about empowering women as union leaders, organizers and members of the SEIU.<sup>194</sup> To make further inroads in the organization, Nussbaum discussed her plans for a clerical division with John Sweeney during the fall of 1979, gaining his support. Sweeney was achieving notoriety as president of a large SEIU

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<sup>191</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Nussbaum to Geagan, February 14, 1978, Box 3, folder 4, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. She also was writing directly to Hardy to ask for extra money for Pittsburgh, citing a strong union-busting effort on the part of the university. See Nussbaum to George Hardy, May 11, 1978, Box 3, folder 4, Reuther Library.

<sup>192</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Nussbaum to Geagan, October 24, 1978, Box 3, folder 4, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. See also Nussbaum to Geagan, September 26, 1978, Box 3, folder 4, Reuther Library.

<sup>193</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Karen Nussbaum to Rosemary Trump of SEIU, September 20, 1977, Box 3, folder 4, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. Also see Nussbaum notes from meeting with Jackie Ruff, September 7, 1977, Box 3, folder 4, Reuther Library.

<sup>194</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Nussbaum to Glenn, September 7, 1977, Box 3, folder 4, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. See also Box 3, folder 4, Nussbaum to Glenn, September 20, 1977; Nussbaum to Trump, September 20, 1977; Nussbaum to Alexander, October 16, 1977; Nussbaum to Trump, October 21, 1977.

local of maintenance workers in New York, before being elected SEIU President in 1980.<sup>195</sup> Given the support of SEIU's female leaders and Hardy's retirement, Nussbaum's vision of a national clerical union was becoming a reality. Sweeney approved plans for District 925 in 1980.<sup>196</sup> Although District 925 did not become official upon his election, Nussbaum knew that she could work with Sweeney and that they could reach a fair agreement.<sup>197</sup>

After Sweeney became President in 1980, Nussbaum still needed to negotiate several issues before District 925 would become official. In late 1980, the SEIU was offering 9to5 only half the money that Nussbaum was requesting. Furthermore, Nussbaum was intent on attaining higher salaries for the 9to5 employees who would be working with District 925.<sup>198</sup> To gain leverage, Nussbaum reminded Sweeney and his assistant that the *9to5* movie, which was released in December 1980, was receiving considerable media attention. Nussbaum strategized that she could use the publicity from the movie to announce the creation of the union.<sup>199</sup> Finally in the two-year agreement reached between the SEIU and 9to5, Nussbaum was named President of District 925, SEIU's Clerical Division, and three regional offices were established (East Coast, Midwest, and West Coast), each with a SEIU-funded field organizer. The Clerical Division was modeled after the SEIU divisions for health care and public employees, both of which were rapidly growing sectors in the union. This Clerical Division would be an SEIU

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<sup>195</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Nussbaum to Sweeney, April 15, 1980, Box 5, folder 24, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>196</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo to All Affiliated Local Unions from George Hardy, SEIU President re: Office Worker Unionization, March 7, 1978, Box 3, folder 4, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. George Hardy did circulate a *Wall Street Journal* article to all SEIU affiliates, which gave Nussbaum credit for her Local 925 organizing efforts. The memo consisted of the *Wall Street Journal* article on Local 925 success.

<sup>197</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Nussbaum to Bob Muscat, CWA, November 18, 1980; Letter from Muscat to Nussbaum, November 20, 1980, Box 2, folder 11, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>198</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Nussbaum to Bob Welsh, Assistant to President Sweeney, November 25, 1980, Box 5, folder 24, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>199</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Nussbaum to Bob Welsh, January 5, 1981, Box 5, folder 24, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

affiliate but 9to5 would have considerable influence over its structure and operations. The SEIU would use 9to5's expertise about women's issues and contribute money to its activities on behalf of clericals.<sup>200</sup>

Sweeney and Nussbaum planned when and how to announce the creation of the union, and they hired public relations professional Ray Abernathy to maximize the impact. Abernathy raised the possibility of making a public statement before an AFL-CIO meeting in Miami on February 16<sup>th</sup> so that the story would permeate the conference and dominate the labor press coverage of the meeting. Yet breaking the news in Miami could anger some union leaders who might view Sweeney as the “'new guy on the block' and [the SEIU and 9to5] don't want to appear pushy.”<sup>201</sup> To target the mainstream press instead, Abernathy decided to wait until the end of February to release the news.<sup>202</sup> Representatives from both the SEIU and 9to5 would be in five major cities (Boston, Washington D.C., New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco) for short press conferences on February 24<sup>th</sup>. These concurrent broadcasts across the nation aimed to make the announcement not just major local news, but also produce national stories. Abernathy provided the participants with model answers to many “ticklish subjects,” which included why unions had traditionally failed to organize clericals and where did the union stand on the issue of pay equity. He wanted to create a consistent and advantageous “'party line'” that would further

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<sup>200</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Memorandum of Understanding,” February 1, 1981, Box 5, folder 24, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>201</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Ray Abernathy to Bob Welsh, January 19, 1981, Box 5, folder 25, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>202</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Ray Abernathy to Bob Welsh, January 29, 1981, Box 5, folder 25, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

District 925's goals.<sup>203</sup> Abernathy also sought to schedule in-depth interviews with District 925 national leaders on the "Today Show" and "Good Morning America."<sup>204</sup>

The public announcement of District 925 coincided with the popularity of the *9to5* movie, which the SEIU and 9to5 massaged to their benefit. In the press conferences coordinated by Abernathy, 9to5 and 925 leaders described 9to5 as the organization that inspired the production of the *9to5* movie.<sup>205</sup> To appeal to potential District 925 members, union leaders advertised that 9to5 "most recently [played] a key role in creating the Jane Fonda film, *9to5*."<sup>206</sup> Journalists also emphasized the connection between the movie and the union. For instance, Harry Bernstein of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote a March 6<sup>th</sup> article entitled, "Film 'Nine to Five' Sparks Interest in Unionization of Office Workers."<sup>207</sup> Abernathy embraced the association, instructing press conference participants to highlight Jane Fonda's involvement in the organization. He told participants to support the connection because the new union "[welcomed] the chance to build public awareness through such things as the movie." To further promote the 9to5 brand, he instructed press conference participants to divulge the possibility of a 9to5 television series.<sup>208</sup>

The media responded immediately to the public announcement of District 925. The news of the joint campaign appeared not only in major papers such as the *Boston Globe*, the *New York*

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<sup>203</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo to Participants in SEIU/WW Press Conference from Abernathy re Message Control, February 17, 1981, Box 5, folder 25, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>204</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Ray Abernathy to Bob Welsh, January 19, 1981, Box 5, folder 25, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>205</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, District 925 Press Release, Washington D.C., February 24, 1981, Box 5, folder 25, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>206</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, District 925 Announcement Brochure, 1981, Box 5, folder 25, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>207</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Harry Bernstein, "Film 'Nine to Five' Sparks Interest in Unionization of Office Workers," *Los Angeles Times*, March 6, 1981, Box 5, folder 25, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>208</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo to Participants in SEIU/WW Press Conference from Abernathy re Message Control, February 17, 1981, Box 5, folder 25, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

*Times*, and the *Los Angeles Times* but also in many local papers throughout the country.<sup>209</sup>

Sweeney described the reaction as “overwhelming” since many working women were calling the SEIU headquarters and locals to inquire about joining. The SEIU soon had to create a nationwide, toll free number to manage these calls better.<sup>210</sup> Jane Fonda taped a television public service announcement about the toll free number, which brought in “tons of calls.”<sup>211</sup> However, organizers had trouble converting these numerous individual complaints into collective union campaigns.<sup>212</sup>

Creating a distinct public image for District 925 would be vital to the new organization’s success, especially in light of the popular attitudes about trade unions during this era.<sup>213</sup>

Nussbaum was well aware of the need to emphasize the uniqueness of District 925 since office workers’ “views of unions now range from outright fear of unions to a belief that unions just aren’t for ‘us.’” By publicizing the Local 925 campaigns that clericals already had won, Nussbaum aimed to show skeptical clericals that District 925 had the potential to succeed.

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<sup>209</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, *Los Angeles Times*, March 6, 1981; *New York Times*, March 4, 1981; *Cincinnati Post*, March 4, 1981; *Longview, WA News*, March 18, 1981; Box 5, folder 25, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. The story also appeared in many other papers including the *Cincinnati Post*, the *San Francisco Post*, the *Bowling Green, Ohio Sentinel-Tribune*, the *Arizona Business Gazette*, the *St. Paul, Minnesota Pioneer Press*, the *Pomona Progress-Bulletin*, and the *Longview, Washington News*. Other articles from named newspapers in the previous sentence can also be found in Box 5, folder 25.

<sup>210</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo to All Local Unions from John J. Sweeney, re: District 925, March 17, 1981, Box 5, folder 25, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>211</sup> Ellen Cassedy, Karen Nussbaum, and Debbie Schneider, interviewed by Ann Froines, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 1, 2005. Quote is from Schneider.

<sup>212</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo to Jackie Ruff, Nussbaum, and Bob Welsh from Denise Mitchell, public relations for District 925, re: Public Relations Activities Update, July 13, 1981, Box 5, folder 39, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. By the summer of 1981, District 925 already was contemplating ways to increase its visibility, considering advertising in popular women’s magazines.

<sup>213</sup> In the 1980s Harvard economist James Medoff wrote about the importance of labor’s public image, claiming that the public image of unions determined or at least affected their success as organizations. In the 1970s and 80s, Medoff reported that the public viewed unions more as monopolies than as voices for the people, causing their public approval ratings to drop. He claimed that public opinion polls showed that people thought that unions could improve working conditions and pay, thus making the public image factor all the more significant. Karen Nussbaum sent one of his articles from *Business Week* (December 17, 1984) to the other leaders of Working Women in 1985. See SEIU District 925 Collection, James L. Medoff, “The Public’s Image of Labor and Labor’s Response,” Harvard University, National Bureau of Economic Research, November 1984, Box 3, folder 11, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

Furthermore, because 9to5 already had thirteen chapters nationwide, District 925 could use the preexisting 9to5 channels to its benefit. Nine to Five could capture the “attention and allegiance of office workers with a non-threatening but active association—9to5.” Then District 925 could attract these workers and motivate them to pursue change through unionization. Yet District 925 leaders agreed that a democratic alliance—not a centralized structure—would appeal to clericals. The new union sought to offer autonomy to its locals so that working women could take ownership of their own organizing campaigns and construct their own agendas in each workplace.<sup>214</sup>

In speeches and interviews during the 1980s, Nussbaum emphasized that District 925 represented the future of unionization despite a wave of political and economic conservatism that was hindering private-sector organizing. The political and social policies of the Reagan Administration, Nussbaum maintained, had “created an anti-union atmosphere, [and a] new ideology that says problems faced by individuals [were to be] private concerns.”<sup>215</sup> The AFL-CIO reported a huge decline, from 35 percent to below 19 percent, in overall union membership from the 1950s to the 1980s. Furthermore, in the 80s, employers were illegally discharging employees who were engaging in union activities to a greater extent than in the 50s, resulting in a pattern of discriminatory discharges during union elections. Employers of the 1980s were

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<sup>214</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Report to the International President on Local 925 Organizing Strategy, October 15, 1977, Box 3, folder 4, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>215</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum Speech, Future of Working Women Movement (at a women’s magazines breakfast, no location), October 18, 1988, Box 15, folder 30, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. The 1981 PATCO strike, which has been referred to by some scholars (Joseph McCartin, *New York Times*, August 2, 2011) as one of the most important strikes in shaping the modern workplace, did not appear often in my research. The most evidence I found on it was about the health and safety of air traffic controllers (9to5 papers, Carton 5, folder 170, Schlesinger Library).

becoming more likely to shut down or provoke strikes than to bargain with employees and union officials.<sup>216</sup>

While she was aware of these challenging trends and bleak realities, Nussbaum believed that organized clericals could save the declining power of private-sector unions. In her opinion, women office workers of the 1980s were similar to factory workers of the 1930s who turned in large numbers to unionizing after becoming frustrated by exploitative working conditions.<sup>217</sup> She believed that women were changing their attitudes about unions as seen by their willingness to join: in the 1970s and early 80s, more than 50 percent of all new union members were women. If women's issues were the focal point of the organizing campaign, then union elections had a greater chance of succeeding.<sup>218</sup>

## Conclusion

Nine to Five and District 925 would have to confront several hurdles to succeed on a large scale: external resistance from employers and internal hesitancy from employees. Subsequent chapters will show that both organizations had mixed records when directly battling big bosses for tangible gains in the insurance, banking, and publishing industries, as well as challenging top administrators in academia. Although 9to5 and District 925 won some grievances and lost others, without question, they opposed ingrained cultural attitudes that

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<sup>216</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work, "The Changing Situation of Workers and their Unions," February 1985, Box 3, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. In this report, the committee claims that in 1957 the NLRB secured reinstatement for only 922 workers who had been fired for union activity. By 1980 that number had reached 10,000. In addition, although the labor force, and particularly the service sector, grew rapidly during the 1970s, labor membership numbers remained static in that decade. Most likely gains in service sector organizing were offset by job loss in traditional industries like manufacturing.

<sup>217</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum Speech, Future of Working Women Movement (at a women's magazines breakfast, no location), October 18, 1988, Box 15, folder 30, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>218</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum, "Can Women Save the Labor Movement?" *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, September 5, 1982, Box 14, folder 81, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.



degraded clerical work. At a time when many well-educated feminists were trying to break through the glass ceiling and enter into male-dominated professions, 9to5 was claiming that a woman did not need to become part of the male-defined professional class to be indispensable to the workplace. In fact, in the 1980s and 90s, many clerical workers continued to feel invisible and expendable, particularly as other women entered management in greater numbers. Tackling public perceptions of clerical work would prove to be just as difficult as was achieving actual bread-and-butter gains. As Nussbaum stated, “you can’t organize people who hate themselves for what they’re doing. You can’t organize around the desire to be doing something else because those people will only try to get out of that work situation.”<sup>219</sup>

Not all clericals sought collective remedies for their workplace problems because workers from various backgrounds had differing ideas about how to endure conditions in the office. The social movements of the 1960s had inspired women like Casedy and Nussbaum to question their lack of mobility and status in the workplace. Yet these women had come from comfortable backgrounds where a person’s core values could guide her major life choices. Because obtaining money for food was not on the forefront of these women’s minds, they could engage in morally-driven battles against institutions and forces that they perceived as corrupt or evil. Many of the progressive youth of the 1960s attempted to collaborate with others who shared their vision in an attempt to improve society for everyone.<sup>220</sup> Young activists like Nussbaum did not just aim for a single political win; rather, their life purpose was to make society a more just place.

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<sup>219</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Written statement by Karen Nussbaum, #53, 1974-1975, MC366, Box 2, folder 13, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>220</sup> Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). Rossinow’s book suggests that activists of the 1960s sought to live an authentic existence by working with other authentic people to better society. Although his book is a case study of the University of Texas, it makes a powerful point that the activists saw themselves as interested in correcting morals and values that had gone awry, not just in lobbying for issues that were on the left of the political spectrum.

Women from working-class backgrounds did not necessarily translate personal workplace struggles into larger political, social, or moral issues for several reasons. Many clerical workers relied on their next paychecks for food and rent, making them extremely dependent on their jobs for basic sustenance. Because many of these clericals made wages that were hovering around the poverty line, they spent their energy trying to make ends meet so that they could run their households. Some had second or third jobs, cared for their children without a partner, or were trying to work their way out of a cycle of poverty that had plagued everyone they had known. Although economically-struggling women might have welcomed changes to unjust office norms that disparately affected female workers, they perceived their jobs as necessary for physical survival.<sup>221</sup> The ideas of social activists of the 1960s and the feminists of the 1970s would not meet *immediate* economic needs of the working class.<sup>222</sup> For these clericals, Nussbaum partnered with the SEIU to develop a national clericals' union. The next chapter will detail union campaigns in the academy, revealing that university clericals were most willing to organize against pay inequity that was embedded in their salary structures.

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<sup>221</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with Travellers Insurance employee, #12, 1974-1975, MC366, Box 1, folder 4, Schlesinger Library. A women in the insurance industry tells a 9to5 representative that she is doing a good job and that she and her colleagues support 9to5's work even if the workers decide not to join or to be active.

<sup>222</sup> Dorothy Sue Cobble, "Response: The Difference Differences Make," *Labor* 2, issue 4 (Winter 2005), 58-62. Cobble is responding to a Reading Roundtable about her book *The Other Women's Movement*, noting that part of her project is to reconstruct American feminism as a more varied movement with actors and goals and strategies from the labor movement playing just as important of a role as the main actors and goals and strategies that are now part of the traditional narrative of American feminism.

## Chapter Two: Respect Through Raises: Examining Grassroots Movements for Pay Equity on University Campuses

One sociology department secretary told a Boston University professor that she had “been experiencing a great period of consciousness-raising this year which has profoundly affected the way I view my situation as a woman and as a member of the work force.”<sup>223</sup>

Unlike traditional, male-dominated trade unions that developed from men’s experiences, both 9to5 and District 925, have been recognized, historically and currently, as unique because of the organizations’ emphasis on bringing dignity to the unappreciated work of women.<sup>224</sup> According to the 9to5 rhetoric, women wanted “respect not roses.” Clericals were demanding recognition for their work and becoming increasingly aware of workplace injustices thanks to contemporary social movements like feminism. This chapter examines university clericals who sought to gain power and respect by unionizing. Clericals insisted upon more pay given the value of their labor. For many unionizing clericals, raises meant respect in ways unidentifiable to unionizing men.

Many of the strongest office worker unions formed at universities where some students and professors, unlike bank and insurance managers, accepted or even fostered reform from the bottom up. Clerical and technical workers organized mainly around economic issues: low pay, lack of benefits, wage ceilings and inequitable salary structures. As the mainstream feminist movement encouraged women to empower themselves by challenging institutional hierarchies, clericals gained impetus to condemn university pay policies. Thus, university workers formed associations primarily to promote their financial needs, which usually resulted from working in sex-segregated positions. The university, more so than other white-collar workplaces, allowed

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<sup>223</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo from Francine Miller to Mike Miller, Boston University, June 12, 1974, Box 7, folder 29, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>224</sup> The 9to5 and 925 literature, speeches and articles from Karen Nussbaum, as well as the oral history interviews echoed similar sentiments: both pay and respect were important components of the organizations. The little that has been written about 9to5 by historians also emphasizes pay and respect.

for reform-minded workers to fight for class- and sex-based justice. Yet certain people and certain parts of the university could hinder organizing efforts in ways very similar to those in profit-drive industries.

The overall economic climate of the 1970s propelled women workers to fight for fair pay. In the 1950s and 1960s, family income grew for those at all points along the income scale but in the 1970s the income gap among families began to widen. Those at the top 20 percent saw their incomes rise 17 percent and lowest fifth of families saw their incomes fall 18 percent.<sup>225</sup> From 1973 to 1986, more families required two incomes to stay afloat. In 1987 an urban family of four needed 19,400 to survive on a no-frills budget, but most individual workers earn less than 12,500.<sup>226</sup> Furthermore, the growth of part-time and temporary work during these years disparately affected women so that many women were working fewer hours than they would have liked. In 1983, nearly half the women who worked part-time said they would rather work full time if they could find a job and affordable childcare.<sup>227</sup> Full time or part time, women had become permanent workers. In 1987, women comprised 48 percent of the workforce.<sup>228</sup> By 1995, 99 percent of women worked for pay at some point in their lives.<sup>229</sup>

Although fighting for pay equity was not new to the 1970s and 1980s, the feminist movement promoted new strategies to remedy old economic injustices.<sup>230</sup> Earlier in the

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<sup>225</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum speech, "Working Women Count! Challenges for Working Women," Connecticut Women's Summit, March 25, 1995, Box 15, folder 65, Reuther Library.

<sup>226</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum speech, "Work and Family Issues: Perceiving the Need, Delivering the Options," National Public Relations Employer Labor Relations Association, Ft. Lauderdale, FL, March 22, 1989, Box 15, folder 63, Reuther Library.

<sup>227</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum, Testimony before Senator Edward Kennedy concerning "National Goals: Employment," Chair of Committee on Labor and Human Resources, U.S. Senate, January 13, 1987, Box 15, folder 70, Reuther Library.

<sup>228</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum speech, "Solutions for the New Workforce," John Hancock, October 20, 1987, Box 15, folder 50, Reuther Library.

<sup>229</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum speech, "Working Women Count! Challenges for Working Women," Connecticut Women's Summit, March 25, 1995, Box 15, folder 65, Reuther Library.

<sup>230</sup> In this paper I will use the terms pay equity, comparable worth, and sex-based wage discrimination interchangeably.

twentieth century, industrial women workers had argued for comparable worth through their participation in male-dominated unions like the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE).<sup>231</sup> Women union members attempted to fight for pay equity in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s by gaining leadership positions at the local or international level. Yet their advocacy efforts brought mixed results: only select locals supported equitable pay policies for industrial women. In the 1970s, the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE), backed by feminist leaders, used federal legislation to file lawsuits against employers where wage bias existed.<sup>232</sup> Yet most clerical workers in the 1970s fought to eliminate workplace bias through grassroots organizations and unionization. They did not turn to established feminist organizations or become part of landmark court cases to seek higher pay and greater respect for office work. These clericals, most of whom did not consider themselves feminists or advocate for larger issues of women's rights, turned to organizing at a time when overall union membership was declining. Clericals still saw promise in collective bargaining although new feminists and some union leaders were promoting government intervention to help raise pay and promote economic equality for office workers.

This chapter suggests that historians need to reexamine the movement for comparable worth given the nature and extent of clerical organizing in the 1970s and 1980s. They will find a more expansive conception of pay equity where workers themselves initiated and continued to

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<sup>231</sup> On one level, male leaders in these two unions supported the principle of equal pay for comparable work, at times to appease their female members and at times because they did not want women to displace higher paid male workers. Yet, on another level, women workers had to suffer the injustices of separate pay rates and distinct seniority lists even after performing men's jobs during World War II. See Nancy Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935-1975* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 32, 63-68, 71-77, 190-192, 233-236; Dennis A. Deslippe, "Rights Not Roses": *Unions and the Rise of Working-Class Feminism, 1945-1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 45, 62-63; Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 80-82, 129-130; Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 98-109, 163-167.

<sup>232</sup> Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 219-220.

secure higher pay through collective bargaining. The conventional narrative of pay equity in this era discusses increased state intervention into the public sector. Management consultants devised quantitative reports, which rated the skills required for particular jobs, to indicate the presence or nonexistence of pay inequity. However, many women in sex-segregated work fought for more equitable salaries without conducting formal research, without initiating government involvement, or without considering themselves part of a movement. They were realizing their labor was collectively undervalued and that institutionalized salary structures were preventing them from earning adequate pay. These grassroots conflicts between university workers and administrators have not been recognized as part of the larger pay equity movement.

By the 1980s, the efficacy of federal policy against workplace discrimination had propelled the office workers' movement to turn to government intervention to regulate pay inequity. Clerical unions of the 1980s continued to collectively bargaining, but also they sought to codify regulations against sex-based wage discrimination. They collaborated with feminists who also wanted to regulate pay inequities through statutory or judicial means. Regardless of the strategies pursued by union and feminist leaders, the movement relied on women's realizations that their work as sex-segregated laborers was devalued. Grassroots efforts initiated by university clericals comprised an important part of the pay equity battle. State and national movements for policy change became possible because of the smaller acts of resistance by women seeking to modify their salary structures.

### The Social Climate on Campus

Below average salaries or changes in compensation or classification systems precipitated grassroots activity among clericals. When university administrators tinkered with compensation

plans without consulting the staff about changes, workers felt all the more powerless to control their work lives because of the low pay and the lack of influence over such decisions.

Administrators tried to present new pay scales and altered classification systems as equitable in their design and implementation, which insulted clericals who could see beyond the university's rhetoric. They felt disrespected by their employers not just for inadequate pay raises and promotion opportunities but also for being viewed as naïve and unimportant. Because feminists encouraged women to place more value on their worth to others, clericals felt angered by top-down changes that literally shortchanged them.

Karen Nussbaum estimated that among the campaigns to organize university clericals in the 1970s and 1980s, 70 percent were successful, meaning that the clericals emerged with a union contract.<sup>233</sup> Universities boasted significant grassroots activity, and many formed internal worker groups without external motivation from 9to5, the National Association of Working Women, or from unions like SEIU District 925, the sister organization to 9to5.<sup>234</sup> Some clerical workers held notions that joining a union would force them to go on strike for workers they did not know. Yet they felt comfortable meeting regularly with fellow coworkers about specific problems at their universities.<sup>235</sup> Once interested university employees got to know and trust one another, they felt committed to the organizations that they had formed and the people they knew in them. Such informal groups allowed workers to unite against management without requiring

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<sup>233</sup> Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 222.

<sup>234</sup> Workers at least at Barnard, Columbia, and Boston University were organizing and affiliating with District 65. Other workers at the following colleges were engaged in either informal worker associations or drives to affiliate with unions: Yale, New York University, Boston State College, Wellesley, Tufts, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Syracuse. Jean Tepperman Papers. MC 366, Box 1, folders 8 and 9. Schlesinger Library. The Distributive Workers of America helped to bolster the efforts of a staff organizing committee at the University of Chicago, see Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; "What the Union is All About," a flyer from the Distributive Workers of America at Chicago, ca.1974. MC624, Box 21, folder 6. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>235</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with Yale non-faculty employee, #32, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 8. Schlesinger Library. One Yale clerical stated that she did not want to unionize because she did not want to go on strike to support bartenders or any other type of worker covered by an international union.

the commitment of union membership. Many of these groups eventually did seek association with formal unions if administrators did not take their demands seriously. Workers at some universities conducted their own long-term, arduous campaigns to win representation in a variety of unions. The workers themselves became the union organizers, which gave the university employees more autonomy to make their own decisions at a local level. Other grassroots committees were short-lived, dispersing after they either attained their goals or failed to gain enough support within their university or make inroads with administrators.<sup>236</sup>

Why did clerical organizing occur on university campuses to a greater extent than at other workplaces such as publishing houses or financial institutions?<sup>237</sup> The growth in public sector unionism accounts for some of the disparity since many public university clericals took advantage of changing state laws and expanding labor organizations that were courting them.

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<sup>236</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.). Additional records, “9to5: Women Office Workers Interpret a Social Movement,” MIT dissertation by Adrianna Nasch Stadecker, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, pp. 20, 200-202, 1976. 88-M96—89-M104, Carton 2, folder 57. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Stadecker interviewed members of 9to5 for her dissertation.

<sup>237</sup> A subsequent chapter addresses organizing in publishing houses. There was some collective organizing in banking and insurance but it was just significantly less prevalent since these worker committees required sustained and regular action on the part of several committed workers. Certain conditions like race and sex of the workers as well as regional location of the company could make unionization more likely. One example of a successful unionization effort was the San Francisco office of Blue Cross Blue Shield. Clerks started looking for unions to represent them in the late 1960s after they had approached management repeatedly about workplace problems and had been ignored. As they met with different unions, this group of employees gathered often to boost morale among those concerned with the sweatshop-like conditions there. Also the union-drive committee issued an underground newsletter called “Paton’s Place” that external supporters distributed to employees. The writers named the publication after the company president Tom Paton because the newsletter reported “juicy tidbits about the private lives of our big honcho officers and staff.” It was extremely popular because the employees liked getting to know such prurient details; furthermore, the meetings of the committee kept morale for organizing high as they endured poor workplace conditions. Eventually the workers voted for representation by Local 3 of the Office and Professional Employees, a group that had been a leading choice of organized office workers through the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Also contributing to the union victory was the racial composition of the office, which was unusual for most insurance companies. Almost half the clerical workers were Pilipino and a fourth were black, and these minority workers supported the union. The Blue Cross union-drive committee attributes nine-tenths of the success not to the Local 3 leaders but to the informal group itself that started the push for formal representation, suggesting that grassroots organizing was a key component to winning union elections. Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interviews with two Blue Cross Blue Shield workers, #18, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 4. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Another notable victory was the District 925 win at Equitable Life Insurance in Syracuse, NY. In response, the employer shut down the branch and moved all the jobs elsewhere to avoid the presence of a union. See Kim Cook, interviewed by Ann Froines, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, May 10, 2005.



Yet workers at private universities have unionized at higher rates than have clericals in other private sectors, suggesting that public sector organizing explains only part of the increase.<sup>238</sup>

Unlike unapologetically revenue-driven business, universities offered the prestige of working in the academy where, supposedly, truth triumphed over profits.<sup>239</sup> This idealism about university work actually propelled some of the dissatisfaction among clericals. They felt they were receiving unfair pay and little respect given the huge university endowments and esteem enjoyed by faculty members.<sup>240</sup> As university clericals articulated their concerns, many faced union-busting challenges from administrators but most enjoyed the support of progressively-minded faculty and students. Many faculty and students either backed staff campaigns or waged their own protests against despotic administrators. On the contrary, managers and personnel officers in private industries collaborated to preempt organizing.<sup>241</sup>

Students tended to defend workers unless their campaigns infringed upon students' interests or the smooth operations of the university. When the Brandeis University librarians had trouble negotiating their contract with administrators in 1976, students openly supported them in articles and demonstrations. The Brandeis Student Senate in particular declared its support for the demands of the union in the student newspaper. Twenty students met with administrators to pressure them to accept the librarians' contract terms.<sup>242</sup> Students for a Fair Contract organized a one-day boycott of the library in support of the union, reducing library patrons from an average

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<sup>238</sup> Richard W. Hurd, "Organizing and Representing Clerical Workers: The Harvard Model," *Articles & Chapters*, Paper 319, Cornell University, 1993, <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/articles/319>.

<sup>239</sup> Howard Zinn, "'A University Should Not Be A Democracy'" in *The Zinn Reader: Writings on Disobedience and Democracy* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007), 581-592.

<sup>240</sup> Richard W. Hurd, "The Unionization of Clerical and Technical Workers in Colleges and Universities: A Status Report," *Conference Proceedings, Presentations, and Speeches*, Paper 11, Cornell University, 1989, <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/conference/11>.

<sup>241</sup> Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 222. Karen Nussbaum, "Working Women's Insurgent Consciousness" in Dorothy Sue Cobble, editor, *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 166-167.

<sup>242</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, David Adlerstein, "Senate Favors Union Stance," *The Justice* (An Independent Student Newspaper), November 2, 1976, Box 7, folder 39, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. Also see "Editorial: The Library Negotiations," *The Justice*, November 2, 1976, Box 7, folder 39.

of 2000 to 400 on December 2, 1976. Thirty students joined the picket line and participated in the rally as well to discuss the status of contract negotiations.<sup>243</sup> Students at other universities supported the efforts of unionizing workers. At Brown University in November 1973, students joined library workers in a strike to gain higher wages and to revise job classifications, successfully helping to secure a 13 percent salary increase. Part-time student employees refused to work and large numbers of students refused to use the library.<sup>244</sup> Student body leaders at the University of Cincinnati supported unionized workers in their efforts to win pay equity for university clericals. The student government president declared his support for the union at a news conference where the UC clericals announced that they would be filing a pay equity suit with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).<sup>245</sup> Harvard students signed petitions to implore President Derek Bok to cease his anti-union campaign against the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers (HUCTW).<sup>246</sup> Students joined faculty and clericals workers who went on strike at Boston University (BU) in 1979.<sup>247</sup>

However, student opinion could be less enthusiastic or even ambivalent, particularly if collective resistance conflicted with access to university services. Students were exchanging money for a service, and usually they (and their parents) resented paying for services not

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<sup>243</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Donald Berk, "Brandeis Students Demonstrate in Support of Library Workers," *The Harvard Crimson*, December 2, 1976, Box 7, folder 42. Flyer, "Boycott Goldfarb Library, Thursday December 2," 1976, Box 7, folder 39.

<sup>244</sup> SEIU District 925, "Victories Are Possible," *The Coffee Break* (Newsletter of SCAMP), Vol. 1, no. 3, July 1974, Box 7, folder 29.

<sup>245</sup> SEIU District 925, Letter from Deborah Schneider, District 925 Regional Director to Joseph Reid, Student Government President, 1998, Box 11, folder 22. Press Release, "UC Women Office Workers Commemorate Women's Equality Day with Mass Filings of Wage Discrimination Complaints at the EEOC," August 1998, Box 11, folder 22.

<sup>246</sup> Richard W. Hurd, "The Unionization of Clerical and Technical Workers in Colleges and Universities: A Status Report," *Conference Proceedings, Presentations, and Speeches*, Paper 11, Cornell University, 1989, <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/conference/11>.

<sup>247</sup> Laurence S. Grafstein, "B.U. Clerks Strike; Negotiations Halted," *The Harvard Crimson*, September 10, 1979. Students supported strikes by faculty and the buildings and grounds workers as well. See Howard Zinn, "A University Should Not Be A Democracy" in *The Zinn Reader: Writings on Disobedience and Democracy* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007), 581-592.

received. Some BU students supported action against President John Silber and along with dissatisfied faculty wore “Dump Silber” buttons. Yet many worried that tuition would increase if faculty and staff received raises. Others filed a class action lawsuit to recover tuition money for classes not held because of the faculty strike.<sup>248</sup> At Yale students supported the causes that helped clericals to unionize, participating in a 4000-person rally in 1984. Nonetheless, many students cared most about averting a strike, urging the administrators to do everything possible to defer to the union demands.<sup>249</sup> At Brandeis many undergraduates felt similarly about the importance of settling union-administration tensions quickly. One student noted that the “schism...threatens to seriously hinder library operations,” showing her point of view as a consumer of university services.<sup>250</sup>

Many faculty members tended to sympathize with the social justice campaigns waged by clerical workers. At several universities, professors were organizing chapters of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and thus the faculty and staff faced a common enemy in the administration.<sup>251</sup> At BU, President Silber provoked university employees of all ranks, facilitating a coalition among faculty and staff unions.<sup>252</sup> A faculty union collaborated with two different staff associations at Northeastern University regarding affirmative action and related employment issues on campus.<sup>253</sup> The University of Cincinnati also boasted a coalition

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<sup>248</sup> Nicholas D. Kristof, “The B.U. Faculty: Striking Back,” *The Harvard Crimson*, April 11, 1979.

<sup>249</sup> John Rosentkai, “Yale Clerical Workers Threaten To Walk Out On March 28,” *The Harvard Crimson*, March 16, 1984.

<sup>250</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Editorial: The Library Negotiations,” *The Justice*, November 2, 1976, Box 7, folder 39, Reuther Library.

<sup>251</sup> The first faculty unions attempted to organize professors in the late 1910s under the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) at Howard University (1918) and the University of Illinois (1919). Yet, only in the 1960s were faculty members able to secure lasting unions and meaningful contracts. Timothy Reese Cain, “‘Learning and Labor’: Faculty Unionization at the University of Illinois, 1919-1923,” *Labor History*, Vol. 51, issue 4, (2010), 543-569.

<sup>252</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from BU Local/District 65 and BU Chapter of AAUP to Staff and Faculty, March 5, 1979, Box 7, folder 31, Reuther Library.

<sup>253</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Amy of Northeastern University to Judy of Brandeis University, 1975 Box 7, folder 37, Reuther Library.

among four campus unions including the AAUP and District 925, which agreed to support one another on strike.<sup>254</sup> The Syracuse University Chapter of the AAUP passed a formal resolution backing the unionizing efforts of the support staff.<sup>255</sup> According to a study of university organizing in the 1970s and 1980, the presence of a faculty union greatly increased the success rate of the clerical drive. The existence of a faculty union encouraged clerical organizing.<sup>256</sup>

While organizations like the AAUP battled university administrators for control over hiring, tenure, and salaries, women faculty members faced a more challenging workplace environment because of their gender. Women and people of color were underrepresented in most academic departments, particularly at the level of tenured faculty. Although women comprised 26 percent of faculty members in the 1920s, the female percentage continued to decline over the next five decades, hovering right below twenty percent in the beginning of the 70s. Tenure eluded women and minorities: two women had tenure at the University of Massachusetts, Boston in 1970 and zero at Harvard. African Americans held less than three percent of professorships in 1970.<sup>257</sup> After experiencing discrimination in graduate school and on the job market, Dr. Bernice Sandler allied with the newly-created Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) to combat sex bias in higher education. Led by Sandler's efforts, WEAL filed complaints with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) against some 300

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<sup>254</sup> SEIU District 925, Norman H. Murdoch of AAUP Thanks 925 for Strike Efforts, *District 925 Newsletter: Union News for U.C. Support Staff*, May/June 1993, Box 11, folder 13, Reuther Library.

<sup>255</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, S.U. Chapter Organizing Committee, *District 925, Better Times*, Vol. 1, no. 5, 1982, Box 8, folder 28, Reuther Library.

<sup>256</sup> Richard W. Hurd, "The Unionization of Clerical and Technical Workers in Colleges and Universities: A Status Report," *Conference Proceedings, Presentations, and Speeches*, Paper 11, Cornell University, 1989, <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/conference/11>.

<sup>257</sup> Bonnie Cook Freeman, "Faculty Women in the American University: Up the Down Staircase," *Higher Education* Vol. 6, no. 2 (May 1977), 166, 168. Statement of Dr. Bernice Sandler, Chairman, Action Committee for Federal Contract Compliance in Education, WEAL, Congressional Hearing on Sex Discrimination in Higher Education, Summer 1970, < <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6462/>>.

universities including every medical school in the nation.<sup>258</sup> In 1969 and 1970 this organization, backed by testimony and evidence from numerous female professors, successfully showed that most universities were not complying with federal mandates concerning hiring and promotions. Under Executive Order 11246, the federal government withheld funds from certain programs at schools including the University of Michigan and Harvard until the universities constructed and instituted suitable affirmative action programs.<sup>259</sup> WEAL effectively publicized the use of Executive Order 11246 to battle sex discrimination.<sup>260</sup>

Given the status of many of WEAL's founders and members, female professors and government officials often used their positions of authority to advocate for equity in higher education. Congresswomen including Edith Green, Shirley Chisholm, and Martha Griffiths happened to be on WEAL's national advisory board. Representative Green in particular responded to Sandler's efforts to strengthen federal regulations against workplace bias in the academy. Sandler and Green initiated hearings on sex discrimination in higher education, which eventually led to the passage of Title IX and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, which extended Title VII to cover employees in higher education.<sup>261</sup> Armed with new legislation and federal orders to enforce E.O. 11246, female faculty members focused on using state remedies to achieve employment equity in the 1970s. Female professors at schools across the nation pursued fair treatment in hiring, administrative, and promotion decisions. They formed coalitions within their universities and networked with women from other campuses.<sup>262</sup> Access

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<sup>258</sup> Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 89.

<sup>259</sup> Gayle Graham Yates, *What Women Want: The Ideas of the Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 47.

<sup>260</sup> Bernice R. Sandler, "'Too Strong for a Woman'—The Five Words that Created Title IX" in Susan Ware, editor, *Title IX: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007), 38.

<sup>261</sup> Sandler, "'Too Strong for a Woman'" in Ware, *Title IX*, 39-42.

<sup>262</sup> For more on the battles at individual schools and analysis of remedies for sex discrimination, see the proceedings of a conference on the status of women in higher education that took place at Cornell University in 1980. Jennie

to tenure improved and the percentage of women faculty increased even though sex discrimination persisted. By the 1990s female faculty members reported that salary and rank inequities still plagued academic departments. Of the full-time University of Cincinnati (UC) employees with the title of full professor, only 16 percent were women and 2 percent were black in 1997.<sup>263</sup> Although the UC affirmative action policy attempted to ensure equitable representation of women and minorities, it failed to remedy much of the bias that could not be eliminated by existing law.

The disparate strategies and goals of female professors and female clericals in the 1970s and 1980s usually meant that faculty and staff complaints moved along different paths. Yet at times university women, regardless of rank, endured similar problems based on their gender. Sexual harassment affected students, professors, and staff on campus. Yet clericals turned to unions for remedy and many university workers secured contract clauses forbidding sexual harassment. The BU chapter of Local 925, which was comprised mostly of librarians, wrote several procedures into its contract that guaranteed rights for the complainants. The contract declared that BU would agree to post a ‘no tolerance to sexual harassment’ policy, to process sexual harassment claims in a speedy manner, and to offer complainants a transfer to a job of equal pay and status.<sup>264</sup> The District 925 contract with the University of Cincinnati, which covered over 1,000 workers, also included a clause forbidding sexual harassment, and the union demonstrated its commitment to backing workers who brought forward claims. When a male professor sexually assaulted a female clerical worker, the union took swift action and helped get her paid administrative leave. District 925 also forced the administration to move the professor

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Farley, editor, *Sex Discrimination in Higher Education: Strategies for Equality* (Ithaca: New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, November 1980).

<sup>263</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Appendix C: Utilization Analysis Summary” in University of Cincinnati Affirmative Action Plan, 1997-1998, Box 11, folder 14, Reuther Library.

<sup>264</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Sexual Harrassment—Your Rights,” Local 925 Newsletter, May 1980, Box 7, folder 25, Reuther Library.

to another office.<sup>265</sup> Other higher education contracts with sexual harassment clauses included the University of Illinois and Peralta Community College in California.<sup>266</sup> Brandeis University and the University of Washington incorporated “dignity and respect” clauses in their contracts, which were general statements that could cover incidences of sexual harassment but called for all university employees to treat each other with dignity and respect.<sup>267</sup> The UW contract clause had stronger and more specific language, and thus was not accepted quickly or amiably by administrators. It stated that employees could file grievances if they were publically reprimanded or asked to perform personal favors.<sup>268</sup>

At the University of Washington (UW), clericals vocalized the harassment they had endured, in part because of the backing of their union.<sup>269</sup> In 1990 alone, six women (three clericals and three students) filed charges against three men (two professors and one dean) at the UW Office of Human Rights. This office held the duty of investigating sexual harassment cases, yet UW District 925 believed that the office rarely supported the complainant and rather tried to protect the university’s image. District 925 provided the clericals with an union attorney who had experience in sexual harassment claims at UW. He perceived the Human Rights Office as more sensitive to complaints from female students relative to those from female staff. Furthermore, he stated that the office considered the prestige of the accused professor when making a ruling, overlooking the actions of more prominent faculty. Due in part to the union’s

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<sup>265</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “The Assault,” District 925 News: The Union Newsletter of the UC Support Staff, April 1993, Box 11, folder 13, Reuther Library.

<sup>266</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, SEIU, AFL-CIO publication, “Appendix A—Examples of Contract Language Which Address Sexual Harassment” in *Sexual Harassment: Your Rights* (1987), Box 6, folder 1, Reuther Library.

<sup>267</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Article XXX, Section 6, Dignity and Respect,” Agreement between Brandeis University and Local 925 SEIU, 1982-1984, Box 13, folder 43, Reuther Library.

<sup>268</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Dignity and Respect,” CSA/925 Contract, 1990, Box 12, folder 3, Reuther Library. Also in Box 12, folder 3, see union flyers about deadlock with administration over dignity clause.

<sup>269</sup> Even before the UW staff association, called the Classified Staff Association or CSA, had formal union status with District 925, it had secured written contracts with UW administrators that were similar in language to union contracts. CSA declared that it wanted control over the sexual harassment claims process, which by 1990 was performed by UW institutions. See contract negotiations of CSA from 1983 in SEIU District 925 Collection, Box 12, folder 2, Reuther Library.

role in publicizing the cases, five of the six women received settlements from UW ranging from \$1,000 to \$25,000. Two professors ‘voluntarily’ retired. The Human Rights Office cleared the Dean of the Medical School of all charges and his secretary who accused him of inappropriate behavior received no settlement. UW noted that a factor in their decision had been that both the dean and his secretary were drunk when the alleged incidence occurred. While he retained his position as a professor, his secretary was left without a job.<sup>270</sup>

The intellectual achievements of faculty women and female students did not spare them from the inappropriate behavior of select male professors. At a conference on sex discrimination in higher education, several experts spoke about sexual harassment in the academy. In a session on the importance of finding a mentor to improve access to opportunities, sexual harassment arose as a potential danger. A graduate student asked two presenters about establishing a relationship with a male faculty member. The experts acknowledged that indeed this issue was a real problem but that perhaps a student could defuse the sexual aspects of a relationship in several ways. Do not go to a mentor alone but go with other women; ask him out for a beer but let him know that you seek “his help professionally and are not interested in him as a sexual object.” Get to know the family of the male professor. Or seek a male known to be sensitive “in these matters.” Otherwise, find a female professor even if she is not in the same department or not tenured.<sup>271</sup> Clearly, some male faculty were using their academic status to take advantage of women’s aspirations to be upwardly mobile.

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<sup>270</sup> See the following articles in SEIU District 925 Collection, Box 12, folder 22, Reuther Library: Jane Hadley, “University Draws Fire Over Bias Cases,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 26, 1990; Jane Hadley, “UW Pays \$35,000 in Harassment Cases,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 26, 1990; Chuck Robertson, “UW Forestry Professor to Retire Following Sex Harassment Charges,” *The Daily* (UW student paper), October 1, 1990.

<sup>271</sup> Discussion from Mary P. Rowe, “Building Mentorship Frameworks as Part of an Effective Equal Opportunity Ecology” from Jennie Farley, editor, *Sex Discrimination in Higher Education: Strategies for Equality* (Ithaca: New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, November 1980), 32-33.



Of all of the women working within the university setting, black female clerical workers faced some of the most difficult working conditions. The discriminatory attitudes exercised towards them in the office showed that as black women transitioned from domestic into clerical work, many white women and men did not welcome them. A black woman from Florida said that she enrolled in a one-year business program specifically because she did not want to clean someone's house or work in a restaurant, which were the jobs that would have been available to her without clerical training. After searching extensively in the Florida area and encountering racial discrimination in hiring, she nationalized her job search and landed a position at Boston College (BC) in 1968. She described how trying to gain acceptance in a traditionally-white office place could be difficult if not impossible:

People can smile at you for days and you think they really want you, but meanwhile behind your back they're doing things to get rid of you. It's just that they don't want a black person around them. They don't even care to find out whether they like you or not.<sup>272</sup>

To try to "get rid" of black clericals, often administrators gave them harsh or unfair working conditions. One clerical was assigned to thirteen professors who demanded more work of her than she could ever complete; eventually, she left her job. Another was hired for a permanent job but it was actually a temporary position. Still another black clerical faced unfair treatment from her white supervisor. She was given most of the work of the department while her white supervisor took long lunches with another one of the white clericals. Yet if she were to return one minute late from her own lunch break, she was cited in violation of the office rules. According to the clerical from Florida, the white employees "think if they're nasty enough to

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<sup>272</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with African-American Boston College clerical, #30, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 8. Schlesinger Library.

people they will leave.” Subsequently some of the black employees “feel that there’s too few of us [maybe 20 clericals out of 400 on campus] to fight against them, so why not leave?”<sup>273</sup>

As black women entered the clerical workforce in larger numbers, the resulting office environment could be anything but comfortable. The clerical from Florida who worked at Boston College believed that most professors had never worked or gone to school with a black person before. Many resorted to stereotypes to try to relate to black clericals. “They always talk about Sammy Davis Junior. They always say how much they love him, or how much they love Diana Ross” recalled the BC clerical.<sup>274</sup> She noted that professors would look directly at her in a room full of white people when making such comments. Other stereotypes were less benign such as the idea that black men were dangerous and violent and the idea that black women were lazy. One white clerical always called security when a black man was in the building. Another would complain about the number of blacks that she thought were on welfare because they did not want to work.<sup>275</sup> Black clericals knew from direct or indirect comments that many white employees of all levels did not feel comfortable with them or want them in the office environment.

Thus, racial discrimination and racial identities could threaten potential solidarity among clerical workers. However, regardless of racial identity, workers did not always agree on the efficacy of unions. At BU, an anonymous university librarian circulated letters against the ongoing union campaigns of Local 925. In this literature, the anti-union employee, or perhaps the administration, countered the said benefits of unions and 925 in particular. For instance, one letter claimed that once established on campus, a union would be difficult to remove if

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<sup>273</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with African-American Boston College clerical, #30, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 8. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>274</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with African-American Boston College clerical, #30, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 8. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>275</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with African-American Boston College clerical, #30, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 8. Schlesinger Library.

employees did not like it. Employees could not “try out” the union, but rather unionizing was a nearly irreversible decision. Unionized employees also should fear the power of contracts. They could guarantee benefits but also they could implement unfavorable circumstances. Workers would have to accept the outcome of a contract, and not everyone would have a voice in the negotiation process.<sup>276</sup> Another letter claimed that union status would lower the professional rank of librarians by creating more distance between those in management and those considered workers.<sup>277</sup> This anonymous employee attempted to incite fear in women who had notions that union leaders took away even more control from their members’ work lives.

University administrators posed the greatest threat to clerical unions as they devised strategies to prevent or limit the efficacy of union campaigns. Administrators increased worker participation in decision making when organizing seemed imminent, which could undercut the influence of union messages.<sup>278</sup> The practice of raising wages in a union campaign was supposed to be illegal under the National Labor Relations Act, but some employers granted other perks that acknowledged the importance of and appreciation for employees.<sup>279</sup> At Brandeis, the administration formed an Employees’ Council that would allow workers to meet with higher-ranking administrators and provide the university with “input from a valuable source of talent

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<sup>276</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from University Librarian to Fellow Workers, August 8, 1978, Box 7, folder 32, Reuther Library.

<sup>277</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from University Librarian to Fellow Workers, July 28, 1978, Box 7, folder 32, Reuther Library.

<sup>278</sup> At Syracuse University, District 925 reported that the administration used union-busting tactics similar to those used in big businesses. Tactics included giving employees bonuses, starting in-house worker organizations, and holding required talks or lunches with supervisors. See SU Chapter Organizing Committee, District 925, *Better Times*, Vol. 1, no. 5, 1982, Box 8 folder 28, Reuther Library.

<sup>279</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo to Eyeopener from Jon Hiatt, Labor Attorney for 925 re University’s Obligation to Provide Scheduled Wage and Benefit Increases, Notwithstanding Union Organizing Campaign, May 25, 1984, Box 8, folder 29, Reuther Library. Despite this policy, often employees did given raises during union campaigns. Karen Nussbaum reported unexplained raises of 5 or 6 percent at Brandeis among the clerical support staff directly after the librarians signed their contract with Local 925. See letter from Karen Nussbaum to Brandeis Support Staff card signers, April 22, 1977, Box 7, folder 44, Reuther Library.

and knowledge.”<sup>280</sup> This announcement came just months after the worker-organized Brandeis Employees Coalition started meeting about worker problems on campus.<sup>281</sup> The University of New Haven (UNH) followed a similar pattern. Workers who formed the Eyeopener committee published their own newsletter about low pay, problems with the administration, and organizing with District 925. The UNH president welcomed these dissatisfied workers to reorganize the UNH-created Clerical Council to have their voices heard by administrators. Also he welcomed the Eyeopener committee to come to him with any suggestions. But the staff refused participation in the Clerical Council and continued to pursue unionization, writing that it would not be “fooled again.”<sup>282</sup>

Once unions had been certified, administrators tried to weaken them by stalling contract negotiations. At Boston University, the administration dubbed the “J.P. Stevens of Academia” attempted to subvert passage of the faculty’s contract.<sup>283</sup> Negotiating teams finally seemed to agree upon the terms of the faculty contract in April 1979. Yet the night before the vote to finalize the contract, President Silber and Chairman of the Board of Trustees Arthur Metcalf held a private dinner party for select trustee members. The next day the passage of the contract stalled as several trustee members decided to approve the contract only on conditional terms.<sup>284</sup> Furthermore, at Brandeis University the administration attempted to weaken the newly-created librarian’s union by delaying passage of its contract. Contract negotiations about pay raises and

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<sup>280</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo to All Employees from Michael J. Enwright, Director of University Personnel Services re: Employees’ Council, December 27, 1973, Box 7, folder 35, Reuther Library.

<sup>281</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Brandeis Employees Coalition, Minutes of first meeting, May 15, 1973, Box 7, folder 35, Reuther Library.

<sup>282</sup> SEIU District 925 Collections, “Eyeopener” newsletter written by UNH staff, No. 8, August 28, 1984, Box 8, folder 29, Reuther Library.

<sup>283</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, District 65, “Summary of District 65 Fight and Issues,” April 1979, Box 7, folder 31, Reuther Library.

<sup>284</sup> SEIU District 925, “How to Reheat BU,” *The Boston Globe*, April 6, 1979; Muriel Cohen, “The Divided Trustees at BU,” *The Boston Globe*, April 16, 1979; Letter from BU Local 925 Librarians to Fellow Union Members, April 11, 1979, Box 7, folder 31, Reuther Library.

the inclusion of a “just cause” clause for discharge lasted a year.<sup>285</sup> Similarly, at the University of Cincinnati, employees went on strike after being without a contract for almost a month. The 1,200-person clerical union claimed that they could not reach fair contract terms with the UC administration since the university was attempting to institute a wage freeze, pay more for medical insurance, and receive fewer sick days.<sup>286</sup>

Thus, many universities promoted progressive ideals for their students while upholding rigid employment hierarchies among their workers. Smith College stands as perhaps one of the most glaring examples of a female-dominated establishment that furthered personal and intellectual growth for students while remaining strong in its anti-union sentiment.<sup>287</sup> Organizing began in late 1991 when a group of eight employees started meeting to discuss their work problems, particularly their feeling that faculty and administrators did not respect their opinions on work-related issues.<sup>288</sup> As Nancy Slator, secretary in the dean of the faculty’s office put it, “‘Smith College is all about empowering women. The issue that comes up (with the employees) is respect and being able to take control of our own work lives the way Smith wants its students to.’”<sup>289</sup> By late 1992, this informal group contacted 925 and sought unionization not just because of respect issues but also because of cuts in medical benefits and a recent campus-wide job reclassification program. This program downgraded the rank and salaries of many office

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<sup>285</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Local 925, “Report on Brandeis Library Union Contracts,” 1977, Box 7, folder 40, Reuther Library.

<sup>286</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, District 925 Press Release, “925 Declares ‘Strike Zone’ Today,” September 28, 1992, Box 11, folder 6, Reuther Library.

<sup>287</sup> Another interesting example of an institution aimed at advancing women but reluctant to fully provide economic justice for its workers is the National Federation of Business & Professional Women’s Clubs, Inc., which signed an agreement with District 925 between 1997 and 2001, establishing better wages, promotional opportunities, job descriptions, and flextime for employees. SEIU District 925 Collection, 925 Agreement with the National Business & Professional Women’s Clubs, Inc. and the Business & Professional Women’s Foundation, 1997-2001, Box 14, folder 37, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>288</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Kim Gilman, SEIU Organizer at Smith to Karen Nussbaum, January 29, 1993, Box 8, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>289</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Jessica Clarke, “Smith Clerical Staff Organizing Union,” *Hampshire Union-News*, February 3, 1993, Box 8, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

workers who were making less than the unionized dining room assistants and custodians. About fifteen clerical workers including Slator formed a group called Workers Empowering Workers in Northampton (WE WIN), and they recruited over seventy other employees to attend informational meetings about unionization.<sup>290</sup>

District 925, under the guidance of regional organizer Kim Gilman, sought to use Smith's mission, the advancement of women, to try to convince employees to unionize. It was willing to put forward financial and human resources for the effort, for if the union drive succeeded, District 925 would gain anywhere from 275 to 400 clericals, and then it could work towards organizing nearby schools including Amherst, Mt. Holyoke, and Hampshire.<sup>291</sup> District 925 organizers brought unionized university workers from other New England schools to talk to the Smith staff and answer their questions.<sup>292</sup> The union also sought help from Smith alumnus and 9to5 supporter Gloria Steinem. Gilman wanted her to endorse the union drive by backing 925 in during her campus visit. Hopefully Steinem could also meet with Smith President Mary Maples Dunn to denounce her union-busting actions and meet with WE WIN members to encourage their efforts.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Kim Gilman, SEIU Organizer at Smith to Karen Nussbaum, January 29, 1993, Box 8, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. Residence, dining, and custodial employees were all represented by SEIU locals.

<sup>291</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo to Karen Nussbaum from Nancy E. Cross re: Smith College Campaign, December 15, 1992, Box 8, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. Cross writes that pending continued interest in the campaign, the SEIU will pay for and provide organizers to conduct a "blitz" whereby union staff would visit employee offices, homes, and make phone calls. For the size of the clerical unit see SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo to David Rodich, Eileen Haggerty, Nancy Cross from Kim Gilman re: Proposed Assessment Plan for Smith College Clerical Unit, December 11, 1992, Box 8, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. For the strategy see SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Kim Gilman, SEIU Organizer at Smith to Karen Nussbaum, January 29, 1993, Box 8, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>292</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, "District 925 News: 'We Make UC Work'" (Union newsletter of the University of Cincinnati Support Staff), April 1993, Box 11, folder 13, Reuther Library. Participants of the panel included workers from UC, UMass-Amherst, Vassar, Yale, and Harvard. According to the UC worker, most of the women at the Smith panel had little or no first-hand knowledge of unionization and they had many questions.

<sup>293</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo to Karen Nussbaum from Nancy E. Cross re: Smith College Campaign/Gloria Steinem, January 29, 1993, Box 8, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

The unionization efforts failed, in part because of the success of a bold anti-union campaign waged by President Dunn. In January 1993 Dunn sent ten pages of anti-union literature to the staff and faculty, and she began a series of meetings with supervisors to instruct them to convey the anti-union message to all employees.<sup>294</sup> Maples wrote in a January 19, 1993 letter to Smith staff telling them that they already had “competitive compensation” and “a voice in policy decisions” through the Staff Council. She wrote that “[as] Smith is an educational institution, I know you will not be surprised if I ask you to make an educated decision about your involvement with the union.” Most importantly was that Dunn claimed her door was always open.<sup>295</sup> In other memos Dunn claimed that unions could limit the advancement of ambitious workers and that overall union participation was declining in the U.S., making membership not in the best interest of the workers.<sup>296</sup> In addition to the statements of the president, some supervisors were forbidding employees from distributing union literature in the workplace. Smith administrators started forming policies to keep employees from reserving college space for union discussion. Lastly, because of pro-union sentiment among employees on the Staff Council, administrators suspended publication of the Staff Council Newsletter, of which union advocate Slator was editor.<sup>297</sup>

In addition, some Smith employees articulated their opposition to organizing, arguing that the staff would not benefit from the union. The anti-union employees openly vocalized their

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<sup>294</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Kim Gilman, SEIU Organizer at Smith to Karen Nussbaum, January 29, 1993, Box 8, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. Gilman felt sure that Smith had hired a professional consultant but had no evidence to date.

<sup>295</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Mary Maples Dunn to Smith Staff Members, January 19, 1993, Box 8, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>296</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Cate Chant, “Drive to Unionize Clerical Staff at Smith is Called Part of a Trend,” *Boston Globe*, February 15, 1993, Box 8, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>297</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “WE WIN Newsletter,” Issue #6, March 10, 1993, Box 8, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

platform, resulting in a flyer entitled “We Won’t!”<sup>298</sup> The forty employees who endorsed this position emphasized that they were not powerless without a union, and did not need “a union to ‘protect’ or ‘save’ us.” They saw the union as selling them something, representation, which they did not need since they could speak up for themselves. Smith employees did not need the “‘muscle’” of a union to bring them some kind of “magic power.”<sup>299</sup> Two of the “We Won’t” women felt “personally attacked” by the pro-union employees who tried to make them feel submissive and complacent. But they were happy at Smith and felt that a union was unnecessary given Smith’s responsiveness, particularly since the administration recently added family dental care, eye care, and paid maternity leave to employee benefit packages.<sup>300</sup> The administration’s anti-union strategies proved too effective.

### From Consciousness Raising to Collective Bargaining

As demonstrated in the previous section, many universities promoted the advancement of women as scholars but they were reluctant to fully provide for them as workers. While clericals may have felt slighted by their superiors before, unjust alternations in pay scales precipitated action at universities in the 1970s. As clericals identified their economic problems as resulting from their sex-segregated labor, they were more willing to demand better pay for themselves and their families. The feminist movement encouraged women to reexamine their everyday lives and empower themselves in their interpersonal relationships. Clerical women applied feminist messages to their workplaces to change the contractual terms of their labor. This section will

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<sup>298</sup> According to Gilman, “the anti-union campaign has intimidated many of the workers.” SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Kim Gilman, SEIU Organizer at Smith to Karen Nussbaum, January 29, 1993, Box 8, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>299</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “We Won’t!” flyer, ca. 1993, Box 8, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>300</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Laurie Loisel, “Smith Union Battle Hits Close to Home,” *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, March 11, 1993, Box 8, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.



examine clerical campaigns on university campuses, arguing that much of the resistance for higher wages in the 1970s was part of the movement for pay equity. Previous definitions of the fight to attain pay equity have required the presence of leading activists or policymakers. The campus battles discussed below demonstrate that advancing pay equity only required that women realize that their sex-segregated work was undervalued, and that they move towards achieving economic justice. The conceptual boundaries of the pay equity movement must be expanded to include grassroots campaigns and smaller-scale union efforts.

The founding of Brandeis University's Local 925 chapter demonstrates that persistent inequitable pay, unlike almost any other issue, could bring workers together. When the Brandeis Library Staff Association, composed initially of "non-professional" librarians, first met with university administrators in 1969, all six of the staff's discussion points involved pay rates and raises. They requested higher raises (8 percent instead of 6 percent), insisted that administrators give them a voice in potential increases, and they protested what they saw as pay inequity based on seniority and within job classifications.<sup>301</sup> Four years later, pay was still the primary concern for group members. By 1975 the Staff Association had successfully won an across-the-board pay increase, in part because of their role as a pressure group, but they persisted in petitioning for higher raises.<sup>302</sup> Deciding that the administration had not satisfactorily recognized their requests, including a call to earn the same as other area college librarians, the Brandeis Library Staff

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<sup>301</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo to the Library Staff from the Staff Association Board re: Welfare Committee Action, July 2, 1969, Box 7, folder 35, Reuther Library.

<sup>302</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Notes from meeting with Brandeis Library Staff Association, April 30, 1975, Box 7, folder 36, Reuther Library.

Association voted to begin a union drive with Local 925 in September 1975.<sup>303</sup> In early 1976, an 80 percent pro-union vote made Brandeis the first university to affiliate with 925.<sup>304</sup>

The grassroots efforts of the Boston University (BU) clerical and library staff reveal that economic concerns could mobilize workers for years despite an extremely hostile administration.<sup>305</sup> Starting in 1971 BU clericals attempted but failed to unionize, resuming their efforts three years later. The unrest in 1974 stemmed from administrators' decision to freeze automatic step increases and substitute merit awards only.<sup>306</sup> Salary raises became more arbitrary, as BU did not ensure annual cost-of-living raises. Furthermore, in the merit plan, administrators sought to maintain a bell curve distribution when rating employees' performances, predetermining that only 2 to 3 percent of the employees would be rated outstanding, 12 percent superior, 70 percent competent, and that 12 percent would meet minimum requirements.<sup>307</sup>

Women workers formed the Staff Committee Against the Merit Plan (SCAMP) and circulated a newsletter called "Coffee Break" to inform fellow workers of the inequity of the step freeze that discounted their daily contributions to BU. Through this organization they sought to

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<sup>303</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Open Letter to the Brandeis Community drafted by Local 925, ca. 1975, Box 7, folder 36, Reuther Library.

<sup>304</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum, Press Release: Brandeis University Library Workers Make Clean Sweep—Landslide Vote for Local 925, February 3, 1976, Box 7, folder 38, Reuther Library.

<sup>305</sup> A couple of works have explored the Boston University unionization efforts. Tom Juravich, William F. Hartford, James R. Green, *Commonwealth of Toil: Chapters in the History of Massachusetts Workers and Their Unions* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts), 1996, 146-152. Gary Zabel, "The Boston University Strike of 1979," in Aaron Brenner, Benjamin Day, Immanuel Ness, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History* (New York: M.E. Sharp, 2009), 690-697. Zabel was a graduate student at Boston University during the strikes. Avishay Artsy, "Strike Commemoration Unites Campus," *The Student Underground*, Issue 26, Spring 2000, accessed March 1, 2011, [http://www.bostonunderground.info/old\\_website/article.php?Issue=26&ArticleID=82](http://www.bostonunderground.info/old_website/article.php?Issue=26&ArticleID=82).

<sup>306</sup> The NLRB petition shows that in 1971, 611 employees voted against and 213 voted for District 65 of DWA out of almost 1100 employees eligible to vote. SEIU District 925 Collection, NLRB Petition, case number 1-RC-11,452, submitted on March 3, 1971, vote on May 14, 1971, Box 7, folder 29, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>307</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, SCAMP Newsletter," Vol. 1, No. 2, June 1974, Box 7, folder 29, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. Interestingly, the first issue of the SCAMP newsletter ("Coffee Break") asked employees what they thought about the new salary plan and asked for reactions. Employees did not automatically conclude that the new salary plan would disadvantage them. See "The Coffee Break," Vol. 1, No. 1, June 3, 1974, Box 7, folder 29. For more on the bell curve distribution, see SEIU District 925 Collection, "Supplement to Guidebook for Supervisors: Implementing the Merit Salary Plan for Biweekly Employees," ca. 1974, Box 7, folder 29, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

get to know other employees and air their complaints about the plan. They resented the lack of staff participation in the development of the plan and the preemptive decision that only a small percentage of staff could receive high ratings. Employees met regularly to discuss the merit plan at BU, realizing that recently hired clericals were earning more money than those with seniority. Women claimed that they could get higher raises if they quit and got rehired than if they were subject to the merit plan where annual raises were between 3 and 6 percent, which would not cover the rising cost of living.<sup>308</sup> The clericals submitted a petition of over 200 signatures against the merit plan to the Vice President of Personnel, gaining campus-wide recognition for their cause but failing to change policy.<sup>309</sup> The Vice President acknowledged that the policy had “shortcomings” but stated that it would take “some time before a strategy for implementing a revision [could] be announced.”<sup>310</sup> Many clericals would not accept what had become the status quo. One organizer declared that she joined the effort when she recognized that she felt embarrassed to tell people that she was a secretary at social events. She had a self-described “‘ah-hah!’” moment when she realized that she worked very hard at her job for very little pay, waitressing one night a week to help cover the expense of taking classes at BU.<sup>311</sup>

As BU administrators upheld the new pay structure, women began talking more openly about an array of poor work conditions and unionization as a formal remedy. SCAMP changed its name in 1975 to Boston University Organizing Committee (BUSOC). More clericals became interested in unionizing as they realized that, once the faculty affiliated with the American

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<sup>308</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “SCAMP Newsletter,” Coffee Break, Vol. 1, No. 2, June 1974, Box 7, folder 29, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI; SEIU District 925 Collection, Employee notes from meeting on 5/23/74, Box 7, folder 29, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>309</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “SCAMP Protesting BU Salary Plan,” 9to5 University & College Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1975, Box 1, folder 20, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>310</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo to All Deans and Directors from Patricia M. Harvey, VP Personnel, August 5, 1974, Box 7, folder 29, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>311</sup> Barbara Rahke, interview by Stacey Heath, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, May 23, 2006.

Association of University Professors (AAUP) in 1975, clericals were the only sector of BU that was not organized.<sup>312</sup> Furthermore, the clerical staff association held several meetings with other local university groups that were actively unionizing. Leaders from both the MIT and Harvard office workers movements, as did Karen Nussbaum, came to speak at several BUSOC meetings.<sup>313</sup> Both Local 925 and District 65 became active in organizing the BU campus for several years.<sup>314</sup> BUSOC members discussed the merits of both Local 925 and District 65 as possible union choices, placing importance on local autonomy and internal organizers when choosing a union.<sup>315</sup> The thought of receiving orders from remote, centralized institutions with male leaders made many clericals uncomfortable since they were organizing to seek greater control over their work lives.

President Silber attempted to stop clerical unionization by using conventional anti-union strategies and consultants.<sup>316</sup> University managers and administrators were to recognize suspect employees based on the traditions of “Pinkertons.”<sup>317</sup> Named for Allan Pinkerton, a late nineteenth-century detective, Pinkertons were men hired to infiltrate the workplace, spy on employee meetings, recognize union men, report them to company leaders, and thus help

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<sup>312</sup> Also the building and grounds workers at BU were already organized. SEIU District 925 Collection, “Coffee Break,” Vol. 1, No. 8, June 1975, Box 7, folder 30, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. SEIU District 925 Collection, “Coffee Break,” Vol. 2, No. 1, September 1975, Box 7, folder 30, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>313</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Coffee Break,” Vol. 1, No. 7, March 1975, Box 7, folder 30, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. SEIU District 925 Collection, “Coffee Break,” Vol. 2, No. 2, October 1975, Box 7, folder 30, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. SEIU District 925 Collection, Flyer announcing May 1, 1975 Conference on Women in Offices, organized by BU, Box 7, folder 30, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>314</sup> Stacy Jolna, “Walkout by Professors Cripples Operations at Boston University,” *Washington Post*, April 6, 1979, p. A7.

<sup>315</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Coffee Break,” Vol. 2, No. 1, September 1975, Box 7, folder 30, Reuther Library.

<sup>316</sup> Syracuse University also used conventional business consultants. See SU Chapter Organizing Committee, District 925, *Better Times*, Vol. 1, no. 5, 1982, Box 8 folder 28, Reuther Library.

<sup>317</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Transcript from *The Last Word* with Phil Donahue, ABC News, Jan. 31, 1983. Box 6, folder 8, Reuther Library. BU administrators obtained documents from the banking industry about anti-union strategies as well.

diminish union power.<sup>318</sup> According to these tactics, BU officials considered two employees talking at the water fountain suspicious of colluding. In addition to training departmental supervisors in the methods of the Pinkertons, BU administrators hired the union-busting firm known as Modern Management Methods (3M), which became popular among insurance and bank executives and notorious among union organizers in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>319</sup> These consultants attempted, often successfully, to turn managers into anti-union spokespersons in order to reach and intimidate large numbers of employees quickly and effectively.<sup>320</sup> Similar to the “We Won’t” workers in the Smith College campaign some twenty years later, various BU employees, either in groups or anonymously, vocally and ardently opposed unionization. They circulated letters claiming that workers would have little control over their union contracts and that District 65 was in financial trouble.<sup>321</sup> An anti-union librarian declared that unionizing would not “enhance...professional status” and that professional librarians stood lose benefits, not just gain them, by committing to collective bargaining through 925.<sup>322</sup>

Top BU administrators, particularly President Silber, remained relentlessly hostile to employees of all levels who attempted to alter campus policies by forming countervailing associations.<sup>323</sup> Despite the presence of anti-union experts (3M defeated unionization attempts

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<sup>318</sup> Robert Smith, “The Business Community’s Mercenaries: Strikebreakers and Union Busters,” in Aaron Brenner, Benjamin Day, Immanuel Ness, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History* (New York: M.E. Sharp, 2009), 60.

<sup>319</sup> A future chapter will discuss anti-union strategies and consultants and examine the changing relationships among employers, personnel, and employees in the face of workplace conflict.

<sup>320</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Transcript from *The Last Word* with Phil Donahue, ABC News, Jan. 31, 1983. Box 6, folder 8, Reuther Library.

<sup>321</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Concerned Voters Committee” (27 employees) to Bi-weekly employees, ca. 1978, Box 7, folder 30, Reuther Library.

<sup>322</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from a “University Librarian” to other BU librarians, July and August 1978, Box 7, folder 32, Reuther Library.

<sup>323</sup> BU President John Silber gained public attention for ruling his university, including its students, faculty, and staff, with a heavy, autocratic hand. The *Harvard Crimson* reported that Silber’s disciplinary code for protesting students sought “to intimidate activists.” And the same “heavy-handed disciplinary provisions apply to faculty as to students.” Peter M. Shane, “Harvard and the B.U. Five,” *The Harvard Crimson*, October 3, 1973, accessed March 1, 2011, <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1973/10/3/harvard-and-the-bu-five-pbtbhat/>. The MIT student

in 98 of 100 workplaces in 1978), clerical workers voted to affiliate with District 65 and librarians with 925.<sup>324</sup> After the 427-384 vote for District 65 in 1978, administrators refused to recognize the union and would not begin contract negotiations with the clericals, contesting first the election and then the bargaining unit.<sup>325</sup> Also in 1978 BU administrators were bargaining with the recently-created BU chapter of the AAUP by suggesting such unpopular measures as elimination of tenure. In response faculty members threatened a two-day walkout in March and a strike in April if necessary to attain more equitable contract terms.<sup>326</sup> The professors, unlike the BU staff, had the benefit of setting precedence as forming the first private university faculty union, bringing them significant media attention.<sup>327</sup>

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newspaper also reported of Silber's strict conduct codes. The BU student newspaper sued Silber and the Board of Trustees for attempting to review the content of the papers before they were published. Until the students complied, Silber and the Board withheld allocated funds for the newspaper. Jordana Hollander, "*BU Exposure Sues Administration*," *The Tech*, Vol. 97, no. 64, Feb. 1, 1978.

<sup>324</sup> District 65 had organized similarly-situated clericals at Barnard and was active in drives at Harvard and MIT, with which BUSOC members were familiar. Local 925 promised the same independence, but BUSOC members were unsure of the potential relationship between the national SEIU and this new local. SEIU District 925 Collection, "Information Packet: Boston University Staff Organizing Committee, District 65, DWA," ca. 1975, Box 7, folder 30, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>325</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Summary of District 65 issues, ca. 1979, Box 7, folder 31, Reuther Library. Barbara Rahke, interview by Stacey Heath, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, May 23, 2006.

<sup>326</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Summary of District 65 issues, ca. 1979, Box 7, folder 31, Reuther Library. SEIU District 925 Collection, "Notice: Boston University Chapter, AAUP, Is On Strike," March 1979, Box 7, folder 31, Reuther Library.

<sup>327</sup> President Silber's initial refusal to recognize the Boston University chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) attracted the attention of mainstream newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* whereas the clerical workers' drive was mentioned briefly in the faculty articles or not mentioned at all. The BU professors were seeking higher salaries and greater influence over administrative affairs such as tenure and hiring and firing decisions. See Stacy Jolna, "Walkout by Professors Cripples Operations at Boston University," *Washington Post*, April 6, 1979, p. A7. Although the NLRB certified the AAUP as a bargaining unit in 1975, Silber refused to negotiate with the group (until 1979), disregarding the NLRB's decision for several years. He considered the faculty to be managerial employees and thus not covered under union codes. See Damon Stetson, "Court Ruling Stiffens Colleges to Unions," *New York Times*, Nov. 16, 1980, p. EDUC35. Stetson continues to explain that this issue of faculty as managers was taken up by the Supreme Court in a case concerning Yeshiva College in 1980. In a 5-4 decision, the Court determined that faculty members at Yeshiva were managers and could not bargain collectively, but the case did not facilitate an end to all faculty unions. Furthermore, the case came about after the Boston University AAUP filed for union status with the NLRB. Also see Edward B. Fiske, "Unions May Be Out of Luck at 'Mature' Private Colleges," *New York Times*, Feb. 24, 1980, p. E7. During this tense period, Silber tried to use the media's interest in the faculty to his advantage. He claimed that the professors were greedy and that their campaign brought negative attention to the school and undermined BU's academic reputation. See Michael Knight, "Faculty Union at Boston University Votes a Strike," *New York Times*, Mar. 16, 1979, p. A14. Silber made public statements condemning the faculty's behavior as undermining BU's wellbeing. He said that the

In part because of the positive relationships enjoyed between faculty and staff, the struggling unions joined together, given the timing of their battles as well as the common enemy before them.<sup>328</sup> To mitigate Silber's authority, the BU leaders of the AAUP, District 65, and Local 925 formed a cooperative association. They committed their organizations to "mutual cooperation and aid" and promised to "seek approval from the memberships of our respective organizations before undertaking any specific actions."<sup>329</sup> Thus, as Silber held a private dinner party for some members of the Board of Trustees to thwart their acceptance of the AAUP's contract, clericals and librarians joined in the faculty strike in April 1979. Only ten percent of the classes in the College of Liberal Arts met.<sup>330</sup> According to Barbara Rahke, a leader of the District 65 organizing effort, police were arresting clerical picketers with their hand-made signs. Yet the support for the strike was widespread for even the women in Silber's office walked out although the union had never spoken to them in particular.<sup>331</sup> After nearly a week of striking, faculty members reached an agreement with the administration, which solidified the recognition of the AAUP and its contract.

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faculty was creating unfavorable publicity for the school and that they were going to cause lower enrollment and lower the reputation of the school. He also said that the school just did not have the money to give raises to professors.

<sup>328</sup> Rahke described a campus where the faculty supported the staff and the staff felt goodwill towards the faculty, which was not always the norm in university settings. Barbara Rahke, interview by Stacey Heath, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, May 23, 2006.

<sup>329</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from BU Local/District 65 and BU Chapter of AAUP to Staff and Faculty, March 5, 1979, Box 7, folder 31, Reuther Library.

<sup>330</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, "How to Reheat BU," *Boston Globe*, April 6, 1979, Box 7, folder 31, Reuther Library. SEIU District 925 Collection, "Early A.M.," *Boston Globe*, April 10, 1979, Box 7, folder 31, Reuther Library. According to the April 10<sup>th</sup> article, Silber held a secret dinner party, inviting the trustees who were to ratify the contract, calling for clarification of certain aspects of it instead of supporting approval. Also, Gary Zabel writes that graduate students at BU organized at this time too, forming the Graduate Employees Organizing Committee, which both coordinated graduate student participation on the April picket lines, and explored the possibility of a unionization drive among their own ranks. Gary Zabel, "The Boston University Strike of 1979," in Aaron Brenner, Benjamin Day, Immanuel Ness, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History* (New York: M.E. Sharp, 2009), 690-697.

<sup>331</sup> Barbara Rahke, interview by Stacey Heath, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, May 23, 2006.

BU professors in the AAUP wanted to continue to help District 65 and Local 925 gain union recognition, and they attempted to assist in several ways short of remaining officially on strike. BU administrators deftly ensured that the faculty contract prohibited sympathy strikes, meaning picketing on behalf of other groups' causes.<sup>332</sup> The clerical workers were pleading for the faculty's continued support, yet most faculty wanted to ratify the contract, which would effectively end the AAUP's sponsorship of the strike. While a few brave and principled professors picketed with staff members, others supplied much-needed funding, or what Rahke called "guilt money."<sup>333</sup> By an overwhelming 300 to 5 vote, the AAUP passed a resolution to establish a BU strike fund to help any striking employee in financial need. This gesture came as BU clericals and librarians were still on strike, recognizing that many university employees, especially those on strike, "have few resources to pay even food bills and rent."<sup>334</sup> A few AAUP liaisons negotiated privately with BU administrators on behalf of the staff.<sup>335</sup> With the support of the faculty and the determination of the strikers, Silber finally recognized District 65 and Local 925 in late April 1979 after several days of continued striking.<sup>336</sup> Although the BU staff

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<sup>332</sup> Michael Knight, "Boston University Reaches Accord With Faculty on a 3-Year Contract," *New York Times*, April 14, 1979, p. 8. History professor and AAUP chairman Fritz Ringer favored continuing the strike to help the clericals win union recognition.

<sup>333</sup> Barbara Rahke, interview by Stacey Heath, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, May 23, 2006. Most professors returned to their regular schedules except for a few activists including Fritz Ringer, Howard Zinn, and Francis Fox Piven. They refused to cross the picket lines, and Silber threatened to fire them until Nobel Laureate George Wald started a national campaign called the "BU5" (in honor of the five professors who actively supported the clerical workers' strike). Gary Zabel, "The Boston University Strike of 1979," in Aaron Brenner, Benjamin Day, Immanuel Ness, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History* (New York: M.E. Sharp, 2009), 690-697.

<sup>334</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Boston University Chapter of American Association of University Professors, "Paying Dues in Advance," ca. 1979, Box 7, folder 31, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. One listing of this fund provides its total at almost 2500 dollars, showing donations from the SEIU International, Distributive Workers of America, Simmons College, 9to5, Local 880, Local 509, Local 285, and Boston Professional Librarians Staff Association. SEIU District 925 Collection, BU Strike Fund, ca. 1979, Box 7, folder 31, Reuther Library.

<sup>335</sup> Barbara Rahke, interview by Stacey Heath, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, May 23, 2006.

<sup>336</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, BU Press Release, April 23, 1979, Box 7, folder 31, Reuther Library. Barbara Rahke, interview by Stacey Heath, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, May 23, 2006. "1979 District 65 Wins Organizing Drive at Boston University," Massachusetts AFL-



had won union recognition, District 65 and Local 925 had many struggles ahead when negotiating contracts with the administration.<sup>337</sup>

At Harvard the relationship between discontent professors and organizing staff was more tenuous, and resulting class tensions among women workers shaped the structure and agenda of the union movement.<sup>338</sup> Before the formation of the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers (HUCTW), various grassroots organizations existed to fight low salaries and poor working conditions as well as to combat sex-based employment discrimination. The unionized workers in the Harvard Printing Office and Typing and Copy Center went on strike for over ten weeks concerning wage rates in 1974.<sup>339</sup> Dining hall employees struck in 1976.<sup>340</sup> In the education school, Karen Nussbaum and Ellen Cassedy had begun the Harvard Office Workers' Group, which would become Boston 9to5 and serve the larger community.<sup>341</sup> A secretary in the Physics Department started the Harvard Employee Organizing Committee (HEOC) in the spring of 1974 to affiliate the 3,000 non-medical Harvard office workers with District 65 of the

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CIO, accessed February 1, 2011, <http://www.massflcio.org/1979-district-65-wins-organizing-drive-boston-university-0>.

<sup>337</sup> For more information about contract negotiations, see articles and materials in SEIU District 925 Collection, Box 7, folder 33, Reuther Library. During negotiations in 1980 for Local 925's second contract, BU administrators tried to cut benefits in 25 areas and offered raises of 5.1 percent, which the librarians claimed would not cover annual inflation. Also see Barbara Rahke, interview by Stacey Heath, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, May 23, 2006.

<sup>338</sup> For other works on the Harvard clerical organizing movement see John Hoerr, *We Can't Eat Prestige: The Women Who Organized Harvard* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997); Robert D. Putnam and Lewis M. Feldstein, "The Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers" in *Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 166-185; John Trumbour, ed., *How Harvard Rules: Reason in the Service of Empire* (Boston: South End Press, 1989).

<sup>339</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; "G.A.I.U. on Strike!" ca. 1974. MC 624, Box 18, folder 14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Also see John P. Hardt, "Harvard's Unions: The Printers Ask for More Money" *The Harvard Crimson*, June 13, 1974.

<sup>340</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Article from the *Harvard Crimson*, June 4, 1976. MC 624, Box 21, folder 6. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Dining hall employees were part of Local 26 of Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Employees Union.

<sup>341</sup> For memos and newsletters of the Harvard Office Workers' Group (HOWG), see Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Box 18, folder 14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Distributive Workers of America.<sup>342</sup> Separate associations also existed for employees in the business and medical schools, with the latter eventually becoming the Harvard Union for Clerical and Technical Workers. The Harvard Business School Staff Association of nearly 100 members published a newsletter, negotiated specific grievances with administrators and faculty (such as requesting the “privilege of eating in the Faculty Club”) while in general seeking “recognition...as a legitimate and professional constituency of HBS.”<sup>343</sup> In 1974 staff members of the Harvard Divinity School petitioned for a greater voice in their school budget, winning paid tuition for Harvard courses, written salary reviews, open communication between administrators and staff, and representatives on the budget committee.<sup>344</sup>

While these staff associations had been forming for workers who shared similar occupational identities, other organizations arose to try to unite women workers against gender-based discrimination. Female faculty members, mobilized by inequitable pay and low representation among those tenured, tried to construct inclusive organizations. The fact that women constituted less than 2 percent of tenured faculty at Harvard in the early 1970s galvanized female professors to use federal regulations and lobby feminist organizations for assistance.<sup>345</sup> The Women’s Equity Action League (WEAL) had filed complaints on behalf of

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<sup>342</sup> “Personnel Matter In Progress,” *The Harvard Crimson*, Oct. 19, 1974. Representatives from the HEOC and the association for medical employees both attended one of the first 9to5 conferences for university workers in 1974. See Natalie Wexler, “Boston Conference Seeks to Organize University Workers,” *The Harvard Crimson*, Oct. 5, 1974. Articles about and documents from the HEOC can be found in Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Box 18, folder 13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>343</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; “The Fourth Estate,” *The HBS Staff Association News*, Issue 7, May 25, 1973; Memo to Faculty/Staff Advisory Committee on Conditions of Work and Employment from Task Force on Perquisites Re: Outline Submitted for Suggestions and Comments, May 8, 1974; Statement of Purpose and Goals, 1973. MC624, Box 18, folder 14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>344</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Coffee Break, Newsletter of Boston University workers, Vol. 1, no. 3, July 1974, Box 7, folder 29, Reuther Library.

<sup>345</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; “Where Are All the Women at Harvard?” 1974. MC624, Box 18, folder 13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

women and minority professors in 1970. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare determined that Harvard should rectify its weak program by constructing serious goals and timetables or face loss of federal funding.<sup>346</sup> One university-wide effort to force an amended affirmative action policy started in 1972 and became known as Women Employed at Harvard (WEH).<sup>347</sup> Even though Harvard male administrators had promised to consult female faculty and administrators about proposed changes, they unilaterally completed a draft of a revised plan in late 1972 without seeking any female input. Furthermore, these administrators kept it undisclosed while awaiting government approval, ostensibly to avoid female and minority backlash.<sup>348</sup> The plan still did not meet federal regulations and thus it remained open to modification. The women, angered by what they perceived as indifference towards equal employment opportunities for women and minorities, signed a letter urging Harvard administrators to give affirmative action their utmost attention and to construct and institute a more rigorous policy.<sup>349</sup>

These professional women also recruited “salary and wage” (S&W) employees, as Harvard called the non-exempt workers, to join their efforts, in part because they believed in strength in numbers. Soon around 100 women became involved in the cause, and WEH was founded officially in 1973. This effort would represent one of the first collaborations between professional Harvard women and its S&W workers. The *Harvard Crimson* reported that one of

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<sup>346</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; S&W News: Harvard Medical Area Women’s Group, Jan. 18, 1974. MC624, Box 18, folder 16. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. NOW filed complaints in 1970 and 1974 with the DOL and EEOC, respectively.

<sup>347</sup> Robin Freedberg, “Women Form Employee Group in Atmosphere of Tense Distrust,” *The Harvard Crimson*, June 14, 1973; Letter to the Editor from Co-President of Graduate Women’s Organization, “Affirmative Action,” *The Harvard Crimson*, July 31, 1973. Thirty-three female faculty members and administrators started meeting and formed what became known the next year as WEH.

<sup>348</sup> Hoerr, *We Can’t Eat Prestige*, 37.

<sup>349</sup> Robin Freedberg, “Women Form Employee Group in Atmosphere of Tense Distrust,” *The Harvard Crimson*, June 14, 1973; Letter to the Editor from Co-President of Graduate Women’s Organization, “Affirmative Action,” *The Harvard Crimson*, July 31, 1973.

the organization's greatest successes was its diversity in membership and its attempt to advocate for women at all levels within the university.<sup>350</sup> While WEH prioritized the creation of a strong affirmative action program at Harvard, which the founders truly believed would help all women workers, the organization addressed other gender-specific problems. WEH sought to "include everyone and exclude no one" by making its founding principles broad enough to encompass the concerns of Harvard women at various occupational levels.<sup>351</sup> Among WEH's seven founding principles were job security and equitable compensation, as well as the establishment of a resource center for women workers. WEH instituted its own Grievance Committee. Women could take specific job complaints to the committee and its members would attempt to guide them towards remedies.<sup>352</sup> Also the Women's Law Association at Harvard Law School volunteered to advise employees with grievances. WEH encouraged women to use the law school's services, in part because Harvard might ameliorate the employee's situation to preempt the negative publicity that could result.<sup>353</sup> Another issue that WEH women addressed was turnover rates.<sup>354</sup> Both the faculty and the S&W women suffered from low retention rates among their ranks. Female faculty sought opportunities for tenure at other universities while S&W employees sought higher wages at local corporations.<sup>355</sup> Before the union drive attracted S&W workers to its cause, WEH maintained a presence on the Harvard campus. In 1973 the

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<sup>350</sup>Robin Freedberg, "Women Form Employee Group in Atmosphere of Tense Distrust," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 14, 1973.

<sup>351</sup>"University Women Lay Foundation for Organization," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 18, 1973.

<sup>352</sup>Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Women Employed at Harvard, Bulletin Number One, May 21, 1973. MC624, Box 21, folder 14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>353</sup>Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Women Employed at Harvard, Bulletin Number Seven, February 1974. MC624, Box 21, folder 14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>354</sup>Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Women Employed at Harvard meeting minutes, July 11, 1973. MC624, Box 21, folder 14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. They knew that turnover among women workers was a problem but they were not sure if Harvard administrators saw it as such.

<sup>355</sup>Robin Freedberg, "Women Form Employee Group in Atmosphere of Tense Distrust," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 14, 1973.

organization increased from 100 to 200 members in a matter of months, showing that women of all ranks had issues to bring forward to the administration.<sup>356</sup>

In 1973, a gender-based group in the medical area took shape. But this effort demonstrated that if affirmative action could bring women workers together, it could also have a polarizing effect on their organizing efforts. In February female medical students and professors met to discuss sex discrimination, inviting all women at the medical center, including clerical employees and laboratory assistants, to attend.<sup>357</sup> Ten to twenty women, including faculty, clericals, lab assistants and students, convened several times to share their experiences in an institution where men held positions of power as the most revered and well-paid scholars, students, and employees. Female professors and medical students formed the Harvard Medical Area Women's Group (HMAWG). The group made clear that the medical women, like the faculty who founded WEH, were also displeased with the construction of the Harvard affirmative action plan. These medical professors wanted HMAWG to help make the Harvard community aware of the inadequacy of the institution's affirmative action guidelines.<sup>358</sup> Thus, from the start of the organization, faculty members and many of the medical students became focused on

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<sup>356</sup> Freedberg reports that the organization had 100 members in June and WEH's own bulletin reports 200 members in September. Robin Freedberg, "Women Form Employee Group in Atmosphere of Tense Distrust," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 14, 1973; Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Women Employed at Harvard, Bulletin Number Four, September 1973. MC624, Box 21, folder 14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>357</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with organizer at Harvard Medical Center, #21/35, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 9. Schlesinger Library. Laboratory assistants already had been discussing their specific work problems with one another, and they were planning evening meetings to devise a solution to one of their main gripes: cleaning the labs. The mostly male post-doctorate fellows and professors told the female assistants to clean the labs while the men disappeared to do more cerebral work. The assistants hated having to scrub the walls of the labs, which they thought should be a group effort since no one's job description included this duty. When the female professors and students announced that they were opening their discussion of sex discrimination to the lab assistants, the assistants delayed their plans for organizing around the issue of lab cleaning and joined the broader gender-based effort.

<sup>358</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with organizer at Harvard Medical Center, #21/35, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 9. Schlesinger Library; Hoerr, *We Can't Eat Prestige*, 37-38. Mary Howell was a dean at the medical school who taught pediatrics and wrote a book about sex discrimination in medical schools based on her own survey data. Norma Swenson helped to revise *Our Bodies, Ourselves* for the 1973 edition.

ensuring that Harvard had a strong program to substantially increase the number of female students and professors.<sup>359</sup>

Clerical workers, on the other hand, led by laboratory assistant Leslie Sullivan, had different ideas about how to define HMAWG's agenda. They were not against strengthening the Affirmative action policy; yet as a female-dominated occupational group, clericals were unconcerned with increasing the number of women working among their ranks. They cared more about promotion possibilities as well as raises. S&W employees sought higher salaries, claiming that even the merit raises that some received did not cover the rising cost of living. Harvard often offered salaries that were lower than those given at comparable jobs across the city and the nation.<sup>360</sup> A survey among medical area employees indicated that the majority of women felt that they were underpaid; they also felt dispensable and as if they lacked recourse to change unpleasant aspects of their jobs.<sup>361</sup> Rather than embracing the possibility of goals, timetables, and government remedies, S&W employees considered unionization as a potential solution. They invited clerical union leader Margie Albert to speak at one of their meetings and they sent delegates to meet with National Labor Relations Board officials.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Hoerr, *We Can't Eat Prestige*, 38.

<sup>360</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Leslie Sullivan's Notebook, HMAWG Meeting Agenda, March 7, 1973. MC624, Box 21, folder 3. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Also in Sullivan's Notebook, Box 21, folder 3, when trying to recruit S&W employees to come to HMAWG meetings, the draft of the posters read, "Are you making the 1973 starting salary for your job? Come to our noon meeting...and find out!" Hoerr brings up the point that Harvard raises often were not matching annual inflation rates in *We Can't Eat Prestige*, 40.

<sup>361</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; "S&W News: Harvard Medical Area Women's Group," Vol. 2, no. 1. MC624, Box 17, folder 2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>362</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; "S&W News: Harvard Medical Area Women's Group," Jan. 30, 1974. MC624, Box 17, folder 2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

By the summer of 1973, HMAWG had an active S&W faction that wrote newsletters, made posters for meetings, and, in general, led the women's group.<sup>363</sup> To emphasize the arbitrariness of the university pay scales, the S&W division published an issue that exposed employee job titles, grades and salaries, which had previously been confidential information. Employees became very upset when they saw inequitable connections among their seniority status, ranks, and salaries. For instance, one clerical had been working for ten years at Harvard and was still making the same amount as a new person in her same job. The article debunked the assumption that Harvard would reward loyalty. It also facilitated discussions of salaries, which had been considered private, partly because employers wanted to avoid having to address inequities. Harvard workers saw a pattern emerging: employees boasted years of experience but suffered from stagnant salaries.<sup>364</sup>

The cross-class alliance of HMAWG would become increasingly unstable as male Harvard administrators created a Joint Committee on the Status of Women, another gender-based organization that fractured along occupational lines. Created in the summer of 1973, this committee for medical area women was not permitted to participate in salary negotiations or handle specific grievances, which caused Sullivan to write that it was "totally impotent but [gave] appearance [of] progress."<sup>365</sup> Nevertheless, Sullivan wanted access to the committee, and although she was not given an official seat at the table initially, she became an ex-officio

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<sup>363</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with organizer at Harvard Medical Center, #21/35, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 9. Schlesinger Library. Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; "S&W News: Harvard Medical Area Women's Group," April 4, 1973. MC624, Box 18, folder 16. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>364</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with organizer at Harvard Medical Center, #21/35, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 9. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>365</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Leslie Sullivan's Notebook, ca. 1973. MC624, Box 21, folder 3. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

member.<sup>366</sup> The official Joint Committee of eleven contained one clerical worker with the other members being faculty, students, or administrators.<sup>367</sup> Most female workers at Harvard were classified as S&W and thus the committee did not come close to reflecting the occupational reality of working women at the university.<sup>368</sup> Even though the Joint Committee attempted to represent all women's interests by having separate task forces for faculty, student, and employee concerns, the various task forces showed that these women had distinct issues. For example, Sullivan stated that the changes being made in the personnel office were not benefiting S&W employees. At a Joint Committee meeting in November, she confronted Walter Leonard, the Harvard affirmative action Officer and Douglas Knox, Director of Personnel for the Medical Area, asking them how changes at the administrative level, such as compilation of personnel manuals and circulation of university-wide memos, were important improvements to workers' daily lives. She agreed that management practices and personnel policies had become more open, but she did not see how S&W workers, herself included, tangibly were benefiting. Sullivan never received a satisfying response. The rest of the meeting was spent questioning

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<sup>366</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Recommended Members of the Committee on Women, June 27, 1973. MC 624, Box 17, folder 2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. In November 1973, the Joint Committee allowed ex-officio members, like Sullivan who represented HMAWG, to vote at meetings. See Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Minutes, Committee on Women at the Harvard Medical-Dental Schools, Nov. 28, 1973. MC 624, Box 17, folder 4. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>367</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Draft of Press Release for Gazette and Focus. MC624, Box 17, folder 3. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Another document claims that HMAWG submitted thirteen names to the administration for membership on the Joint Committee yet the press release draft only cites eleven names along with a few ex-officio members. See Recommended Members of the Committee on Women, June 27, 1973. MC 624, Box 17, folder 2. Hoerr claims that there were twelve voting members. See Hoerr, *We Can't Eat Prestige*, 41.

<sup>368</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Leslie Sullivan's Notebook, ca. 1973. MC624, Box 21, folder 3. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. In the three Medical Area schools (Medical, Dentistry and Public Health), 1,200 employees were exempt and only about 200 were non-exempt or S&W. Of the non-exempt, 60 to 75 percent were female.



Leonard about the affirmative action policy, which diverted attention away from Sullivan's concerns.<sup>369</sup>

S&W workers soon realized that association with professional women was not bolstering their own cause. Wages were most important to the former and affirmative action was the priority of the latter. Bickering at meetings demonstrated that the women were advancing disparate agendas. During the Employee Task Force meeting in the fall of 1973, the S&W women voiced interest in having Caroline Bird, author of *Everything a Woman Needs to Know to Get Paid What She's Worth*, speak to the medical area women. They passed her book around the group to read, and the S&W workers believed it held important information for wage-earning women.<sup>370</sup> Yet because at the Joint Committee planning meeting only one S&W employee was present, the faculty women quickly dismissed the idea of inviting Bird. The professors instead began to list names of other professional women who could speak on topics that "may or may not [have been] interesting to employees."<sup>371</sup> Furthermore, the Joint Committee emphasized that each group of women had distinct concerns when they issued their 1974 recommendations and categorized them according to occupation: student, faculty, and staff. These recommendations to increase the status of women at Harvard reflected the various priorities of women on campus. For example, faculty demanded to be placed on all decision-making committees, councils, or taskforces in proportion to the number of female students enrolled. Employees insisted upon

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<sup>369</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Minutes, Committee on Women at the Harvard Medical-Dental Schools, Nov. 7, 1973. MC 624, Box 17, folder 4. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>370</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Draft of Press Release for Gazette and Focus. MC624, Box 17, folder 3. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Meeting of the Task Force for Salary and Wage Employees, Oct. 26, 1973. MC624, Box 21, folder 10. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>371</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Memo to Employee Task Force members and Chairperson Ruth Kundsinn from Mary Walsh re: Cancellation of Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> employee task force meeting, Dec. 3, 1973. MC624, Box 17, folder 3. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

yearly performance reviews, a broader interpretation of “job-related” when seeking reimbursement for courses, and more access to management training.<sup>372</sup> Clericals also emphasized the inequity between salary and experience that Harvard’s “paid for performance” policy had permitted.<sup>373</sup>

While faculty and students enjoyed the support of shifting government policies in favor of sex equality, clericals did not benefit to the same extent. Federal officials mandated that Harvard devote resources to providing female faculty and students with the same opportunities as Harvard men. They scrutinized the schools’ affirmative action proposal vigilantly because the approved plan of Harvard, given its leadership position among elite universities, would serve as a model for future policies at other schools.<sup>374</sup> The formal language of affirmative action ordered the employer not just to provide a nondiscriminatory work environment, but also to “make additional efforts” and take “positive action” to recruit, retain, and promote female faculty and students.<sup>375</sup> Thus, affirmative action applied most pointedly to areas where women and minorities were underrepresented: the undergraduate student body (30 percent women), graduate students (25 percent), junior faculty (less than 10 percent, and tenured faculty (less than 2 percent).<sup>376</sup> But S&W workers, who were mostly women, prioritized higher pay, and not affirmative action, which did not apply to low wages alone. Affirmative action could raise individual salaries by promoting underrepresented persons to higher paying, professional jobs.

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<sup>372</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Summary of Recommendations, Committee on the Status of Women, 23-25, ca. 1974. MC624, Box 17, folder 2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>373</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; S&W Notes: Harvard Medical Area Women’s Group, Vol. 1, no. 5, May 2, 1973. MC624, Box 18, folder 16. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>374</sup> Robin Freedberg, “Harvard Status May Delay OK of Hiring Plan,” *The Harvard Crimson*, October 30, 1973.

<sup>375</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Annual Report of the Joint Committee on the Status of Women at Harvard Medical School, Harvard School of Dental Medicine, and Harvard School of Public Health, September 1974. MC624, Box 20, folder 10. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>376</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; “Where Are the Women At Harvard?” ca. 1975. MC624, Box 18, folder 13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

But it did not ameliorate the systemic devaluing of a sex-segregated occupation like clerical work. As union leader Margie Albert noted, because our “chances of reaching the top are slim...[we must not allow] the lives of the ‘losers’ [to] remain unchanged.”<sup>377</sup> However, the demands of the ‘losers’ did not have the backing of federal mandates, making their problems less pressing to Harvard administrators. In the fall of 1973, about six months after the founding of the Harvard Medical Area Women’s Group and soon after the creation of the Joint Committee on the Status of Women, Leslie Sullivan and other S&W workers realized that moving towards unionization would be their best option.<sup>378</sup>

Before Harvard employee turned union organizer Kristine Rondeau would lead the long and arduous drive to create the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers, gender-based alliances existed briefly in groups such as Women Employed Harvard and the Harvard Medical Area Women’s Group. Both WEH and HMAWG have not received as much attention in the literature as have later events in the Harvard campaign.<sup>379</sup> To be sure, HMAWG was short-lived and failed in its goal to organize all medical center women around gender-based work problems. Yet HMAWG and WEH demonstrated that Harvard women attempted to find common goals that could be forwarded to the male-dominated administration. Female professionals at Harvard embraced the wage-earning women that served as their support staff, even if only for a moment.<sup>380</sup> However, the methodology of affirmative action excluded clerical women and their

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<sup>377</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, 1967-2005; Margie Albert, “What Can Be Done to Change Things,” *Ms.* magazine, May 1973, p. 82. MC624, Box 18, folder 16. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>378</sup> Hoerr, *We Can’t Eat Prestige*, 38-39.

<sup>379</sup> Hoerr is the best and only account of the beginning of the HUCTW that I have found. My research into the Tepperman Papers and HUCTW Records adds additional information and new perspective to Hoerr’s account, more clearly showing the changing agenda of the women’s groups and the relationship between class status and particular women’s goals.

<sup>380</sup> Some publishing houses had groups consisting of editorial and clerical women because publishing house employees, on the whole, were more likely to be college-graduates. Many women working in publishing were looking to advance to the editor level even if they took clerical jobs at the houses.

main concerns. These fleeting organizations helped women align and subsequently diverge by forcing them to determine their priorities, allowing clericals to pursue a strategy and structure that could suit their needs.<sup>381</sup>

Furthermore, at Boston State College, which would become part of the University of Massachusetts, Boston in 1982, clericals refused to belong to progressive workplace groups with faculty and administrators if these professionals did not give them full consideration. In 1974 faculty and administrators at Boston State invited “non-professional employees” to join the Personnel Committee, a group that assisted in making internal hiring decisions by recommending certain candidates to the college’s personnel director.<sup>382</sup> Non-professional employees began to take part in the meetings of this university-wide Personnel Committee in the last couple of months of 1974. Yet by January 1975, some non-professional employees, who began organizing with one another because of a new Massachusetts law that granted collective bargaining rights to state employees, began to complain about committee practices.<sup>383</sup> Some members even resigned from the Personnel Committee, complaining that it disregarded the opinions of wage-earning employees. The non-professionals explained that the committee itself was ineffective and that their presence on it was merely symbolic rather than an earnest attempt to make hiring practices more equitable. According to one clerical, the “old favoritism-power play,” meaning alliances among the faculty and administrators, outweighed “the capabilities of

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<sup>381</sup> The Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers, or HUCTW, campaigned for nearly fifteen years before winning recognition from Harvard administrators in the late 1980s under the leadership of union organizer Kristine Rondeau.

<sup>382</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Non-Professional Employees Organizing Committee, “The Newsletter for the Employees of Boston State College” Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 1, Oct. 14, 1974. MC 366, Box 1, folder 8. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>383</sup> Some wage-earning women had started the Non-Professional Employees Organizing Committee in 1974 to explore the options offered by a new Massachusetts law that granted full collective bargaining rights to state employees. “A Guide to the Massachusetts Public Employee Collective Bargaining Law, Internet Edition,” Labor Relations Committee, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2002, accessed January 25, 2011, [www.mass.gov/lrc/publications/gb-all.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/lrc/publications/gb-all.pdf).

many of [the] non-professional employees” to influence personnel decisions. Another non-professional resigned stating that the Personnel Committee was futile, for the administration filled positions with chosen employees rather than with the candidates who were recommended from the representative body.<sup>384</sup>

Within just a few months, wage-earning employees at Boston State perceived this inclusive committee that strove to achieve professional and non-professional harmony as a façade that maintained paternalism. One employee recalled that because the school was small, workers, professors, and administrators knew one another and preferred to envision their workplace as one “big happy family.” She wanted her colleagues to “wake up” and realize that they were not a family; women had to take control of their own work lives and “have a say” by participating in the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) drive to unionize the non-professional employees.<sup>385</sup> The newsletter of the Non-Professional Employees Organizing Committee claimed that the ineffectiveness of the Personnel Committee was just “one more example of the arbitrary and whimsical nature of policies that directly affect our working conditions.”<sup>386</sup> Many of the non-professionals were refusing to participate in the

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<sup>384</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Memos from Ethel Conaxis and George Erickson to Shirley Wickman, “Personnel Committee Ineffective,” printed in “The Newsletter for the Employees of Boston State College” by Non-Professional Employees Organizing Committee, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 1-2, Jan. 13, 1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 8. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>385</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with Boston State College employee, #33, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 8. Schlesinger Library. Some non-professional employees wanted to remain represented by the Massachusetts State Employees Association (MSEA) but some wanted to drop the MSEA and join Council 41 of AFSCME because it was more in touch with their needs and was such a large public workers’ union. Also, Council 41 represented workers at other small local colleges like Berkshire Community College, Massachusetts Maritime Academy, Bridgewater, and Framingham and Lowell State Colleges. Jean Tepperman Papers, “By-Line Reports: What is AFSCME?” by Dorine Levasseur, “The Newsletter for the Employees of Boston State College” by the Non-Professional Employees Organizing Committee, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 4, Jan. 13, 1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 8. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>386</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, “Personnel Committee Ineffective,” in “The Newsletter for the Employees of Boston State College” Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 1-2, Jan. 13, 1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 8. Schlesinger Library.

administration's vision of Boston State, and they wanted their colleagues to refuse to appease the administrators, too.<sup>387</sup>

A similar façade existed at Wellesley College, a private, highly-selective, liberal arts women's college outside of Boston. A clerical worker reported that she received a salary of \$623 per month, "which [was] fantastic as far as Wellesley College [was] concerned," but barely covered her basic needs. Even though she showed interest in learning new duties to advance, she felt limited by the opportunities for mobility after working at Wellesley for five years. Her supervisors promised her promotions to better grade levels yet she stayed in the same place, which proved frustrating. This bookkeeper believed that her association with an on-campus union for maintenance workers and her involvement with a women's concern group had hindered her chances for growth since Wellesley administrators did not like anyone who tried to "buck the system." Wellesley administrators were, in the view of this clerical, "sickening-sweet" to the employees. Yet a clear divide remained between the two classes of workers: faculty and most administrators "up in the ivory tower" versus the clerical workers. "You're either up there or you're down below." The atmosphere of educational achievement made this gap all the more

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<sup>387</sup> Administrators were fighting battles on other fronts as well, with forceful demands from students and professors who were protesting gender inequality and the lack of opportunities for women on campus. Following months of discussions between students and administrators, in February 1973 twelve female students barricaded themselves in one of the school's administration buildings that housed the main switchboard for two days. They demanded the following: the allocation of 50 percent of all athletic fees to women's sports, the creation of a women's center, the formation of a board to consider federal funding for day care, and the institution of women's studies classes for the fall semester. Faculty women met with the president to discuss salary discrepancies between male and female professors. The Boston State president granted most of these requests and the students vacated the building. See Robin Freedberg, "Women Move Against Boston State," *The Harvard Crimson*, Feb. 17, 1973. Administrators were forced to consider the demands of students and faculty members since ostensibly the three groups all have some authority over the operation of the university. The conflicts among these players continued. By October 1973, students and faculty were still arguing with administrators. Two professors had been fired allegedly because of overstaffing according to college authorities although students believed they were dismissed for their progressive viewpoints. Nearly 100 students occupied the switchboard again, insisting that the president reconsider the dismissals and protesting changes to the Massachusetts State College master plan, which would bring new provisions and regulations to Boston State's operation. See Geoffrey D. Garin, "Protestors Occupy President's Office at Boston State," *The Harvard Crimson*, Oct. 17, 1973.

striking: “in a private college such as Wellesley, you [were] reminded constantly of what your place [was] in life.”<sup>388</sup>

### The Politics of Pay Equity in the 1980s

In the 1980s, pay equity had become a highly publicized issue for several reasons. First, leaders of feminist and labor organizations collaborated to revive pay equity as an issue of national concern for working women. In particular, the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the Coalition for Labor Union Women (CLUW), which seemed to have divergent priorities in the 1970s, aligned on issues such as pay equity in the 1980s.<sup>389</sup> At a conference sponsored by the Women’s Bureau and AFSCME, the National Committee on Pay Equity (NCPE) was founded in 1979. The NCPE would serve as an association to unite the various local and state organizations on behalf of pay equity, giving the movement a coherent voice.<sup>390</sup> Second, although no federal law guaranteed pay equity directly, the national government devoted greater attention to the matter in the 1980s. Congress held hearings on pay equity and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) prioritized the issue under the tenure of Eleanor Holmes Norton.<sup>391</sup> Third, International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) attorney Winn Newman highlighted the equal pay for work of comparable worth in his efforts to use judicial action to eliminate sex discrimination from unions and workplaces. Newman, regarded by some as the founder of the pay equity movement, regarded legal activism as the best way to fight pay inequity, believing that Title VII and the EEOC were the best tools available to women

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<sup>388</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with Wellesley clerical, #44, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 8. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>389</sup> Deslippe, *Rights Not Roses*, 194.

<sup>390</sup> Linda M. Blum, *Between Feminism and Labor: The Significance of the Comparable Worth Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 49.

<sup>391</sup> Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement*, 220; Blum, *Between Feminism and Labor*, 49-53.

workers.<sup>392</sup> Fellow IUE lawyer Ruth Weyand worked with Newman on behalf of AFSCME in its prominent Title VII class action lawsuit against the state of Washington.<sup>393</sup> Last, state governments created pay equity legislation for public sector workers, which guaranteed back pay and raises for many female clericals. Minnesota was the first state to pass such legislation in 1983 and by 1989, nineteen other states had implemented policies for civil service workers.<sup>394</sup>

The scope of the pay equity battle had grown in the 1980s given the media attention and government focus on the issue. In the campaigns of the 1970s, the movement to achieve higher wages had involved negotiations among university administrators, workers, and their unions. Clearly in the 1980s, however, the individual union drives for equitable pay had broader implications as more feminists were pushing for government regulation of wage scales. Workers became more active in the political process since pay equity could be enforced not just through union contracts, but also through legislation and judicial action. Whereas setting equitable pay rates had long been a matter of negotiation between employer and employee, unionized workers and feminist organizations in the 1980s saw promise in using government legislation to rectify sex-based wage discrimination.

Scholars who consider male, industrial workers to be the core of the working class claim that by the end of the 1970s, the New Deal coalition, meaning the alliance between major labor unions and the Democratic Party, had died.<sup>395</sup> To organize workers based on class identity was difficult for all unions in an era that was increasingly sensitive to individual rights. Yet viewing the 1970s and 1980s from the perspective of clerical workers shows that their issues, and pay

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<sup>392</sup> Susan M. Hartmann, *The Other Feminists: Activists in the Liberal Establishment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 37-39.

<sup>393</sup> Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 221.

<sup>394</sup> Heidi I. Hartmann and Stephanie Aaronson, "Pay Equity and Women's Wage Increases: Success in the States, A Model for the Nation," *Duke Journal of Gender, Law, & Policy*, Vol. 1 (1994), 69-88.

<sup>395</sup> Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2010). 227-241.



equity in particular, spurred labor organizing among working women. Furthermore, clerical union leaders of the 1980s pushed their workers to participate in Democratic Party politics. Karen Nussbaum noted in her speeches and writings of the 1980s that the 70s had been a time of great mobilizing among office workers who, as a rapidly growing sector, had replaced “a man in a hard hat” as the typical American worker.<sup>396</sup> But unionized women needed to move beyond negotiation with their employers to formally politicize their concerns.<sup>397</sup> Through voting and party participation, women could work to achieve government mandates regarding pay equity.<sup>398</sup> Nussbaum emphasized the necessity of federal action in the 1982 congressional hearings on pay equity.<sup>399</sup> In what Nussbaum called the “new workforce,” which was composed of part-time and temporary women office workers, the government must regulate the contract between worker and employer.<sup>400</sup> Collective bargaining would not be enough.<sup>401</sup>

The following discussions of the University of New Haven, the University of Cincinnati, Yale University, and the University of Washington demonstrate the influence of feminists’ emphasis on government regulation on university clericals’ demands to achieve fair pay. Although clericals persisted in using unionization and collective bargaining to remedy inequitable pay in the 1980s, the collaboration between mainstream feminist organizations and select labor unions became stronger as they shared a focus on equal pay for jobs of comparable

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<sup>396</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum, “To Become a Political Woman,” *The Economic Democrat*, January/February 1982, Box 14, folder 77, Reuther Library.

<sup>397</sup> Working women were showing their independence in electoral politics: for the first time in history, women split sharply from men in the 1980 presidential election. SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum, “The New Battleground for Women’s Rights,” *Christian-Science Monitor*, July 21, 1982, Box 14, folder 82, Reuther Library.

<sup>398</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum, “To Become a Political Woman,” *The Economic Democrat*, January/February 1982, Box 14, folder 77, Reuther Library.

<sup>399</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum, Testimony submitted to Hearings on Pay Equity, Committee on the Post Office and Civil Service, U.S. House of Representatives, September 16, 1982, Box 15, folder 73, Reuther Library.

<sup>400</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum speech, “Solutions for the New Workforce,” John Hancock, October 20, 1987, Box 15, folder 50, Reuther Library.

<sup>401</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum speech, “Work and Family,” SEIU Forum, Washington D.C., June 24, 1987, Box 15, folder 62, Reuther Library.

worth. In the union drives of the 1980s as opposed to the campaigns from the 1970s, clericals asserted their calls for salary restructuring as clear demands for pay equity.<sup>402</sup>

At the University of New Haven, District 925's first chapter in Connecticut, organizers conducted a successful drive in 1984 that relied on exposing systemic gender- and seniority-based pay inequity. The top two concerns of UNH clerical workers were related to pay and job classification: one, restructuring of salary levels to allow employees to reach maximum wage rates and receive yearly step increases and two, re-evaluation of all jobs to make sure that each person and each position was placed in the correct salary level.<sup>403</sup> After District 925 distributed a survey to UNH staff in 1983, some workers began meeting and realized that the salary structure was rigged.<sup>404</sup> Clericals who had worked at UNH for many years were still earning the "mid-point" hourly wage for their salary level; almost no one earned the maximum wage possible.<sup>405</sup> District 925 organizers helped to publish and distribute a bi-weekly newsletter called "Eyeopener," which they perceived as not necessarily a "heavy union sell [but just providing] facts and figures."<sup>406</sup> These newsletters gave UNH clericals numerical proof that they were underpaid and exposed the methods used by administrators to create somewhat standardized

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<sup>402</sup> Salary inequities had mobilized workers at Boston University and at Harvard in the 1970s; yet their union drives overlooked the issue of clerical pay relative to wages of similarly skilled men. As corporate and governmental policies on child bearing and child rearing became a reality in the 1990s, large-scale raises for pink-collar workers disappeared from most feminist agendas. Business executives had successfully curbed large-scale unionization and governmental intervention in private industry, meaning that union leaders and public policy makers needed to adjust their platforms accordingly. The continued depression of wages for clerical workers in the 1990s meant that unions and progressive officeholders attempted to reconcile women's paid and unpaid labor in ways that would not greatly affect businesses' bottom line, shifting the focus to nondiscrimination (equality between professional men and women and between the races), and to improving the operation and functioning of the working family. Thus, the national discourse about working women turned away from pay equity and toward work-life balance, which was a cheaper alternative to clericals' problems but still cheerfully progressive.

<sup>403</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, "Eyeopener," a newsletter of UNH organizers, no. 10, September 11, 1984, Box 8, folder 29, Reuther Library.

<sup>404</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, "Eyeopener," no. 1, May 16, 1984, Box 8, folder 29, Reuther Library.

<sup>405</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, "Eyeopener," a newsletter of UNH organizers, no. 1, May 16, 1984, Box 8, folder 29, Reuther Library. SEIU District 925 Collection, "Eyeopener," a newsletter of UNH organizers, no. 7, August 14, 1984, Box 8, folder 29, Reuther Library. SEIU District 925 Collection, "Eyeopener," no. 8, August 28, 1984, Box 8, folder 29, Reuther Library.

<sup>406</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo to Dave Crommer from Sam Luciano, SEIU organizer re: University of New Haven Campaign, October 8, 1984, Box 8, folder 29, Reuther Library.

scales.<sup>407</sup> Yet the system could be altered as needed to attract new employees. “Eyeopener” demonstrated that UNH administrators would adjust salary ranges for incoming employees while maintaining a lower pay scale for long-term employees. Besides exposing seniority-based bias, the newsletter illuminated gender-based wage discrimination. In one article, union organizers charted the median rates of clerical salaries nationally, and compared UNH clerical wages with the salaries of other UNH staff persons like maintenance workers and painters.<sup>408</sup>

The union campaign also related workers’ immediate economic concerns to larger issues of public policy debate. Using the survey information about disparities between clerical and maintenance workers’ salaries, UNH District 925 organizer Sam Luciano spoke at the Connecticut General Assembly in favor of pay equity. She pointed to the salary structure at UNH to exemplify the lower pay given to clerical positions relative to maintenance work. Furthermore, the Eyeopener newsletter encouraged UNH clericals to consider the 1984 presidential election “as employees and as citizens.” After giving some facts about both candidates, the newsletter encouraged clericals to vote for Democratic candidate Walter Mondale in large part because he supported comprehensive programs to implement pay equity measures in private and public workplaces.<sup>409</sup> In the first UNH contract, 925 received across-the-board raises of 6 percent and \$35,000 specifically to address pay inequity at the university. A committee of

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<sup>407</sup> Bulletin issued to employees on Hay System, a method of providing points to certain job factors, devised by consulting firm Hay Associations, See SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo to Dave Crommer from Sam Luciano, SEIU organizer re: University of New Haven Campaign, October 8, 1984, Box 8, folder 29, Reuther Library.

<sup>408</sup> For UNH clerical salaries, see SEIU District 925 Collection, “Eyeopener,” no. 8, August 28, 1984, Box 8, folder 29, Reuther Library. For national median salaries see SEIU District 925 Collection, “Eyeopener,” no. 2, May 29, 1984, Box 8, folder 29, Reuther Library. For salaries of maintenance workers and painters, see “Eyeopener,” no. 7, August 14, 1984.

<sup>409</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Eyeopener,” no. 2, October 23, 1984, Box 8, folder 29, Reuther Library.

three union members and three administrators were given the task of reviewing job descriptions and deciding how to distribute the money.<sup>410</sup>

At the University of Cincinnati (UC), the number one clerical problem was pay and lack of adequate salary increases.<sup>411</sup> The District 925 campaign gained momentum upon passage of a 1983 Ohio state law that granted economic bargaining power to public employees. Clericals at UC, a public university, formed an organizing committee when wage increases authorized for faculty, administrators, and staff by the Ohio legislature arrived months late only to the clerical staff. Despite reported shortages in the state budget, faculty and administrators received their raises on time, but the budget problems stalled the raises promised to the clericals. This disparate treatment compelled many clericals to view unionization as a vehicle to gain not just money but also dignity and respect for those at the bottom of the university hierarchy.<sup>412</sup> In 1985 for National Office Workers Day in April, District 925 brought at least two speakers to the UC campus to discuss why clericals have been underpaid and how comparable worth helps to explain their historically low wages.<sup>413</sup> By the late 1980s, the 925 campaign at UC added about 1200 employees to the SEIU ranks, with 91 percent wanting the union to prioritize economic concerns in contract negotiations.<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Steve Hamm, "UNH Clerical Workers Ratify First Contract," New Haven Register, September 19, 1985, Box 8, folder 29, Reuther Library.

<sup>411</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Ohio College and University Staff Survey Results, District 925 survey, 1984, Box 11, folder 1, Reuther Library.

<sup>412</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Al Andry, "Workers Feel Vulnerable," *Cincinnati Post*, March 29, 1984, Box 11, folder 1, Reuther Library.

<sup>413</sup> Kate Whelan from the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services, see SEIU District 925 Collection, "District 925 Newsletter: Union News for U.C. Support Staff," May 1985, Box 11, folder 9, Reuther Library. Anne Hill from District 925 and the Governor's Advisory Committee on Pay Equity, see SEIU District 925 Collection, Flyer, "National Office Worker's Week Forum: Winning: Rights, Respect, Recognition," April 1985, Box 11, folder 1, Reuther Library.

<sup>414</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Phil Comstock, Wilson Center study on UC clerical employees, ca. 1989, Box 11, folder 5, Reuther Library. Attempting to debunk the notion that women workers in male dominated, office-style work environments in the 1980s cared utmost about "dignity on the job," Phil Comstock surveyed 250 employees after the District 925 victory to show that when bargaining with the university, most clericals at the University of Cincinnati cared largely about economic issues.

Contract negotiations in Cincinnati also demonstrated the association between economic issues and dignity. Although union leaders referred to wages, benefits, sick leave, and promotions as the “big issues” at the bargaining table, distinguishing them from non-economic issues like child care, health and safety, evaluations, and affirmative action, they saw their fight for fair pay and benefits as a battle to win respect from the UC administrators.<sup>415</sup> Administrators were refusing to grant step increases, a 5 percent across-the-board raise, and certain terms regarding medical benefits, causing the union to call for a Stay-Home Day in September.<sup>416</sup> Eighty percent of the 1200 clericals did not attend work.<sup>417</sup> District 925 leaders reported that this one-day strike successfully showed administrators that clericals insisted they be treated with respect and that they demanded more influence over salary terms.<sup>418</sup> In protest of disparate medical benefits for UC faculty and UC staff, in particular the administration’s no-cost plan for faculty but not for staff, 925 leaders concluded: “WE ARE NOT SECOND CLASS CITIZENS.”<sup>419</sup>

The interest of feminist organizations and state governments in the pay equity issue meant that UC workers received support from additional channels. The organizing workers gained the national spotlight when the President of the National Organization for Women, Molly Yard, held a press conference on the UC campus in support of contract negotiations. She resolved that Cincinnati workers would do “Whatever It Takes,” which was the tenacious UC

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<sup>415</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Contract Campaign: District 925 Update, No. 9, July 26, 1989, Box 11, folder 5, Reuther Library.

<sup>416</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, District 925 flyer, “What We Deserve: Fair Pay, Fair Benefits, and Fair Share,” August 21, 1989, Box 11, folder 5, Reuther Library.

<sup>417</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, District 925 flyer, “Stay-Home Day A Success” September/October 1989, Box 11, folder 5, Reuther Library.

<sup>418</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, District 925 flyer, “Wednesday, October 18: Strike for Fair Pay, Benefits, and Share!” October 1989, Box 11, folder 5, Reuther Library. Another one day strike occurred in October as announced on this flyer.

<sup>419</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, District 925 flyer, “Progress: Slowly But Surely!” October 1989, Box 11, folder 5, Reuther Library.

union slogan. She warned that National NOW would go on strike with workers if necessary to attain fair terms for their contract.<sup>420</sup> Following Yard's rally, the Cincinnati NOW chapter president called on women nationwide to send postcards to UC administrators, urging them to agree to a fair contract.<sup>421</sup> Furthermore, the actions of the Ohio government bolstered District 925's call to reassess the wages of clericals. In 1983 Ohio Governor Celeste ordered a pay equity study for all employees of state agencies. The UC newsletters reported that the Ohio study and other state actions should inspire workers to fight for pay equity through the security of a union contract.<sup>422</sup> Although university workers were not included in the study or in the money set aside for back pay, the Governor declared his support for the union the morning following the one-day strike in October and wanted to know what he could do to help expedite the negotiations.<sup>423</sup> The focus of feminist organizations and policymakers on comparable worth helped to publicize the UC clericals' cause. Eventually District 925 secured a fair contract that included, among other terms, raises totaling 14 percent over three years.<sup>424</sup>

In part because the Yale drive became an overt fight for comparable worth and in part because of Yale's prestigious position in the Ivy League, its clerical union also gained the attention of national feminist groups and prominent media outlets.<sup>425</sup> Female non-faculty

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<sup>420</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Contract Campaign: District 925 Update, No. 8, June/July 1989, Box 11, folder 5, Reuther Library.

<sup>421</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Contract Campaign: District 925 Update, No. 9, July 26, 1989, Box 11, folder 5, Reuther Library.

<sup>422</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, "District 925 Newsletter: Union News for U.C. Support Staff," May 1985, Box 11, folder 9, Reuther Library; SEIU District 925 Collection, District 925 flyer, "Ohio College and University Staff Survey Results," 1984, Box 11, folder 1, Reuther Library.

<sup>423</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, District 925 Update, UC Contract Campaign Newsletter, October 1989, Box 11, folder 5, Reuther Library.

<sup>424</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, District 925 Agreement with the University of Cincinnati, 1989, Box 11, folder 5, Reuther Library.

<sup>425</sup> For *New York Times*, see, for instance William Serrin, "Union's Success at Yale: New Focus on White-Collar Women," *New York Times*, April 10, 1984, p. B24; William Serrin, "Yale Strike is Watched by Unions Across the U.S.," *New York Times*, Oct. 11, 1984, p. B4; Edward A. Gargan, "For Some Employees, Yale is a College of Hard Knocks," *New York Times*, Dec. 9, 1984, p. E22. Other work on the Yale union includes Toni Gilpin, Gary Isaac, Dan Letwin, and Jack McKivigan: *On Strike for Respect: The Clerical and Technical Workers' Strike at Yale*

employees joined forces with the established collective of male workers at Yale in the late 1970s.<sup>426</sup> Local 35 of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE), which represented janitors, maintenance workers, and dining hall employees at Yale began to manage, fund, and supervise the movement to organize Yale clericals, forming Local 34. The HERE International provided money for the drive, and Local 35 lent organizers and supplied community contacts.<sup>427</sup> The Local 34 organizing effort officially began in 1980 and three years later, Local 34, which was composed of 80 percent women, won their union election. Yet gaining recognition was just the beginning for these clericals. After contract negotiations stalled, Local 34 went on a ten-week strike in 1984, benefiting from the support of 95 percent of the members of Local 35.<sup>428</sup> By January of 1985, both Local 34 and Local 35 reached favorable contracts with Yale that provided substantial wage increases for the lowest paid workers as well

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*University, 1984-1985* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Dan Clawson, *The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); John Wilhelm, "A Short History of Unionization at Yale," *Social Text* 49 (Winter 1996): 13-19;

Lee Lucas Berman, "In Your Face, In Your Space: Spatial Strategies in Organizing Clerical Workers at Yale," in Andrew Herod, ed., *Organizing the Landscape: Geographical Perspectives on Labor Unionism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

<sup>426</sup> As early as the 1950s the Distributive, Processing, and Office Workers' Union unsuccessfully attempted to organize Yale clericals. Then in the late 1960s, Local 35 of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees, which represented janitors, maintenance workers, and dining hall employees at Yale since the 1940s, funded a drive to develop an Association of Clericals & Technicals (ACT) for Yale clerical and technical employees. While the ACT campaign lasted for a few years, the organization did not attract large numbers of workers. Rather, clericals gathered around their own issues, making themselves separate from Local 35. For instance, clerical employees at the medical center formed temporary groups like the Subcommittee on Parking (to reduce parking fees) or the Subcommittee on Paychecks (to receive monthly paychecks before Christmas). As they were writing letters to the local newspaper and submitting petitions to administrators, they formed the Yale Non-Faculty Action Committee (YNFAC) to handle these and other problems that might arise for clericals across the Yale campus. The differing outlooks of the employees and the efforts of the administrators resulted in the YNFAC losing its NLRB election by a 2 to 1 margin in 1971. Several years later two other unions tried to organize the Yale clericals, but the OPEIU failed by several hundred votes and the United Auto Workers (UAW) abandoned the campaign. See Gilpin, Isaac, Letwin, and McKivigan, *On Strike for Respect*, 18-19; Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with Yale non-faculty employee, #32, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 8. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>427</sup> Gilpin, Isaac, Letwin, and McKivigan, *On Strike for Respect*, 20-21.

<sup>428</sup> Approximately two-thirds of the clerical and technical workers went on strike. Gilpin, Isaac, Letwin, and McKivigan, *On Strike for Respect*, 50; Dan Clawson, *The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 64; William Serrin, "Union's Success at Yale, New Focus on White-Collar Women," *New York Times*, April 10, 1984, p. B24; Lee Lucas Berman, "In Your Face, In Your Space: Spatial Strategies in Organizing Clerical Workers at Yale," in Andrew Herod, ed., *Organizing the Landscape: Geographical Perspectives on Labor Unionism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 213.

as dental plans, better pensions, and improved job security.<sup>429</sup> The Yale clericals' fight for respect and fair pay developed into an issue of rectifying the systematic pay differentials between female-dominated and male-dominated university staff positions.

The Local 34 campaign movement to alleviate structural pay injustices against all working women meant that the clericals demanded more than across-the-board raises.<sup>430</sup> During negotiations with Yale, the Local 34 women sought wage increases in graduated forms that would guard against the clustering of women and minorities in the lowest-paid positions. "Step" increases would raise salaries each year for employees within their job classification while "slotting" would place existing employees at a particular pay level had the step program already been in place.<sup>431</sup> Thus, negotiators in Local 34 wanted more than flat raises; they also wanted to rectify past pay discrimination and prevent it from occurring in the future. Yale rejected step and slotting proposals but agreed to across-the-board raises. Local 34 employees were furious and demanded that the University and the union create a committee to research pay inequity in the clerical ranks. When Yale refused, Local 34 proceeded on its own and distributed leaflets showing the salary disparities between white and black employees as well as the pay differences between male and female employees at Yale.<sup>432</sup>

Local 34's contract negotiations brought increased public attention to the issue of comparable worth.<sup>433</sup> To show that they were serious about going on strike to gain a favorable contract, Local 34 members initiated a one-day strike in May 1984 called "59-Cent Day" to

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<sup>429</sup> Clawson, *The Next Upsurge*, 67; Gilpin, Isaac, Letwin, and McKivigan, *On Strike for Respect*, 88-91.

<sup>430</sup> William Serrin, "Yale Strike is Watched by Unions Across the U.S.," *New York Times*, Oct. 11, 1984, p. B4

<sup>431</sup> Gilpin, Isaac, Letwin, and McKivigan, *On Strike for Respect*, 35.

<sup>432</sup> Gilpin, Isaac, Letwin, and McKivigan, *On Strike for Respect*, 45.

<sup>433</sup> According to Dan Clawson, Local 34 women emphasized the difference between men's and women's salaries at Yale but they rarely or never used the terms comparable worth and pay equity. Yet the media coverage of the campaigns, along with the increased public attention given to equal pay in the workplace, placed the Local 34 movement squarely within the boundaries of the pay equity discussion. Clawson, *The Next Upsurge*, 64-65.



protest pay inequity at Yale.<sup>434</sup> A few months later the ten-week strike began in September 1984 in part because Yale was not willing to offer terms that would mitigate pay inequity. Yale offered Local 34 a three-year contract with an across-the-board raise, yet clericals countered that the increase was not enough because their wages were much less than those of janitors and truck drivers at Yale who were almost all men. Much like the UC campaign that emphasized pay equity, the Yale campaign emphasized raw numbers. The average salary for Yale clericals in Local 34 was \$13,424 while janitors made an average of over \$14,000 and truck drivers made almost \$18,500. According to comparable worth proponents, clerical work required just as much skill, education, and job autonomy as better-paid men's jobs.<sup>435</sup> The National Organization for Women took note of the strike and its past and current presidents Eleanor Smeal and Judy Goldsmith both visited Yale and gave speeches to the strikers.<sup>436</sup> After months of resisting clericals' principle demands, Yale submitted to the proposed terms, agreeing to rectify pay inequity. The final contract for Local 34 did include provisions for the step and slotting programs, a 20.25 percent across-the-board increase, and other benefits.<sup>437</sup>

Most scholars associate Washington with comparable worth because of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees' (AFSCME) 1983 class action claim against the state for gender-based wage disparities among public employees. In this case the district court upheld the comparable worth argument of AFSCME, which relied on a Washington state study by Willis Consulting to rate job worth. However, upon appeal to the Ninth Circuit, the decision was reversed in 1985. In exchange for AFSCME's dismissal of the case, Washington state provided statutory compensation to the affected female employees. Many

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<sup>434</sup> Gilpin, Isaac, Letwin, and McKivigan, *On Strike for Respect*, 46.

<sup>435</sup> Edward A. Gargan, "For Some Employees, Yale is a College of Hard Knocks," *New York Times*, Dec. 9, 1984, p. E22

<sup>436</sup> Gilpin, Isaac, Letwin, and McKivigan, *On Strike for Respect*, 61-62.

<sup>437</sup> Gilpin, Isaac, Letwin, and McKivigan, *On Strike for Respect*, 89.

public workers, including University of Washington (UW) clericals, received significant raises.<sup>438</sup> Although they were not formally part of the court case, UW office workers contributed to the legislative pay equity victory in Washington and brought significant national attention to sex-based wage discrimination.

Comparable worth became a chief concern of the UW clericals who, as state employees, did not enjoy economic bargaining rights under Washington state law until the 1990s.<sup>439</sup> Thus, fighting for raises in the 1980s required that workers or their representatives approach a state-affiliated personnel board. Thus, from the start of the Classified Staff Association (CSA), a worker-initiated group of clericals founded in the 1970s, UW employees became entangled with current state budgets and public policies if they sought their own pay raises.<sup>440</sup> Without the power to negotiate wages privately with their employer, CSA women sought to better their lot through progressive politics. Clericals promoted Democratic candidates and held conferences to advance comparable worth.<sup>441</sup> Yet CSA did hold sway with UW administrators concerning noneconomic workplace issues. Without union affiliation, clericals in CSA negotiated their own contracts with the UW administration years before seeking becoming part of District 925.<sup>442</sup> In

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<sup>438</sup> See, for instance, Robert J. Arnold and Donna M. Ballman, "AFSCME v. Washington: The Death of Comparable Worth?" *University of Miami Law Review* vol. 40 (1985-1986), 1039-1074; Ellen Frankel Paul, *Equity and Gender: The Comparable Worth Debate* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1988).

<sup>439</sup> Kim Cook, interviewed by Ann Froines, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, May 10, 2005.

<sup>440</sup> Neal Culver, interviewed by Ann Froines, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, May 11, 2005.

<sup>441</sup> For membership, see SEIU District 925 Collection, Midori Sumida, "CSA Members Attempt to Equalize Pay," *The Daily*, November 12, 1980, Box 13, folder 22, Reuther Library.

For gubernatorial speech see SEIU District 925 Collection, Advertisement to hear John Spellman, Candidate for Governor, Sponsored by CSA, *The Daily* (UW Student Newspaper), 1976, Box 13, folder 22, Reuther Library. For information on pay equity conference at UW see SEIU District 925 Collection, Midori Sumida, "Working Women Fight for 'Comparable Worth,'" *The Daily*, April 3, 1981, Box 13, folder 22, Reuther Library. For CSA member lobbying Washington legislature, see SEIU District 925 Collection, Wendy Marcus and Patricia Fisher, "Bill Would Make State pay Commensurate with Duties," *Seattle Times*, March 22, 1979, Box 13, folder 22, Reuther Library.

<sup>442</sup> In addition to university workers, clericals in secondary school systems formed committees to negotiate with their employers. Before joining Local 925 in 1983, the women who worked at the administrative headquarters of Brookline Public Schools (Massachusetts) had been securing written agreements about pay with their employers since at least 1967. These contracts between the Brookline School Committee and the Brookline Educational

these “Agreements by and between the University of Washington and the Classified Staff Association,” UW clericals won increased access to employee job training, release time for career development classes, and clauses to protect workers from discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, marital state, disability, and CSA-membership status.<sup>443</sup> Thus, in the 1970s and early 1980s, UW clericals used both contract negotiations and voting power to improve their pay, benefits, and treatment.

As CSA affiliated with District 925 in 1983, the new union, CSA/District 925 continued its commitment to state politics by becoming a strong lobbying force in Olympia. The UW campaign slogan “We’re Worth It” embodied not just the importance of pay equity, but also the strong sense of collective purpose that brought these clericals together as a union. The CSA/925 legislative program focused much of its effort on achieving pay equity for UW employees in the 1980s, gaining strength from the similar focus of other public sector unions in Washington such as AFSCME.<sup>444</sup> CSA/925 members consistently contacted their state representatives to support a bill that, based on comparable worth rating systems, would use state funding to remedy pay inequity among public employees.<sup>445</sup> In 1985 when the Ninth Circuit overturned the AFSCME decision in favor of pay equity relief, CSA/925 continued to be an integral part of the legislative fight to ensure fair compensation for state employees. One 925 flyer stated, “Some staff

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Secretaries Association set minimum and maximum wage rates for each clerical position, required that temporarily-transferred employees receive the pay appropriate for their assignment, and mandated that promoted employees advance in their salary range as well as title. See SEIU District 925 Collection, Agreement Between Brookline School Committee and Brookline Educational Secretaries Association, 1980-1983, Box 14, folder 1, Reuther Library.

<sup>443</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Contracts between CSA and UW, 1976-1981, Box 14, folders 59 and 60, Reuther Library.

<sup>444</sup> CSA/925 leader Neal Culver notes that although AFSCME, the Washington Federation of State Employees, and 925 had very similar goals, 925 was focused on gaining economic bargaining rights for state employees throughout the 1980s. AFSCME and the Federation were more content approaching the state personnel boards for wage issues. Neal Culver, interviewed by Ann Froines, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, May 11, 2005.

<sup>445</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, CSA/District 925 flyer, “Pay Equity Alert,” May 4, 1983, Box 12, folder 25, Reuther Library.

members have been asking, ‘Does this mean it’s all over?’ The answer is, ‘NO—NOT AT ALL.’”<sup>446</sup> And it was not all over when the appeals court prohibited AFSCME from using Title VII to attain equal pay for comparable work.<sup>447</sup>

Many UW clericals travelled to Olympia in 1985 to support the comparable worth bill that would become part of the settlement between AFSCME and the state of Washington.<sup>448</sup> When this bill became state law in 1986, it granted pay increases to all state employees who could show that they had suffered from sex-based wage discrimination. According to the studies by Willis Consulting that had been used in the AFSCME case, secretaries, office assistants, data entry operators, and word processors at UW would gain anywhere from 20 to 27.5 percent of their current salaries, demonstrating the extent of injustice that existed.<sup>449</sup> Although the pay equity increases were scheduled incrementally each year until 1993 or until full equity was achieved, the state, its personnel board, and UW administrators faltered on the funding in the early 1990s. CSA/District 925 lobbied state policymakers and university officials, pressuring them, successfully for the most part, to fulfill the terms of the agreement.<sup>450</sup> To be sure, AFSCME was the union most responsible for advancing a nationwide pay equity platform through union contracts, state law, and judicial action in this era.<sup>451</sup> Nevertheless, the

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<sup>446</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, CSA/District 925 flyer, “Comparable Worth Alert,” 1985, Box 12, folder 1, Reuther Library.

<sup>447</sup> In the 1985 Ninth Circuit decision, the appeals court judges determined that the job ratings study that was used for evidence in the district court was in fact insufficient to prove disparate treatment between men and women under Title VII. Employees would not just have to show that an employers’ actions resulted in unequal pay but also that the employer intended to discriminate based on sex. See Robert J. Arnold and Donna M. Ballman, “AFSCME v. Washington: The Death of Comparable Worth?” *University of Miami Law Review* vol. 40 (1985-1986), 1066-1068.

<sup>448</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, CSA/District 925 flyer, “Comparable Worth Settlement,” 1985, Box 12, folder 1, Reuther Library.

<sup>449</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, CSA/District 925 flyer, “Comparable Worth Is Signed Into Law,” 1985, Box 12, folder 1, Reuther Library.

<sup>450</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, CSA/District 925 flyer, “CSA/925 Appeals Advocate History Sheet,” 1991, Box 12, folder 1, Reuther Library.

<sup>451</sup> See Blum, *Between Feminism and Labor*, 47-49; Michael W. McCann, *Rights at Work: Pay Equity Reform and the Politics of Legal Mobilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), 48-91; Cobble, *The Other Women’s*

contributions of SEIU CSA/925 resulted in historic legislation and unprecedented salary increases for Washington state clericals.

Thus, for CSA/District 925, “Politics [was] Union Business,” as its literature noted.<sup>452</sup> Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, CSA/925 leaders issued numerous updates, alerts, and summaries regarding the union’s legislative priorities so that members could easily express support issues like pay equity. The union also kept members informed on other topics such as state-subsidized childcare, bargaining rights and flat salary increases for public employees, and video display terminal regulations.<sup>453</sup> CSA/925 organized official Lobby Days in the state capital of Olympia, where UW staff would carpool from the Seattle campus to the capitol building to accost legislators about issues of union interest.<sup>454</sup> In addition, members and their allies sent union-produced postcards to legislators to express support for pay equity policies. To endorse the state comparable worth bill, 4,000 postcards from 925 and its backers reached the state capitol. The mailers sought to associate pay inequity with recognizable human rights leaders and social justice issues to demonstrate its discriminatory and unfair nature. For instance, one card had a photo of Martin Luther King, Jr. making an impassioned speech on behalf of African-American civil rights. The caption read, “Comparable Worth. Another Step Toward Justice.”<sup>455</sup> Other postcards stressed comparable worth’s equal standing among historic

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*Movement*, 221; Jo Freeman, “Comparable Worth,” *In These Times*, August 22-September 4, 1984, 16; September 12-18, 1984, 11, < <http://www.jofreeman.com/lawandpolicy/compworth.htm>>.

<sup>452</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, CSA/925 Flyer, “Politics Is Union Business,” ca. 1987, Box 12, folder 25, Reuther Library.

<sup>453</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, CSA/District 925 flyer, “1987 Legislative Session: Legislative Update,” 1987, Box 12, folder 25, Reuther Library.

<sup>454</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, CSA/District 925 flyer, “Rules of the Day, CSA/925-SEIU Lobby Day,” February 14, 1991, Box 12, folder 26, Reuther Library.

<sup>455</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, CSA/District 925 postcard, Martin Luther King, Jr., ca. 1983-85, Box 12, folder 1, Reuther Library. Citation of 4,000 postcards, see SEIU District 925 Collection, CSA/District 925 flyer, “Pay Equity Alert,” May 4, 1983, Box 12, folder 25, Reuther Library.

social movements by employing pictures of Chinese railroad workers, early 20<sup>th</sup> century child laborers, and Equal Rights Amendment supporters.<sup>456</sup>

## Conclusion

Campaigns across the nation in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s demonstrated that academia could provide a ripe environment for staff organizing even if certain aspects of its structure and not all of its personnel fully supported workers' claims. Union drives for higher pay became more prevalent as the mainstream feminist movement encouraged women to reexamine the power dynamics inherent in their everyday lives. Thus, the successes of the larger feminist movement propelled many of the university organizing drives despite the fact that most clericals did not label themselves as feminists. These union campaigns demonstrated that women workers both inside and outside of feminist organizations were seeking fair pay for their work. Most university campaigns for pay equity in the 1970s proceeded without government intervention. The salary negotiations occurred between university administrators and clerical unions.

In the 1980s, sex-based wage discrimination became a more public issue. The SEIU told Connecticut public sector clericals in 1981 that, "Equal pay for equal worth is a new slogan throughout the U.S.," promising that to fight to increase inequitable secretaries' salaries in Connecticut.<sup>457</sup> In feminist groups and union circles of the 1980s, pay equity had become a visible and recognizable issue. While clerical unions continued to pursue collective bargaining to increase their wages, they also joined the coalition fighting for government regulation of sex-

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<sup>456</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, CSA/District 925 postcard pictures in Naomi Almeleh, "Working Women Organizing for Comparable Worth: The Case of the Classified Staff Association/District 925," Masters of Arts thesis, Vermont College of Norwich University, Seattle, Washington, January 1991, Box 12, folder 24, Reuther Library.

<sup>457</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Clerical Council, Local 203, SEIU, Brochure entitled Equal worth deserves equal pay, 1981, Box 7, folder 46, Reuther Library.

based wage discrimination. Their campus battles for fair pay became significant to a movement of growing national concern.

Subsequent chapters will argue that the office workers' movement suffered in part because federal policy tolerated pay inequity. Not only did comparable worth lose legal traction, but also salary restructuring through collective bargaining faltered as many unions struggled for negotiating power. Private employers successfully maintained existing salary scales that devalued clerical work while they fulfilled sex and race quotas in managerial positions. By 1995, an SEIU survey demonstrated that achieving better pay and fair pay was still the number one issue of concern for working women.<sup>458</sup> However, the demand for comparable worth became a lower priority on the national feminist platform. Government remedies promised women increased access to male dominated spheres through policies of nondiscrimination and by promoting work-life balance.

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<sup>458</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum speech, "Working Women Count! Challenges for Working Women," Connecticut Women's Summit, March 25, 1995, Box 15, folder 65, Reuther Library.

### Chapter Three: Organizing for Upward Mobility: Publishing Women and Personnel Practices in the 1970s

Sherry Arden, a vice president and director of publicity for William Morrow and Company, explained that when she was promoted to vice president “secretaries came to my office crying. They felt they were sharing in what I was doing and that they had a chance at this point.” But at another publishing firm, a female executive was “hurt by all the women who came up to congratulate me” upon becoming the youngest vice president at Bantam. She perceived it as a “put-down” and felt, “I deserved it for my work, not just because I was a woman.” At Fawcett World Library, a female executive who started as a secretary at Little, Brown claimed that she made her own tea and kept track of her own expense account. Having worked as a clerical, she was not going to make anyone do that type of service for her.<sup>459</sup>

How did women in the publishing industry gain status and mobility in the postwar feminist era? The above accounts reveal that rising through the ranks, from secretary to manager or editor, was a rare occurrence in the 1970s. Yet some white, educated women were gaining access to these male-dominated publishing positions.<sup>460</sup> While some emphasized and others suppressed their gender identities, they all realized they were breaking barriers by becoming executives. Just how women fought sex discrimination within their own workplaces, struggling to attain the higher paid, more prestigious jobs, has not been sufficiently explored. This chapter will examine the collective resistance of publishing workers—both unionizing efforts and non-union strategies—in Boston and New York in the 1970s. A range of grievances—from low salaries to the lack of standardized practices and thwarted desires for upward career mobility—

<sup>459</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, Ann Geracimos, “Women in Publishing: Where Do They Feel They’re Going?” *Publishers Weekly*, November 11, 1974, pgs. 22-27. 79-M16—81-M121, Carton 2, folder 54, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>460</sup> Others eventually would enter the managerial and editor positions directly after graduation from college or graduate school, particularly as companies focused on recruiting women and minorities to positions where they were underrepresented because of affirmative action guidelines. But this chapter concerns the collective activities of women who were already working in female-dominated positions.



fueled these campaigns. Publishing women helped to transform corporate policies and practices in their industry. They won job postings, pushed for job descriptions, and advocated for job training. In the end, these struggles helped to create the basis for modern human resource management, making some of these workplaces more equitable and some employers more willing to meet employees' claims.

Scholars have accounted for changing corporate policy—for instance, the standardization of performance reviews, the codification of job descriptions, and the accessibility to external training—in several ways. Recent scholarship in sociology has shown that personnel officers actively expanded their own professional standing as they implemented equal employment laws in their workplaces. In other words, the actions taken by personnel officers determined how corporate leaders, state officials, and the general public came to understand the scope and content of employment laws.<sup>461</sup> Other evidence demonstrates that in the late 1970s, management and industrial relations publications, targeted both to practitioners and to academics, began to emphasize human resources as an integral component of a firm's strategy and financial success.<sup>462</sup>

Historians have looked to workers instead of managers or executives as the primary actors of workplace change. In *Freedom Is Not Enough*, Nancy MacLean traces the legal battles initiated by women, blacks, and immigrants, as these employees used new state remedies to fight for economic justice.<sup>463</sup> Similar to this account, MacLean's book presents workers as the primary agents in the changing workplace landscape. Yet her history upholds a clear divide

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<sup>461</sup> Frank Dobbin, *Inventing Equal Opportunity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>462</sup> Richard Beckhard and Reuben T. Harris, *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1977); Edgar H. Schein, *Career Dynamics: Matching Individual and Organizational Needs* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978); Mary Anne Devanna, Charles Fombrun, and Noel Tichy, "Human Resources Management," *Organizational Dynamics* (Winter 1981: 51-67); Michael Beer, Bert Spector, Paul R. Lawrence, D. Quinn Mills, and Richard E. Walton, *Managing Human Assets* (New York: The Free Press, 1984).

<sup>463</sup> Nancy MacLean, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).

between the development of state regulation and corporate policy. The law, however, did not always exert pressure on corporate actors. In many instances, employees and employers negotiated new procedures and practices, and this changing corporate policy defined state regulations.<sup>464</sup> Furthermore, many workers were bypassing government channels to voice their concerns directly to managers and personnel officials. To gain power in personnel matters, workers started grassroots organizations, most of which remained within the office but some of which associated with larger trade unions. This chapter includes the legal action initiated by publishing workers. But more significantly, it accounts for the employee associations, women's groups, and union drives that pressured managers and executives to restructure and expand certain personnel matters. Thus, the organizing activities and successes of publishing women in the 1970s provide a bottom-up account of human resource development.

These efforts also expand our understanding of the strategies and goals of the labor movement during that decade. As a whole, this industry did not become heavily unionized nor did it prioritize bread and butter issues only, which have long been markers of labor's presence and success.<sup>465</sup> Some women cared primarily about their low pay, which propelled them to unionize. But to other women, fair treatment meant access to jobs within their companies that matched their education and work experience. These concerns did not have to be mutually exclusive nor did they prevent women with different concerns from uniting against intransigent management. In some workplaces discussed in section three, women overcame class divisions to unite and even to go on strike. In other workplaces, employees' priorities diverged during organizing campaigns, creating tension among women.

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<sup>464</sup> Frank Dobbin, *Inventing Equal Opportunity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>465</sup> In fact, university women were more likely to act in ways that conform to our traditional definitions of the labor movement. See Chapter Two on university women.

In most organizing campaigns, publishing women were calling for greater transparency in the hiring and promotion processes. They wanted to change internal corporate policies so that they could access higher-ranking professions. Women watched men doing jobs that they were more than capable of performing. They demanded that employers post available jobs (not just clerical but also editorial), institute written job descriptions, and finance job training and external education. Many employers answered their calls by formalizing and standardizing these processes. In today's workplaces, we now recognize these workers' claims as standard protocol within employer-constructed human resource departments. These women successfully facilitated large-scale and long-lasting change on an institutional level.

Important scholarship discusses the declining economic and culture power of workers in the 1970s.<sup>466</sup> In *Stayin' Alive*, Jefferson Cowie traces the diminishing social and cultural capital of working-class industrial men. Much of his analysis assumes that new political and social value placed on securing individual rights, those based on characteristics such as race and sex, detracted from the collective rights of organized workers. However, examining the activities of clericals defies this supposition, calling for a reexamination of workers in the 1970s for two main reasons. First, the successful resistance of many women workers in the 1970s no longer depended solely on the trade union model. Thus, the decline of union strength did not necessarily indicate the decline of workers' influence. Women were relying, quite successfully, on less formal channels to present their grievances. The efforts and campaigns of publishing women changed corporate policies in this decade. Second, publishing women, and many other

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<sup>466</sup> Judith Stein accounts for the increasing gap between rich and poor that starts in the 1970s, which she calls the "age of inequality." Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). In his declension story, Jefferson Cowie argues that working-class identity, meaning the cohesiveness of Democratic, trade union men, declines by the 1980s. He does not account for the increased labor activity of clerical workers throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s in his account of the culture of the working class. Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

clerical women, started a national office workers' movement that relied on unionizing to achieve sex-specific goals. The increasing activity of office workers, home health workers, domestic workers, flight attendants, and many other sex-segregated service jobs and female-dominated professions caused national trade unions to reevaluate their organizing tactics and their target workforces.<sup>467</sup> By defying economic conditions and gender norms with their efforts, these women showed that the frameworks of individual and collective rights could operate simultaneously in the 1970s.

Publishing house norms reinforced gendered ideology that assigned clerical tasks to women workers regardless of their skills and abilities, educational background, or career goals. Women reacted against these customs because they expected jobs in publishing to allow for interesting work and upward job mobility. The college-educated women who filled these secretarial positions created a successful 9to5 committee, Women in Publishing, to handle the specific concerns of publishing women. These women formed committees to fight the unfair policies that hindered the development of female workers. Different from clericals in academia, banking and insurance who cared primarily about current pay levels, clericals in publishing fought for access to editorial and executive-level positions. Some publishing efforts resulted in unionization, but most did not. Those that did, however, had a significant impact on the industry and its workers.

## Overview of the Publishing Industry

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<sup>467</sup> Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein, *Caring for America: Home Health Workers in the Shadow of the Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Premilla Nadasen, "Citizenship Rights, Domestic Work, and the Fair Labor Standards Act," *Journal of Policy History* 24, vol. 1 (2012): 74-94; Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Jo-Ann Mort, editor, *Not Your Father's Union Movement: Inside the AFL-CIO* (London: Verso, 1998).

Publishing houses provided unlikely but ripe environments for collective organizing. The workers historically had similar backgrounds and had similar career goals, more so than at other white-collar workplaces. One woman remembers that during the Great Depression many college educated women like herself, often with bachelors degrees in English, sought jobs in publishing.<sup>468</sup> Into the 1960s, many such women found employment in publishing firms in places like New York City and Boston. These middle-class women believed that, even if they had to begin as secretaries, their social and academic pedigree would afford them access to promotions to editorial positions.<sup>469</sup> In fact, many of the women who were working in publishing as secretaries had liberal arts degrees from top-ranked universities. Publishing clericals working in Boston had bachelor's degrees in English and some had graduated from elite undergraduate programs at Duke, Pomona, Berkeley, Cornell, Boston University, and Columbia. A few had started graduate work at M.I.T., Columbia, or Harvard before entering the publishing industry.<sup>470</sup> Relative to insurance and banking workers who may have completed high school clerical courses or post-secondary secretarial schools, workers in publishing had access to college, which propelled their professional aspirations. Such credentials made publishing clericals feel that they deserved better treatment, increased opportunities, and more interesting work.

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<sup>468</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with unionized publishing worker who was in the UOPWA, #22, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass; Also see Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with associate editor at Harper and Row, #28, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7, Schlesinger Library. Please note: The full names of the interviewees have been expunged on the research copies of the interview transcripts. The originals are closed to research until January 1, 2035. Researchers must sign a special form stating that they will not try to identify, find, or contact any person mentioned in an interview, and that they will not use in any publication the correct name or initials of any person mentioned in an interview.

<sup>469</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, "Chapter VI: Raises and Roses: 9to5's First Ten Years," Brandeis University dissertation by Phyllis S. Glick, p. 161, 1983. 79-M16—81-M121, Carton 2, folder 59. Schlesinger Library. "Women in the Boston Area Publishing Industry: A Status Report," from Women in Publishing, 9to5 Boston, p. 5, March 1975. 79-M16—81-M121, Box 5, folder 127. Schlesinger Library. Glick and the 9to5 report both confirm that most publishing house workers had college degrees.

<sup>470</sup> Information on education gathered from selected returned surveys, Women in Publishing, Wage Survey, Carton 2, folders 79 and 80.

A limited number of workers in publishing had been more formally organizing for decades. For instance, one Depression-era clerical recounted that the union at Macmillan, Local 18 of the United Office and Professional Workers of America (UOPWA), actually grew out of the Book and Magazine Guild in New York, which was a group of publishing industry professionals. The workers in the guild decided to affiliate with the UOPWA to get the benefits associated with unionization since most were low-paid and seeking promotions.<sup>471</sup> In the 1960s workers at Macmillan in New York City followed a similar pattern. They started talking about collective organizing after hearing speakers from both a newspapers' guild and an employee's association from Harper and Row. These Macmillan employees, who were dissatisfied with the lack of upward mobility at the publishing house, joined Local 153 of the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU). Clearly, some unions could appeal to workers who considered themselves well-educated professionals.<sup>472</sup> At Houghton Mifflin Company, an organizing committee wrote:

If grape pickers, and auto assemblers, symphony musicians and engineers, teachers and reporters, TV announcers and air pilots, movie stars and policemen finally abandoned company committees, professional uplift associations and wishful thinking for union collective bargaining, why shouldn't we?<sup>473</sup>

Although employees were unsuccessful, a union drive occurred in late 1970, demonstrating the spirit of collective resistance that was present among publishing workers.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with unionized publishing worker who was in the UOPWA, #22, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>472</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with production editor at Macmillan, #23, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library. According to this Macmillan employee, the organized workers did not favor joining District 65 because it was not as well known, and employees associated it with men, factory work and blue collars. It did not have the status of being a skilled workers' association like the OPEIU did, although District 65 was actually relatively progressive with respect to women's issues. In addition, the OPEIU was part of the AFL-CIO and District 65 was independent until the late 1970s.

<sup>473</sup> Union Organizing Committee of HMCO Employees, HMCO Newsletter, No. 12, October 28, 1970, Carton 15, folder 937.

<sup>474</sup> Memo to Members of the Educational Division from G.M. Fenollosa, November 16, 1970, Box 5, folder 119. Unfortunately I do not have further records of the 1970 organizing drive at this time, but more information on the organizing efforts are in the last section of the chapter.

Furthermore, at Educators Publishing Service (EPS), 9to5 successfully helped to secure Local 925's first contracts in 1974. Needing the force of a formal union to combat several unfair practices, works at the small publishing house in Cambridge organized but had trouble negotiating a contract. When negotiations were at an impasse, workers picketed on a Saturday in front of the EPS building while the company was displaying its new books. The employees carried signs reading "EPS: Every Person a Slave," as they banged pans and spoons and maracas.<sup>475</sup> The terms of this modified union shop contract included 25 percent increase in wages over the next two years, guaranteed internal job postings for two weeks, an extra week of vacation after five years employment, maternity leave policy, grievance and arbitration procedures, better sick leave and medical insurance, and union-approved changes to job descriptions.<sup>476</sup>

Such examples notwithstanding, most publishing houses have never been unionized. The sense of middle-class, professional status that these women shared could inhibit efforts to form unions. One associate editor at Houghton Mifflin claimed that the women in positions like hers saw themselves as "intellectuals...it's like being an associate professor and people like us don't unionize." Even among the clericals, "[they're] also very involved with being professionals and not blue collar, nothing to do with unions because that's blue collar."<sup>477</sup>

They might not have perceived themselves as union material but they saw themselves as worth more, both economically and intellectually. The message of the broader feminist movement of the 1960s was telling these types of college-educated women that they were just as qualified as men and deserved the same pay and promotional tracks. Particularly given their

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<sup>475</sup> "Karen Nussbaum In Conversation with Dorothy Sue Cobble and Alice Kessler-Harris," Mary S. Hartman, editor, *Talking Leadership: Conversations with Powerful Women* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers, 1999), 143.

<sup>476</sup> Local 925, "Educators Publishing Service, Inc.: CONTRACT HIGHLIGHTS," Carton 2, folder 41.

<sup>477</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with associate editor at Harper and Row, #28, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7, Schlesinger Library.

educational background and professional aspirations, publishing clericals formed informal caucuses with other like-minded women to seek fair treatment and open new paths to mobility.

In the 1970s, publishing houses rarely promoted clericals to editorial positions and offered only meager and infrequent cost-of-living raises. Moving horizontally from one publishing house to another was often the only ways to attain a higher pay.<sup>478</sup> This strategy worked because the market rate for new clericals usually exceeded the wages of senior clericals, given their infrequent and inadequate raises. Thus, when management hired new workers, their starting salaries were usually higher than what the most senior editorial assistants were earning. Into the late 1970s, *Glamour* magazine advocated that all clerical workers switch jobs if they were looking to advance their workplace status. The article told women that “horizontal movement can be as valuable as vertical movement” and they could “make each move *look* like a promotion by treating it in a positive manner.”<sup>479</sup> Oddly, then, seniority was not rewarded, vacant positions were filled from outside the firm, and turnover was high. Clericals saw these practices as unfair because management did not honor employee loyalty and experience. One clerical said she was sure she was making more money than a woman who had been at the same publishing house for twenty years.<sup>480</sup> Another said that if a woman wanted to move up, she would have to leave to work at another company and then try to come back to a higher position. Internal promotions did not exist for female clericals.<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>478</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with associate editor at Harper and Row, #28, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>479</sup> Michael Korda, “Some Crazy/Practical Ideas on Moving Up from a Secretarial Job,” *Glamour*, April 1978, 224. Korda’s advice applies to intra-company movement but promotes the same principles, stating that staying in the same position will not lead to growth. He warns, “*Don’t* get yourself assigned to one person and stick there.”

<sup>480</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with credit analyst from Harper and Row, #27, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>481</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with production editor at Macmillan, #23, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library.



In addition, publishing houses were notorious for lacking standard job descriptions and for manipulating job titles. A woman who expressed a desire to become an editor might be hired with a title of “editorial assistant,” but in reality she would perform clerical duties only. One woman explained that depending on one’s supervisor, similarly-qualified women could have disparate job titles and functions.<sup>482</sup> Publishing firms like Houghton Mifflin would use euphemisms for secretarial work for several reasons. First, the firms wanted women to think they were on the track to becoming an assistant editor or even an editor. Because many of these women had earned college degrees, they cared about the nature of work they did each day and about the title they held at their company. Second, some firms had a verbal policy that they did not pay overtime to any employee who had the word ‘editorial’ in her title because it denoted that, from the company’s perspective, she held a management position, exempting her from wage and hours laws. Publishing houses could squeeze longer hours from editorial assistants without having to pay them time and a half for overtime. Yet being an “editorial assistant” was completely different from being an “assistant editor,” the former having the duties of a clerical and the latter having the duties of an editor.<sup>483</sup> Third, some publishing houses, like Houghton Mifflin, were trying to use job titles to fulfill affirmative action guidelines that had been established by Executive Orders 10925 and 11246 in 1961 and 1965, and then amended in 1967 to include sex. Affirmative action recommendations urged employers to hire and promote minorities and women into underutilized categories if they wanted to keep their government contracts. Because so many women were already working jobs classified as clerical, Houghton Mifflin gave women particular job titles so that it could categorize more women as managers

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<sup>482</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with associate editor at Harper and Row, #28, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7. Schlesinger Library. Sometimes, too, women would be hired with clerical titles and ultimately perform editorial-level work without receiving the status or pay that accompanied being an editor.

<sup>483</sup> Jean Tepperman papers, Tepperman interview with associate editor at Houghton Mifflin, #26, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 7. Schlesinger Library.

when submitting affirmative action data to the government. In reality, these women were really doing the duties of and receiving the pay of secretaries.<sup>484</sup>

The inequitable practices occurring within publishing houses begs the question: to what extent did women perceive themselves as engaged in a larger social cause when working to change office policies and practices? The evidence gathered suggests that clericals in many industries, publishing included, did not perceive themselves as part of a broader feminist movement outside of the office. The feminist movement certainly explains the timing of these collective acts, for its social and cultural agenda propelled women to reexamine their status in relation to those around them. Feminism heavily influenced the changing perception of workplace fairness and the destabilization of gender norms that motivated publishing workers. Yet, we cannot label these women feminists because likely they would not have labeled themselves as such. For instance, when concerned Houghton Mifflin clericals began gathering in June 1970 to discuss dissatisfaction with salary levels and lack of promotional opportunities, they demonstrated that female employees could care about workplace fairness without considering themselves part of a larger feminist movement.<sup>485</sup> They met with personnel to express their grievances, which also included inadequate job postings, no written job descriptions, few job-related educational opportunities, and lack of training programs for promotions.<sup>486</sup> A committee of both editorial and clerical workers had formed “to raise the

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<sup>484</sup> Jean Tepperman papers, Tepperman interview with organizer of Black Employee Committee at Houghton Mifflin, #25, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 7. Schlesinger Library. Also, many clericals reported that these Affirmative Action plans were useless because government officials were reluctant to enforce the company's goals and timetables and employees were unaware of the existence of these plans and their right to legal recourse. Jean Tepperman papers, Tepperman interview with associate editor at Houghton Mifflin, #26, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 7. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>485</sup> HMCO Employees Reformation Committee, HMCO Newsletter, No. 7, September 25, 1970, Carton 15, folder 937.

<sup>486</sup> Confidential Memo to Miss Crowell from R.B. Gladstone for the Personnel Committee, Subject: Meeting on June 15, 1970, June 24, 1970, Box 5, folder 119. Job postings, for instance, began in limited capacity at HMCO as late as 1968. Memo to Meg from Irene, Subject: Meeting with Mary Lindsay, May 14, 1976, Carton 15, folder 932.

salaries and opportunities for all employees regardless of sex,” but because it was comprised mostly of women, one male editor called it a “‘woman’s lib’ thing.” The committee responded in its newsletter by distancing itself from the women’s movement. It charged the editor with misunderstanding its goals: “If he believes that the move for higher salaries and better job opportunities is a ‘woman’s lib’ thing, he lacks comprehension.”<sup>487</sup> To be sure, broader social movements for gender equity influenced women forming office organizations. But the women, as workers, did not necessarily perceive themselves as participating in a feminist project that called for a reordering of male-female relationships.

Other employees overtly sought to change social conditions through their workplace advocacy. At Houghton Mifflin an African-American woman organized a committee to advance men and women of color in the Houghton Mifflin office and in the company’s printed material. She maintained a list of requests from the black employees, who numbered just forty out of 600 to 700 workers. Most wanted not just to see more blacks in “decision-making positions” at the company, but also they were concerned about the “fair treatment of blacks in the books,” meaning the portrayal of people of color in the products they were helping to publish. The committee wanted a person of color to examine Houghton books for racial and sex stereotyping before they were printed and distributed. Standard company practice had allowed senior editors to have complete control of such printing decisions. Although management allowed the committee to revise the manual on racial and sex stereotyping, not one black person was a full editor and thus no African-Americans had control over content, printing, and distribution.

The lack of control over book content stemmed from a larger problem in the publishing world: the absence of minorities in decision-making positions. According to minority employees, Houghton Mifflin only nominally pursued affirmative action compliance; it was not

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<sup>487</sup> HMCO Employees Reformation Committee, “HMCO Newsletter,” No. 2, August 13, 1970, Box 5, folder 119.

genuinely committed to rectifying the concentration of women and minorities in the lowest-paid positions. During company-wide meetings, the executives tried to flaunt their subcontracts with minority-owned companies to appear progressive. However, Houghton did little to promote minorities, and arguably it demoted minority activists. The committee organizer had been downgraded from an editorial assistant position to the typing pool over the course of her employment at Houghton Mifflin, most likely because of her leadership role.<sup>488</sup> As we will see below, 9to5 included race discrimination in some of its publishing lawsuits. It reached out to the Houghton Mifflin Black Caucus for help as it was compiling data during the discovery phase of a lawsuit with the attorney general.<sup>489</sup> Yet 9to5 rarely contested racial issues when they did not intersect with instances of gender discrimination. Black women were not well represented within its ranks nor were they very receptive to outreach efforts.

#### 9to5's Women in Publishing Committee

Most women who were dissatisfied with publishing conditions worked outside of the traditional union framework to address their problems in the workplace. In 1974 Boston women used 9to5 as a vehicle to respond to and combat inequities in the publishing industry. They started the first and arguably most successful subcommittee of 9to5, known as Women in Publishing or WIP. This committee gained momentum following major organizing efforts in the New York publishing scene.<sup>490</sup> Nine to Five women successfully brought legal challenges in the

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<sup>488</sup> Jean Tepperman papers, Tepperman interview with organizer of Black Employee Committee at Houghton Mifflin, #25, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 7. Schlesinger Library. She believed that the company patronized and degraded black employees by purposefully waiting to reply to their letters.

<sup>489</sup> Also 9to5 expressed interest in race and sex stereotyping in textbooks, inviting black employees to view an informational video on the subject. Memo to Houghton Mifflin Black Caucus from Women in Publishing, December 4, 1975, Carton 15, folder 932.

<sup>490</sup> Press release, Women in Publishing Announces Fall Program, October 24, 1974, Box 5, folder 118; Letter from Ellen Cassidy to Leslie Max, August 14, 1974, Carton 1, folder 27. The New York organizing efforts will be discussed below in the final section of this chapter.

1970s against several Boston firms and helped workers achieve more equitable workplace practices. Some workers organized collectively on their own, forming internal employees associations; others used 9to5 as a community resource to gather information on corporate practices and public policy, and still other employees worked through 9to5 to unionize. Nine to Five's Women in Publishing Committee stated its goals as being to collect information about women working in publishing firms in the Boston area, to aid women in solving problems at those companies, and to investigate affirmative action in publishing houses and bring about compliance with the law.<sup>491</sup>

Nine to Five leader Joan Quinlan noted that Women in Publishing took a leading role in the early stages of the larger organization. The women who worked in the publishing industry responded positively to 9to5; the subcommittee held weekly meetings that were attended by 50 to 100 women. Women who worked in publishing had high expectations of what they deserved, according to Quinlan. They had college educations and entered publishing "expecting glamour" and a professional career. What they found was that "they [were] going to be secretaries like everyone else."<sup>492</sup> The committee successfully fought for job postings, written job descriptions, and job training in area workplaces. Many of the college-educated women who were working the lowest-paid clerical jobs in these companies perceived themselves as fit for higher-level work. While salaries were a concern in the publishing campaigns, employees usually emphasized promotional opportunities above all else. They viewed affiliation with 9to5 as a path to upward mobility, using the organization to achieve overall goals of workplace fairness but also to further their individual success. Publishing women had their eye on mobility and sought to gain promotions through collaborative efforts.

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<sup>491</sup> Press release, Women in Publishing at Boston Globe Book Festival, September 30, 1974, Box 5, folder 118.

<sup>492</sup> Notes from speech, Joan Quinlan, "How it started," Carton 2, folder 47.

A woman would accept a secretarial position because working as a clerical for a few years was the only chance she would have to attain a managerial or editorial position in the 1970s. When hired, all clericals were told that they would have opportunities for upward mobility. Yet in reality, very few moved from the clerical to professional ranks. For instance, an Allyn & Bacon employee said that the company hired her as a secretary and told her that she would have to stay in that position for at least one year before advancing into editorial work. She jokingly remarked that perhaps being a secretary was Allyn & Bacon's idea of a training program for female employees since a formal one did not exist.<sup>493</sup> An article in *Publishers Weekly* highlighted the exceptional cases of promotion like Sherry Arden, noting that female publishing secretaries had opportunities for upward mobility. The women profiled had all started as secretaries and moved up to executive positions. The editor-in-chief of Pocket Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, began as Nelson Doubleday's private secretary. Another female executive disclosed, "it took willingness to do *any* kind of work to get here." Before moving into sales at Time, Inc., another publishing executive had worked for six years as a secretary at Doubleday.<sup>494</sup> Yet these success stories were the exception not the rule. The publishing women involved in 9to5 were well educated and career oriented just like the featured female executives who had ascended. But they confronted many obstacles when trying to gain access to editorial and executive positions, demonstrating that in the 1970s, on the whole, only limited opportunities existed.

For its first task, Women in Publishing sought to collect information about the industry. Active members distributed questionnaires to employees in at least 30 publishing houses; other statistics were obtained using company rosters, annual reports, and other public information.

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<sup>493</sup> Selected survey, Women in Publishing, Job Training Questionnaire, Carton 2, folder 81.

<sup>494</sup> Ann Geracimos, "Women in Publishing: Where Do They Feel They're Going?" *Publishers Weekly*, November 11, 1974, pgs. 22-27, Carton 2, folder 54.

After several months of compiling and analyzing information on the workforce and working conditions, WIP presented a first report in March 1975. Statistics showed that between 60 and 70 percent of employees in publishing were women; however, only 5 to 10 percent of women employees had management-level positions. The average respondent of the survey was female, 27 years old, held a bachelors degree, and presently earned \$9000 per year with the title of Assistant Editor or Associate Editor. Many of these women moved into the editorial ranks after being hired as clericals in the \$6000 per year range. WIP argued that the promotion in title and job responsibilities did not correspond to an adequate increase in salary. After accounting for cost-of-living increases, the average woman who was promoted only earned a merit increase of 3.5 percent annually. The average woman also felt that she had been discriminated against regarding position titles and salaries relative to male employees in her firm. WIP compared male and female employees' salaries and controlled for education and job experience. It found that there was a gap of over \$3000 per year in starting salaries for college-educated male and female workers. WIP also argued that most women began their careers in clerical work and some had difficulty moving upwards into the editorial positions. Men, in contrast, rarely started in clerical work and constituted the overwhelming majority of managers and executives in the publishing industry.<sup>495</sup>

In the summer of 1975, Women in Publishing produced a second report that specifically compared wage and benefit information among Boston area houses. It detailed the various policies and practices of firms including Addison-Wesley, Allyn & Bacon, Atlantic Monthly, Cahner's, Educator's Publishing Service, Ginn & Co., D.C. Heath & Co., Houghton Mifflin, Little, Brown, and Prindle, Weber & Schmidt. This report allowed workers to see how their

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<sup>495</sup> Women in Publishing, 9to5 Organization, "Women in the Boston Area Publishing Industry: A Status Report," March 1975, Box 5, folder 127. This report also contained information about implementing affirmative action policies, which will be discussed in a later chapter on affirmative action.

employer compared to other firms in areas such as sick days per year, pension plans, job postings, salary reviews, in-house training, educational assistance, and overtime policies. It offered a rough listing of salary ranges and job titles for each company but noted that industry-wide comparisons were difficult because of “lack of knowledge about scope of job included under a particular job title.”<sup>496</sup> To market this comparison survey and increase publicity, WIP used the data gathered to present “dubious distinction awards” to area firms. Awards bestowed included most petty rules, worst company to grow old in, and the company with no maternity benefits.<sup>497</sup>

After writing these research reports, Women in Publishing prepared to take legal action against the worst offenders. Acting as a watchdog group, it demanded that business leaders abide by state guidelines and that government officials enforce the law. With its research reports about working conditions in the Boston publishing industry, WIP approached Massachusetts Attorney General Francis X. Bellotti to take action against sex-based inequities. Its studies demonstrated that women held 66 percent of publishing jobs but only 6 percent of management positions. And regarding equal pay, according to 9to5, “being male ‘is worth an extra \$3,000 in Boston publishing.’”<sup>498</sup> The committee asked the Attorney General to investigate the hiring, promotion, and pay practices in Boston publishing houses.<sup>499</sup> WIP convinced Attorney General Bellotti to take legal action taken against Addison Wesley, Allyn & Bacon, and Houghton Mifflin, and accused all three of both race and sex discrimination. Together the Attorney

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<sup>496</sup> Women in Publishing, 9to5 Organization, “A Comparison of Benefits and Employment Policies at Boston Area Publishing Houses,” Summer 1975, Box 5, folder 127.

<sup>497</sup> Press release, Women in Publishing, “Women in Publishing Presents Dubious Distinction Awards to Boston Publishing Firms,” June 26, 1975, Box 5, folder 126.

<sup>498</sup> “Five Boston Publishers Accused of Sex Discrimination,” BP Report on the Business of Book Publishing, December 1, 1975, Box 5, folder 118.

<sup>499</sup> Danlia Quirk, editor, “Addison-Wesley, Allyn & Bacon, Houghton Hit with Discrimination Charges,” *The Educational Marketer: Newsletter for Sales, Marketing and Advertising Executives in Educational Publishing, Materials and Equipment Companies* Vol. 8, No. 3, December 1, 1975, Box 5, folder 118.



General and 9to5 filed charges with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD), charging the three firms with failing to hire and equitably place women and minorities.<sup>500</sup> Furthermore, WIP complained that these companies failed to notify women and minorities of job openings, failed to transfer and promote women, did not provide equal pay for equal work, and did not take positive actions to overcome past discrimination.<sup>501</sup> Almost simultaneously, WIP also filed charges with the Office of Federal Contract Compliance against Ginn, D.C. Heath, and Addison Wesley, charging them with failing to inform employees about affirmative action programs and with failing to post job openings.<sup>502</sup> Executives at Allyn & Bacon and Houghton Mifflin responded that they were in compliance with the law, citing the existence of their affirmative action plans and the fact that they had women in positions as supervisors and department heads.<sup>503</sup> If anything, these charges were “procedural” in nature and did not have substantive merit, according to the Ginn personnel director.<sup>504</sup>

Tensions continued to rise at Houghton Mifflin in particular. Five editorial women filed charges of sex and wage discrimination in December 1974 with MCAD and in February 1975 with the EEOC. Yet neither agency, in part because both were notoriously backlogged with cases, acted expeditiously on the claims. Thus, the “Houghton Mifflin Five” filed a class action suit in November 1975, seeking \$2 million in back pay. Combined these five women had over

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<sup>500</sup> Press Release from 9to5, “Attorney General and 9to5 Charge Publishing Companies with Discrimination,” November 21, 1975, Box 5, folder 126.

<sup>501</sup> Susan Trausch, “Three Publishers named in discrimination action,” *Evening Globe*, December 3, 1975, Box 5, folder 118.

<sup>502</sup> “Five Boston Publishers Accused of Sex Discrimination,” BP Report on the Business of Book Publishing, December 1, 1975, Box 5, folder 118.

<sup>503</sup> Susan Trausch, “Three Publishers named in discrimination action,” *Evening Globe*, December 3, 1975, Box 5, folder 118; “Bias Charge Is Filed Against 3 Publishers In the Boston Area,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 4, 1975, Box 5, folder 118.

<sup>504</sup> “Five Boston Publishers Accused of Sex Discrimination,” BP Report on the Business of Book Publishing, December 1, 1975, Box 5, folder 118.

32 years of experience with Houghton; all had college degrees and previous work experience.<sup>505</sup> The case eventually settled to the plaintiffs' satisfaction. The women received a \$750,000 back-pay award, and the judge mandated that Houghton move towards more equitable employment practices. These included setting goals for female representation in higher-level editorial positions, instituting job postings, and creating a Joint Monitoring Committee to ensure that management fulfilled the terms of the settlement. Along with the company EEO officer, three members would be appointed from among the ranks of the Houghton employees and three would be selected by the plaintiffs.<sup>506</sup>

Despite the favorable settlement award, Houghton women continued to voice grievances and the company responded by granting some demands. As mentioned above, employees had tried, unsuccessfully, to organize in 1970.<sup>507</sup> When a special subcommittee of 9to5's Women in Publishing committee (WIP) formed to articulate concerns, Houghton tried to foster a more cooperative atmosphere than it had in the past. But it did so without upsetting occupational hierarchies and without altering existing protocol. WIP called for all jobs to be posted, even those that were male-dominated in sales and consulting, so that women could move out of clerical work. At the time only female-dominated jobs were posted.<sup>508</sup> Publishing women also put forward recommendations for job training. One woman contested the current Houghton policy, which reimbursed 100 percent for job-related courses and only 50 percent for publishing-related courses. She stated, "we believe that, in order to gain skills and training needed to

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<sup>505</sup> Danlia Quirk, editor, "Addison-Wesley, Allyn & Bacon, Houghton Hit with Discrimination Charges," *The Educational Marketer: Newsletter for Sales, Marketing and Advertising Executives in Educational Publishing, Materials and Equipment Companies* Vol. 8, No. 3, December 1, 1975, Box 5, folder 118.

<sup>506</sup> Settlement agreement and plaintiff's statement in *Nancy Garden, Linda Cox, Emily Shenk, Sandra Wright, Linda Krupp-Tong v. Houghton-Mifflin Company*, December 22, 1977, Carton 15, folder 935.

<sup>507</sup> Memo to Members of the Educational Division from G.M. Fenollosa, November 16, 1970, Box 5, folder 119.

<sup>508</sup> Suggestions for Job Postings from Meeting for Houghton Mifflin Women, March 10, 1976, Carton 15, folder 931. They wanted skills, experience, salary, and job description to be clear on the announcements. And they wanted them posted internally for two weeks.

change job categories, women often need to take courses beyond the immediate scope of their jobs.” She recommended that Houghton Mifflin expand tuition reimbursement to cover fully any publishing-related courses. Another woman suggested that more seminars be offered to employees of all levels including those at the clerical level. The company, clericals felt, should develop further guidelines so that employees would know how training and seminar attendance could affect their evaluations.<sup>509</sup>

The new Houghton was more open to collaboration with employees although personnel clearly retained decision-making power. When WIP met with personnel, it reported that it seemed to be moving towards “some improvements although clear timetables for this are lacking.” The company wanted to remain open to the suggestions, but it was not making any promises. Houghton refused to expand tuition reimbursement, but it did welcome ideas for new seminar topics and training programs. Nine to Five reported that career ladders seemed as if they would remain nebulous and that the company claimed it would “move towards” job posting.<sup>510</sup> Houghton used language that fostered communication between employees and personnel although it rarely agreed to make substantial policy changes to solve workers’ problems.

One likely reason for personnel’s amenable attitude was the experience of a lawsuit that had garnered national attention. The post-lawsuit personnel department was much easier to approach. While the lawsuit had been pending, Houghton Mifflin executives worked to improve employee relations, in part to prevent further negative publicity. Houghton hired Hay Associates Consulting to survey employees about their job descriptions and interview them about job satisfaction. While some employees seemed eager to participate, others doubted that the study would result in improved salaries or opportunities. One employee wrote that the surveys were

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<sup>509</sup> HMCO Personnel Meeting, Subject: Job Training, August 9, 1976, Carton 15, folder 931.

<sup>510</sup> Women in Publishing report from HMCO meeting, September 1976, Carton 15, folder 931.

“an expensive lot of baloney” and that “the only people who will profit from all this interviewing and conferring and grading is Hay Associates. The money that HM is handing over to Hay might be better apportioned out in all our paychecks.”<sup>511</sup> Employees wondered which workers were being “Hayed,” meaning interviewed. They linked the consultants’ activities with management’s interests.

But was Hay aligned with management? This specific case of hiring consultants at Houghton allows us to reflect on the overall changing nature of employee relations within the modern firm. New management literature in the 1970s was suggesting that human resource issues would affect a firm’s well being and financial standing.<sup>512</sup> By hiring the consultants Houghton executives were trying to temper employee dissatisfaction in two ways. First, in the wake of the union drive and the discrimination charges, they wanted employees to feel as if they had a voice and speaking to the Hay Consultants gave employees a channel in which they could direct their grievances. Second, Houghton executives believed that the Hay surveys and analysis would shed light on how to best solve their employee relations' problems.<sup>513</sup> They thought they would gain insight to move past the employee complaints and to make the workplace a more productive space. Thus, was Hay beneficial for employees? On the one hand, the consultants operated as a tool of management, soothing a dissatisfied workforce with management-approved solutions.

On the other hand, tangible improvements could happen when management knew it needed to act. For instance, several changes directly resulted from the pending lawsuit: two women were named as vice presidents, the number of women promoted to middle-management

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<sup>511</sup> Women in Publishing survey on job posting at Houghton Mifflin, February 1976, Carton 15, folder 936.

<sup>512</sup> Mary Anne Devanna, Charles Fombrun, and Noel Tichy, “Human Resources Management,” *Organizational Dynamics* (Winter 1981: 51-67).

<sup>513</sup> I gathered that this was the purpose of hiring the Hay Consultants from reading employee responses to the surveys. Women in Publishing survey on job posting at Houghton Mifflin, February 1976, Carton 15, folder 936.

rose, and the salary scales were adjusted in January 1975 to increase clerical compensation.<sup>514</sup> By 1978 two Houghton female employees reported that they were “generally happy” at the company, which was providing pay raises and promotions for women, as well as written job descriptions and improved salary scales. And, according to these women, Houghton personnel officers were willing to meet with employees to hear whatever was on their minds.<sup>515</sup> Thus, at Houghton, as well as at other workplaces, management’s strategy toward employee relations now required worker satisfaction. The Hay survey reveals this new paradigm among managers: listening to employee voices and then devising solutions to preempt their concerns. Some workers embraced the opportunity to have a greater influence in company affairs. By 1979, Houghton had written personnel policies to cover several employee issues including job training, salary ranges, performance reviews, and overtime pay. Written policy also detailed the procedures of the Houghton grievance committee, where a panel of “professional” and “non-professional” employees resolved conflicts.<sup>516</sup>

These changes in Houghton work culture and company policy were part of a larger trend in the industry, whereby firms gave greater consideration to workers’ concerns. Yet women had to destabilize the current state of workplace relationships for employers to move towards a new way of thinking. Beyond the walls of offices like Houghton Mifflin, publishing women across Boston turned to 9to5 to enforcing their existing legal rights and to develop their professional career paths. For instance, WIP waged a job posting campaign across Boston beginning in October 1975.<sup>517</sup> It took an informal poll of female publishing employees, finding that 65

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<sup>514</sup> Irene of HMWomen to Ellen Cassedy, “Commend-Recommend List,” May 24, 1976, Carton 15, folder 932.

<sup>515</sup> Handwritten notes from Joan Quinlan, 9to5 with HM employees, July, 17, 1978, Carton 15, folder 932.

<sup>516</sup> Houghton Mifflin Company, “Personnel Policy,” “A Summary of Our Salary Administration Program,” “Organization of the Houghton Mifflin Company,” “Summary of Training Activities,” 1978-1979, Carton 15, folder 937.

<sup>517</sup> “Boston Women in Publishing Hails Job Posting Efforts,” in “The Week,” Madalynne Reuter, editor, *Publishers Weekly*, October 11, 1976, p. 18, Carton 2, folder 43.

percent rated job postings as the most important workplace issue they faced. Publishing women cared about postings because they had accepted clerical positions with the promise that they would ascend to the editorial and managerial ranks. The committee also chose to fight for posting because it was a “clear issue...[with] visible proof of victory.” If successful in securing postings, WIP could prove itself effective and boost support for the organization. It called for all companies to post job openings as part of their compliance with affirmative action. Furthermore, 9to5 argued that postings would benefit the corporate bottom line. Personnel costs would remain lower if companies promoted from within rather than paying agency fees for hiring outside employees and expending human resources training them.<sup>518</sup>

According to WIP, jobs should be posted upon coming available and should stay posted for two weeks internally before being released to the larger applicant pool. WIP wanted postings to detail the “general purpose of the position” and contain a “description of duties involved.” Also, the posting would list qualifications required, the salary range, and promotional possibilities or limitations. Thus, WIP hoped that, with job posting, would come more standardized job descriptions. Companies would be forced to be more specific about a job’s duties and boundaries.<sup>519</sup> When approaching their own personnel departments about their concerns, members of WIP developed a couple of tactics to push for company-wide postings. First, they showed that employees prioritized the posting issue, submitting petitions and poll results to management. The petitions and polls drove several corporate management teams to meet with WIP and to consider their recommendations.<sup>520</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> Women in Publishing, Issue Campaign Proposal: Job Posting & Job Description, n.d. [1975], Carton 2, folder 43.

<sup>519</sup> Women in Publishing, Issue Campaign Proposal: Job Posting & Job Description, n.d. [1975], Carton 2, folder 43.

<sup>520</sup> Press Release, Women in Publishing Hails Job Posting Improvements, September 24, 1976, Box 5, folder 126; Women in Publishing, Issue Campaign Proposal: Job Posting & Job Description, n.d. [1975], Carton 2, folder 43.

Second, WIP was pursuing legal action against companies that failed to post, claiming that they were violating federal affirmative action guidelines.<sup>521</sup> Many employees perceived lack of postings as unfair, but mandatory postings were not part of any written legal code. Pending employment lawsuits, which were costly for firms and tarnished a company's public image, forced employers to reconsider their stance regarding posting. Although in theory posting was a step towards workplace fairness, in reality it did not mean that employers would be forced to alter hiring practices radically. They could post nominally and still continue status-quo practices that undermined merit-based rewards. Thus, to employers, posting could benefit employee relations by appearing to make hiring and promotion processes more transparent. A firm that posts was making a proactive step towards affirmative action compliance without disrupting most company operations.

Employers were receptive to this particular demand, for, in less than a year, the WIP job posting campaign had achieved significant success in Boston. WIP's chairwoman Nancy Farrell stated, "'Our campaign succeeded through WIP's industry-wide pressure for fair treatment of women.'"<sup>522</sup> When WIP started its campaign in October 1975, only two Boston-area houses had complete job posting, and six did not have any job posting at all. By June 1976 four houses had complete postings and five had partial postings. Both Educators' Publishing Service and Allyn & Bacon had transformed their corporate policies from having no postings at all to instituting full postings within the year.<sup>523</sup> Three other houses, Cahnners Publishing, Houghton Mifflin, and D.C. Heath, changed their policies to have partial postings of some job positions.<sup>524</sup> Yet by the fall of 1976, two Boston publishing houses, Atlantic Monthly and Addison-Wesley, still did not

<sup>521</sup> Press Release, Women in Publishing Hails Job Posting Improvements, September 24, 1976, Box 5, folder 126.

<sup>522</sup> "Boston Women in Publishing Hails Job Posting Efforts," in "The Week," Madalynne Reuter, editor, *Publishers Weekly*, October 11, 1976, p. 18, Carton 2, folder 43.

<sup>523</sup> Women in Publishing Job Posting Campaign, Summary, June 17, 1976, Carton 2, folder 43.

<sup>524</sup> "Boston Women in Publishing Hails Job Posting Efforts," in "The Week," Madalynne Reuter, editor, *Publishers Weekly*, October 11, 1976, p. 18, Carton 2, folder 43.

post jobs in accordance with 9to5's recommendations. Addison-Wesley claimed that it always tried to promote from within; furthermore, it claimed that the federal government approved its employment practices when the company was audited. Atlantic Monthly maintained that it already had explained to 9to5 why it did not internally post jobs. Yet WIP responded that it never received a sufficient explanation from the company.<sup>525</sup>

After completing the job posting campaign, WIP began investigating company-wide policies on job training. It perceived corporate training and access to higher education as key to upward mobility within the publishing world. Starting in December 1976, the committee began to gather cross-industry information from workers in a variety of positions on current training practices and educational opportunities. Other WIP members investigated external training opportunities including programs at local centers for adult education; classes at colleges such as Northeastern, Radcliffe, Boston University, and Simmons; as well as courses offered by professional associations including Bookbuilders and the Word Guild.<sup>526</sup> WIP sought to determine which companies provided in-house training and which ones paid for external educational opportunities. It also focused on the type of training provided: would the company pay for classes to help an employee advance her career or only for those related to her present position?

By January 1977, WIP was constructing an industry-wide report and planning a survey for employees.<sup>527</sup> It composed a chart comparing procedures in ten major companies in Boston, noting information about orientation programs, trainee positions, on-the-job training, in-house

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<sup>525</sup> "Boston Women in Publishing Hails Job Posting Efforts," in "The Week," Madalynne Reuter, editor, *Publishers Weekly*, October 11, 1976, p. 18, Carton 2, folder 43.

<sup>526</sup> Memo to Women in Publishing Job Training Committee from Ellen Cassedy, re: Work to be done following meeting of December 2, December 16, 1976, Carton 2, folder 44. WIP wanted to gauge the opportunities available across firms for different job categories including clerical, editorial, production, art, design, marketing, business administration, copy writing, and management.

<sup>527</sup> Memo to Women in Publishing Job Training Committee from Ellen Cassedy, re: Work to be done following meeting of December 2, December 16, 1976, Carton 2, folder 44.



courses, and educational assistance. This chart revealed that only select companies covered tuition for job-related courses and almost none of them covered tuition for career-related courses, meaning education that would help an employee advance to a higher level. Although most had informal on-the-job training, only a few of the companies had in-house courses.<sup>528</sup> Furthermore, the publishing committee created a survey to measure employee satisfaction with current training practices. Survey returns showed that most employees, over half, believed that the tuition reimbursement program at their companies needed improvement. Respondents overwhelmingly maintained that their company did not provide training for advancement, and they were unaware of internal career paths for upward mobility.<sup>529</sup>

Survey returns also showed that the existence of training guidelines did not necessarily help women to advance beyond a clerical level. An Allyn & Bacon secretary wrote about tuition reimbursement that there were “no written guidelines for what one can/cannot take; seems to be a personality thing—I was denied 2 courses because they ‘did not fit my job category.’” She believed that the company should pay for courses that allowed employees to seek higher positions, not just for those designed to improve performance at their current jobs. Another Allyn & Bacon employee complained that the company paid only for courses that “‘directly relate to your job.’” Thus, “if an editor (assistant or associate) wants to take a management course, they will not be reimbursed because only a senior editor could conceivably take such a course.” According to another respondent, training is “different for everyone. It depends on your supervisor” if a course were determined to be job related. Still another employee claimed

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<sup>528</sup> Women in Publishing, Typed charts detailing job training practices of publishing houses in Boston, Carton 2, folder 44.

<sup>529</sup> Women in Publishing, Totals of Women in Publishing Job Training Questionnaire, Carton 2, folder 44. Employees responded that they wanted more in-house courses, and revealed that they would be more likely to stay at their companies if more career training were to be offered. Also their companies did not provide them with information about external education and training offerings at local schools. Employees expressed interest in industry-wide training programs to teach specific skills.

that the definition of job related was “very narrow” and “people [were] denied approval for courses without reason.”<sup>530</sup>

After gathering data about corporate practices and surveying employees about their priorities, WIP made formal recommendations to companies. It issued “Job Training Proposals” in June 1977 to advise employers on best practices for employee education. During the orientation of new employees, WIP wanted companies to delineate career paths by providing organizational charts that would indicate opportunities for mobility within the corporate hierarchy. Regarding in-house training, WIP demanded that employees have access to programs for advancement as well as for their present positions. Also, employees should be given the opportunity to observe other jobs; experienced employees should be granted ample time to train others.<sup>531</sup>

WIP issued several recommendations regarding external education. First, it wanted companies to more clearly state their education policies. It also requested that firms inform employees of educational opportunities in the larger community as well as financially support employee attendance at industry-sponsored seminars, workshops, and conventions. The publishing committee recommended that companies ease the economic burden of taking outside courses by providing low-interest loans for employees who could not afford the full pre-payment of tuition. Furthermore, companies should provide full financial support for courses intended to prepare employees for advancement as well as for those aimed to improve performance in their current jobs. Publishing houses should collaborate with area colleges to develop courses applicable to employees.<sup>532</sup>

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<sup>530</sup> Selected surveys, Women in Publishing, Job Training Questionnaire, Carton 2, folder 81.

<sup>531</sup> Women in Publishing, Job Training Proposals, June 1977, Carton 2, folder 44.

<sup>532</sup> Women in Publishing, Job Training Proposals, June 1977, Carton 2, folder 44.

Women in Publishing saw itself as a valuable contributor as companies adjusted to the shifting baseline of workplace fairness: new norms called for all workers, regardless of starting position, to have opportunities for advancement. It saw its research report as more than an internal white paper. It suggested that, for a fee, it could consult with publishing firms as they revised their training programs. Thus, WIP members intended for their proposals to directly influence industry practice. Although no record exists of publishing houses employing 9to5 as a consultant, more important is that WIP thought that publishing houses should use the committee's expertise to comply with equal employment opportunity standards and affirmative action guidelines.<sup>533</sup> WIP invited personnel managers to its June meeting to hear about its employee survey and training recommendations. According to WIP, publishing women who were interested in upward mobility were leaving their companies to seek better opportunities at other firms. WIP reminded these companies that they were losing talent by lacking clear career paths for their female employees. Although women relinquished their benefits and seniority status by changing companies, "the employer suffers the greater loss—an employee who 'knows the ropes' and who [had wanted] to contribute" has left.<sup>534</sup> The group estimated that some houses had turnover rates of 30 percent annually. And, by WIP estimates, retraining new employees could cost thousands of dollars per year.<sup>535</sup>

To further help women hone publishing skills and gain opportunities to advance, Women in Publishing initiated and implemented an industry-wide career development conference the following year in 1978. This series of lectures and workshops, co-sponsored by the Boston chapter of the Women's National Book Association, was designed to provide job training to

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<sup>533</sup> Women in Publishing, Job Training Program, Draft, May 1977, Carton 2, folder 44.

<sup>534</sup> Letter from Pat Cronin, Chairwoman of Women in Publishing to personnel managers, June 10, 1977, Carton 2, folder 81.

<sup>535</sup> Press Release from Ellen Cassedy, 9to5 Presents Publishing Industry with Model Job Training Program, June 24, 1977, Box 5, folder 126.

women and increase their effectiveness in the business world.<sup>536</sup> The following year the Women Office Workers (WOW), a sister organization to 9to5, held a similar conference in New York City. At the WOW-sponsored event, women examined case studies where female publishing workers were seeking promotion. They analyzed employee relations and organizational structures in the case studies, which led to discussions of mobility and recommendations on seeking advancement.<sup>537</sup>

While gaining promotions was the priority for publishing workers, Women in Publishing took issue with low salaries and pay inequities as well. To be sure, most WIP activities focused on moving women out of clerical work and into professional positions. Yet, some of the first data that WIP gathered revealed the industry-wide, depressed pay of publishing women relative to other female-dominated work. It reported that publishing salaries in Boston on average were several thousand dollars lower than earnings for women in journalism or teaching.<sup>538</sup> WIP again emphasized low wages in a 1977 report, which highlighted, earnings of publishing employees relative to teachers.<sup>539</sup> In this 1977 wage report, WIP revealed salary information from eighteen Boston houses. WIP's wage surveys concluded that women in Boston earned \$1000 to \$5000 less annually than the national average for publishing employees. Salaries were rarely shared among employees; thus, income data on this scale had never before been available to the public.

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<sup>536</sup> Flyer, A Conference on Career Development & Publishing Skills, April 15, 1978, Carton 2, folder 39. Featured speakers included women who were consultants, life coaches, and career advisers; they offered advice on achieving career goals, assertiveness at work, and transferring publishing skills to other professional work. Schedule, A Conference on Career Development & Publishing Skills, April 15, 1978, Carton 2, folder 39. Female industry experts led workshops on specific topics such as sales and marketing; contracts and copyrights; production and design; subsidiary rights; and advertising. Publishing Workshops, A Conference on Career Development & Publishing Skills, April 15, 1978, Carton 2, folder 39.

<sup>537</sup> Women Office Workers, "The Myths and Realities of Employment Practices for Women Working in the Publishing Industry," Industry Seminar Material, FIPSE Career Counseling Project, New York City, Spring 1979, Carton 2, folder 42.

<sup>538</sup> Women in Publishing Preliminary Fact Sheet...and This is Only the Beginning! n.d. [March 1975], Carton 2, folder 52. While publishing executives claimed that their profits were insecure in an increasingly unstable industry, WIP maintained that sales numbers and stock prices had risen significantly for most area firms in 1973 and 1974.

<sup>539</sup> Women in Publishing, 9to5 Organization, *Publishing Salaries in the Boston Area: A Comparison Report*, February 1977, Box 5, folder 127.

Many respondents disclosed that they were unsure of the formal salary range for their positions for a variety of reasons. At Allyn & Bacon, the company outright denied workers access to this information. At other houses, salary ranges existed for some positions but not for others. Most employees maintained that they reached a ceiling after a few years of service, and they had to fight to receive job training for new positions that would promise higher ranges. At eleven of the eighteen houses, employees thought their salaries were inadequate, and many were expected to do overtime work without pay.<sup>540</sup>

The issue of low pay was interwoven with standardizing job titles and job descriptions. WIP felt that workers were entitled to know salary ranges for particular positions and to have working knowledge of the duties and responsibilities attributed to their own job titles. By using the information in the report, employees could better understand career ladders at their firms and plan accordingly. WIP also suggested that women use the report to “check to be sure that they are classified at the right level. It is not unheard of for an employee to be performing the duties of a higher-level position with the title, and pay, of a lower-level position.”<sup>541</sup> The report would allow publishing women access to knowledge of salaries and duties across different firms, giving them leverage when confronting employers about their own wages and responsibilities.

The 1977 report also showed that gender-based pay inequity was a problem for female clericals. The WIP survey asked respondents if they believed that that men and women at their firms received equal pay for equal work. In ten of eighteen houses, most respondents thought that men, relative to women employees, had more favorable salary ranges for the same jobs.<sup>542</sup>

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<sup>540</sup> “Summary of Findings” and “Conclusion and Recommendations” from Women in Publishing, 9to5 Organization, *Publishing Salaries in the Boston Area: A Comparison Report*, February 1977, Box 5, folder 127. National salary data obtained from the Association of American Publishers in the 9to5 report.

<sup>541</sup> “Introduction” from Women in Publishing, 9to5 Organization, *Publishing Salaries in the Boston Area: A Comparison Report*, February 1977, Box 5, folder 127.

<sup>542</sup> “Exhibit 4” from Women in Publishing, 9to5 Organization, *Publishing Salaries in the Boston Area: A Comparison Report*, February 1977, Box 5, folder 127.

Also, respondents reported that overt wage inequality existed within the industry. Yet the survey comments also showed the presence of structural wage disparities. Employees recognized that women were paid less because they were confined to certain job areas. Several women wrote that the survey question, asking respondents about the existence of equal pay for equal work, was difficult to answer. Stated one assistant to the editor at *Atlantic Monthly*, “hard to say—all assistants to editors [the company title for secretaries] are women and only one of the editors is a woman.” Her refusal to answer yes or no to this question revealed that pay issues in publishing called for more action than could be provided by a formal equality model. Furthermore, another secretary in the marketing department of Ginn and Co. stated, “don’t know—there are no male secretaries,” when asked about the existence of equal pay for equal work. An associate editor at Houghton Mifflin revealed, “technically yes [there was equal pay for equal work] under the new salary scale but the men have had a traditional advantage in getting the higher paying positions.” Another Houghton editor stated, “they’ve equalized salaries for people in job categories, but men are the ones who move up into new job categories with the higher salaries.”<sup>543</sup> Both the tendency to assign women to certain low-status jobs and the hindrance of their upward progress were impeding female publishing workers.

Even though WIP was aware of the substandard wages of most publishing workers, other issues took precedence on its agenda. When managers hired women for some of the lowest-paying clerical jobs, the women were promised that they had the potential for mobility. Thus, clericals in the publishing industry were likely to have their eyes on promotional opportunities that postings and trainings could offer. Furthermore, WIP knew that management would be more responsive to issues that would have the least impact on their company’s bottom line. WIP

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<sup>543</sup> Information on education gathered from selected returned surveys, *Women in Publishing, Wage Survey*, Carton 2, folders 79 and 80.

members acknowledged that procedural changes may not greatly affect the day-to-day operations of a company. Yet some change that could provide women with increased opportunity would be better than no change at all. Instead of focusing on the wages of clericals, WIP poured resources into other efforts such as job postings, job descriptions, and job training.

Clearly the feminist agenda of the 1960s and 1970s, which called for dismantling gender hierarchies, was informing the direction of Women in Publishing. WIP members were combating sex stereotyping, which had allowed employers for decades to assign women to certain types of work based on assumed, innate, sex-based characteristics. According to stubborn ideologies such as the cult of domesticity and the family wage ideal, women should take part in the paid labor force only temporarily. Underlying both of these standards was the idea that a woman's primary role was to become a wife and mother.<sup>544</sup> Over the course of the twentieth century, as clerical work was increasingly perceived as requiring less skill, employers assigned office-support tasks to women.<sup>545</sup> The lack of economic and social value placed on clerical work impaired all women, both those who did and those who did not aspire to male-dominated career positions. Those who did not wish to move into managerial roles failed to attain respect and fair pay for their support roles. Those who did want new opportunities could not use clerical work to launch them higher in the white-collar hierarchy.

While some 9to5 campaigns focused on garnering respect for the duties and responsibilities of clerical work, WIP became a resource for moving beyond the confines of clerical work. WIP did not engage in debates about whether or not clerical work was equally as

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<sup>544</sup> On the formation of the cult of domesticity, see Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). On the endurance of the family wage and the devaluing of women's work see Alice Kessler-Harris such as *A Woman's Wage: Historical Meanings and Social Consequences* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1990).

<sup>545</sup> For the role of gender and the changing nature of office work at the turn of the 20th century, see Cindy Sondik Aron, *Ladies and Gentlemen of the Civil Service: Middle-Class Workers in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) and Margery W. Davies, *Woman's Place Is at the Typewriter: Office Work and Office Workers, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982).

valuable as the work of other employees. Instead, the college-educated women who developed the WIP platform sought to attain equality with professional men. WIP evolved into an organization for career development. At its first official meeting in 1974, the issue of unions was listed on the agenda.<sup>546</sup> And WIP backed union drives if they arose within individual publishing firms. Yet, pursuing unionization never became a committee priority. Fighting gender inequity by moving out of sex-segregated occupations, not improving the pay and conditions of clerical work, became WIP's primary concern.

Other progressive groups in the Boston area supported Women in Publishing. The Boston chapter of the National Organization for Women intended to come to the first official meeting to support WIP's efforts but sent a statement of support to be read aloud instead. The co-chairperson wrote, "If there is any way we can work together on this, or other projects, please let us know."<sup>547</sup> Other organizations and businesses endorsed WIP's efforts including the NAACP, the Boston Women's Collective, the Center for Women's Studies at Radcliffe, the Women's National Book Association, Women's City Club of Boston, the Feminist Press, the Governor's Committee on the Status of Women, the Boston Center for Adult Education, Waldenbooks and Barnes and Noble Bookstore. Supportive individuals included Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, Kate Millet, Elizabeth Janeway, Germaine Greer, as well as Senators Edward M. Kennedy and Edward W. Brooke of Massachusetts.<sup>548</sup> Advancing educated women into higher-status positions in the publishing industry evoked positive responses from mainstream feminist channels, civil rights groups, and even bookstores.

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<sup>546</sup> Women in Publishing, Agenda for first meeting, n.d. [March 1975], Carton 2, folder 52.

<sup>547</sup> Memo to Women in Publishing, 9to5 from Ginger Davis, Co-Chairperson, Compliance Task Force, Boston NOW, March 25, 1975, Carton 2, folder 51.

<sup>548</sup> Women in Publishing, Endorsement List with addresses, Carton 2, folder 81.



Women in Publishing took action against unfair practices to be sure. But it operated by trying to get women into the ranks of the male-dominated hierarchy that wielded power and prestige in the publishing world. WIP was not undermining the economic structure of the publishing industry when it called for equal opportunities and more transparent procedures. In fact, WIP believed that companies themselves could benefit from changing their policies and practices to better use the talents of female employees. Upon sending its first report to personnel directors of Boston publishing houses, WIP committee members wrote, “we believe that sex discrimination is of great concern to someone in your position.”<sup>549</sup> Some male executives and personnel directors agreed and began to change their practices and policies to accommodate the aspirations of college-educated women. Others were less flexible, forcing female employees to continue their work within internal associations and unions to fight occupational discrimination. Whether through unions or through 9to5, women struggled to have the same options as men within the publishing profession.

### Why Unionize?

Women in Publishing functioned as a professional association to advance women in the publishing field; it did not prioritize pay or mobilize women to unionize. However, when a union drive was occurring, WIP supported union efforts in certain Boston offices. For some publishing women who saw themselves as limited most by economic concerns, pay was of primary concern. Although unionizing certainly was not common in the industry, these women saw it as a viable option to fight for fair wages. Organizing workers spoke about their needs in economic, gender-neutral terms more so than using sex-specific language. In the 1970s, two major houses in New York City, Harper & Row and Macmillan, led the way as publishing

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<sup>549</sup> Letter from Steering Committee, Women in Publishing to personnel directors, April 2, 1975, Carton 2, folder 52.

women unionized for the first time in decades. Subsequently, in Boston in the 1970s and 1980s, workers in several houses, with the aid of WIP, turned to the trade union model.

In New York City at Harper & Row and Macmillan, publishing women unionized for the first time since the Great Depression.<sup>550</sup> At Harper and Row, management formed a women's committee in the early 1970s to take a proactive approach towards supporting women's interests in the workplace. This group for professional females gave voice to some women's concerns.<sup>551</sup> But since management organized and oversaw the committee, in essence, it was an arm of the male-dominated executive board.<sup>552</sup> According to one union organizer, "companies will often sanction a women's committee [unlike an in-house union...because] they don't think it is going to be trouble."<sup>553</sup> And indeed, this women's committee was not "trouble" at Harper. It made some contributions to investigating and improving the status of women at Harper, but it acted in a way that never upset the status quo. For instance, the women's committee conducted a company-wide survey to determine "how women at Harper felt opposed to how men felt," finding that women wanted higher pay and a greater voice in decision making. However, after administering the initial questionnaire, the committee did not act upon the survey results. Instead most of the committee's actions sought to increase company morale, such as having the women's committee sponsored a talent show and a festival. Thus, editorial or managerial employees with substantial complaints against Harper executives were not able to work effectively through the women's committee.

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<sup>550</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with associate editor at Harper and Row, #28, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>551</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with credit analyst from Harper and Row, #27, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7, Schlesinger Library. Top executives had started the Harper's women's group years before the union drive began, aiming to gauge the status of women in the company. It was made up largely of editorial and management employees and seemed to hold events that celebrated women's contributions to the company.

<sup>552</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with associate editor at Harper and Row, #28, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>553</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with District 65 organizer in law office, #45, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 2, folder 11, Schlesinger Library.

The inefficacy of this women's committee set the stage for a successful union drive. Women who were looking for substantive change created a union that attempted to represent the interests of editorial, managerial, and clerical employees. Harper workers crafted a "vertical union," according to one associate editor, because employees of any rank at Harper could and did join.<sup>554</sup> During the summer of 1974, workers at Harper and Row went on strike for the first time since the Great Depression.<sup>555</sup> This strike began, in part, because the majority of female employees, and some lower-level male workers, became enraged when executives postponed meeting with them. Instead, management responded to their requests for pay increases by offering insultingly meager raises.<sup>556</sup> Employees then went on strike, seeking 20 percent across-the-board raises, better medical benefits, job postings and written job descriptions.<sup>557</sup> Two hundred of the 320 male and female workers, from mailroom runners to associate editors, picketed in midtown Manhattan for 17 days. Employees from a dozen other New York publishing houses intermittently joined in solidarity.<sup>558</sup> Because of the high visibility of the strike, Harper executives eventually negotiated with their employees, who had affiliated with District 65 of the Distributive Workers of America.<sup>559</sup> Negotiations resulted in a three-year

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<sup>554</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with associate editor at Harper and Row, #28, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>555</sup> Harper and Row employees first organized with the Newspaper Guild and then soon thereafter they affiliated with District 65 of the Distributive Workers of America. "Book Biz Getting Organized?" *New York Magazine*, July 8, 1974.

<sup>556</sup> In particular, management proposed a 2.1 percent pay raise, which was meant to appease agitated workers. But it would not have even covered annual cost-of-living increases. Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with District 65 organizer in law office, #45, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 2, folder 11, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>557</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with associate editor at Harper and Row, #28, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>558</sup> "Professionals in Unions Cite Old Reasons: Pay, Security," *New York Times*, July 28, 1974, p. 166; "Book Biz Getting Organized?" *New York Magazine*, July 8, 1974, 72.

<sup>559</sup> Both #27 and #28 cited that the strike most likely ended because the American Library Association Convention, to be held in New York in a matter of days, was fast approaching, causing Harper executives to want to end the strike by the time the convention started. Two people who were in charge of the Harper and Row exhibit were on strike and Harper executives needed them to work at the convention. Also, the convention was to be held in a hotel that was a couple of blocks from the Harper and Row office and executives did not want the embarrassment of convention attendees witnessing the strike. Lastly, the Harper and Row social events were supposed to be held in the Harper offices and the librarians publically stated that they would not cross picket lines to attend. Regarding

contract with substantial across-the-board, incremental pay increases as well as other terms such as mandatory internal job postings.<sup>560</sup>

This strike involved workers from almost all ranks within the Harper hierarchy, showing that management intransigence could bring together a variety of employees regardless of their titles, positions, or earning potential. No one expected this type of resistance from such a range of publishing employees. According to a Harper and Row associate editor, it was “embarrassing for people of [my] level to walk out,” meaning that white-collar professionals did not usually go on strike. By going on strike, many of these women, who saw themselves as professionals, proved to the public that collective resistance was not just a blue-collar tactic. Women also surprised themselves by striking, which one employee thought she could never do because “I’m not an exhibitionist. I find it difficult to put myself on display like that.” Yet management continued to approach disgruntled employees with “insulting offers,” causing her feel a responsibility to take shifts on the picket line.<sup>561</sup>

Even though the strike united workers temporarily by way of a vertical union, the distinction between clerical and professional women was clear at Harper. A credit analyst

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union affiliation, Tepperman #28 stated that she preferred District 65 to the OPEIU because Margie Albert (District 65 leader) seemed very genuine. She did not like the “union people who make up the union offices” of the AFL-CIO (the OPEIU was part of the AFL-CIO) and thought that many labor unions become “a big business” in themselves and thus are not helpful to workers’ needs. See Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with credit analyst from Harper and Row, #27, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7; Tepperman interview with associate editor at Harper and Row, #28, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7, Schlesinger Library. According to a legal secretary in New York, Harper and Row chose District 65 after forming an ad-hoc, city committee of publishing employees who had supported the Harper’s strike. Three weeks after the strike, Harper’s activists gathered their supporters to discuss the possibility of organizing the entire industry. This committee investigated different unions including District 65, the Newspaper Guild, and the Office and Professional Employees and thought that District 65 was the most appropriate choice. Harper workers joined District 65 because it promised to create a publishing division while also ensuring immediate funding and an emphasis on organizing. See Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with District 65 organizer in law office, #45, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 2, folder 11, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>560</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with associate editor at Harper and Row, #28, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7, Schlesinger Library. The pay raises were not 20 percent but they were 5 or 7 dollar (per week) increases every six months.

<sup>561</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with associate editor at Harper and Row, #28, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7, Schlesinger Library.

remembered that many of the Harper clericals who worked at the manufacturing plant in Scranton, Pennsylvania felt distant from and had little interaction with the editorial and managerial employees at the New York office.<sup>562</sup> This division became apparent in the dynamics of the union drive meetings as well. Editorial women tended to lead the group and voice their concerns more often because they had more practice speaking in public and probably felt more confident articulating their opinions. After the strike ended, professional women were more likely to work on the District 65 negotiation committee to discuss the terms of agreement with Harper and Row management.<sup>563</sup> Furthermore, clerical and editorial women could have varying ideas as to how best to improve their workplace. Some of the clericals were “purely there for the salary...there [was] no intention of work being satisfying.”<sup>564</sup> In contrast, an associate editor thought that the most important result of the strike was that Harper and Row agreed to pay 12,000 dollars for an outside consultant to conduct an extensive job survey on job titles and job descriptions in the company.<sup>565</sup>

Because professional women participated significantly in the union, using it as their primary platform to voice concerns, some clericals who were already reluctant to join a union decided to turn away. They did not see the union as embodying their interests because the union was trying to represent such a wide range of perspectives. A significant section of clericals were unresponsive to the union drive even though they seemed furious about certain company

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<sup>562</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, interview with credit analyst from Harper and Row, #27, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 7. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>563</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with associate editor at Harper and Row, #28, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>564</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with credit analyst from Harper and Row, #27, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>565</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with associate editor at Harper and Row, #28, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7, Schlesinger Library.

policies.<sup>566</sup> In the royalties department, for example, supervisors mandated that clericals work overtime or face termination. These women definitely complained about the policy even if they did not want to take action. An active union employee responded to a non-union worker, “I’ll say you bitch all the time why don’t you grieve [make a grievance through union channels]. And she’ll say why bother and I say you bother me every time you bitch.”<sup>567</sup> Following the strike, in which most of the royalties department had not participated, the negotiating board of District 65 requested to meet with royalties because it was willing to settle the overtime issue with Harper executives. Yet the clericals in royalties declined to meet with the union. One organizer called them “martyrs,” believing that they enjoyed moaning about their work conditions.<sup>568</sup> Regardless of their tendency to complain, the clericals in royalties did not want to collaborate with the union because they saw it as not representative of their needs.

The Harper and Row campaign demonstrates two central points: first, women could unite when necessary. But maintaining unity among a broad section of employees could last only for a finite period of time. Eventually professional status or economic class channeled some women into positions of authority, which subjected others into positions below them. Collective efforts based on gender could bring employees together for particular goals while simultaneously revealing the divisions among them. Second, the Harper strike was the first publishing industry strike in half of a century, which meant that the general public took note. Employees gained additional leverage over their bosses given that the media was drawn towards the events. After giving its recommendations for summer operas and Broadway shows, the “Going Out Guide” in

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<sup>566</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with credit analyst from Harper and Row, #27, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7, Schlesinger Library. Clericals in the Scranton warehouse had little interest in unionizing and this credit analyst complained about the interest of those in the New York office as well.

<sup>567</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with credit analyst from Harper and Row, #27, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>568</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with credit analyst from Harper and Row, #27, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 7. Schlesinger Library.

the June 1974 *New York Times* announced a fundraising event, calling it “entertainment of a different sort.” Writers, politicians, and activists, including Bella Abzug, Noam Chomsky, Benjamin Spock, and Studs Terkel, were participating in a benefit auction for the Harper and Row strikers. Employees were auctioning items such as a lunch with a Harper executive and picket signs carried by the workers; they were charging a flat fee for admission to the star-studded event, inviting the public “to mingle and bid with the literary and political celebrities.”<sup>569</sup> Given this type of publicity, publishing executives would want to negotiate as quickly as possible.

At Macmillan in New York City, the concerns and efforts of a union and a women’s group overlapped, allowing members of both to collaborate against unfair management practices. In the early 1970s, Local 153 of the Office and Professional Employee International Union (OPEIU), formed at Macmillan to protest a number of workplace conditions including low pay as well as unfair hiring, firing and promotion practices.<sup>570</sup> Almost simultaneously, a Macmillan women’s group began to highlight and curtail sex discrimination in the workplace.<sup>571</sup> The professional women who formed this group stressed Macmillan’s sex-segregated labor practices: 94 percent of women worked in the three lowest clerical positions and 76 percent of men worked

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<sup>569</sup> Fred Ferretti, “Going Out Guide,” *New York Times*, June 25, 1974, p. 28.

<sup>570</sup> The Macmillan group formed and operated separately from 9to5 during its first years of existence. Boston 9to5 leader Karen Koenig offered to the women of Macmillan in New York to “support [their] organizing efforts...[and to] be of help.” 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, Letter from Karen Koenig, 9to5 Co-chair, to Macmillan Publishing Organizing Committee, OPEIU Local 153, October 22, 1974. 79-M16—81-M121, Carton 2, folder 51. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>571</sup> Janet Schulman, “Looking Back: The 1974 Macmillan Massacre,” *Publishers Weekly*, April 10, 2008, accessed February 12, 2010, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/15635-looking-back-the-1974-macmillan-massacre.html>; Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with assistant vice president at Macmillan, #24, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library. The women’s group formed in 1973 as female employees in the school division began to gather facts about discriminatory practices such as wage differentials between men and women and lack of standard personnel policies that disadvantaged them.

in the top three positions.<sup>572</sup> It also filed charges with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in May 1974, charging Macmillan with sex discrimination. The chief complaints included lack of maternity benefits, unequal pay, and differential hiring practices and promotion tracks for men and women.<sup>573</sup> Not only did 94 percent of women work in the three lowest-level jobs, but also of some 370 professional and managerial employees, blacks, Hispanic or Asian American comprised only eighteen in number.<sup>574</sup> The Macmillan women's group encouraged the New York Attorney General to file charges of both sex and racial discrimination with the New York State Division of Human Rights.<sup>575</sup>

Macmillan executives took action to bolster their company's reputation in an increasingly rights-conscious world. The president of Macmillan defended the disproportionate number of women in lower-paid jobs, claiming that women chose these positions: "it is the nature of the beast that women want to be secretaries."<sup>576</sup> Macmillan tried to meet government expectations by hiring an affirmative action officer, who happened to be a black woman, to oversee the

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<sup>572</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with production editor at Macmillan, #23, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>573</sup> Janet Schulman, "Looking Back: The 1974 Macmillan Massacre," *Publishers Weekly*, April 10, 2008, accessed February 12, 2010, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/15635-looking-back-the-1974-macmillan-massacre.html>. The women's grassroots efforts coincided with New York Attorney General Louis Lefkowitz's investigation of the employment practices at several publishing houses. He subpoenaed personnel and payroll records to examine the pattern of hiring and employment at these companies. Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with assistant vice president at Macmillan, #24, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library. Lefkowitz was investigating other NYC publishing houses as well such as McGraw Hill and Harcourt Brace Javanovitch and was not just investigating Macmillan in response to the protests. Also, forty-four women from Macmillan signed their names to the complaint filed with the New York State Division of Human Rights. (The Tepperman transcript names the "U.S. Commission of Human Rights" as the body of redress but I found elsewhere that the charges in 1974 were at the state level only. See 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, "Four Women Bring Class Suit Against Macmillan," *Publishers Weekly*, 1974. 79-M16—81-M121, Carton 2, folder 39, Schlesinger Library.)

<sup>574</sup> "A Discrimination Suit at Macmillan," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 21, 1974, p. B3.

<sup>575</sup> Janet Schulman, "Looking Back: The 1974 Macmillan Massacre," *Publishers Weekly*, April 10, 2008, accessed February 12, 2010, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/15635-looking-back-the-1974-macmillan-massacre.html>; "A Discrimination Suit at Macmillan," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 21, 1974, p. B3.

<sup>576</sup> "A Discrimination Suit at Macmillan," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 21, 1974, p. B3.



company's vacuous affirmative action policy.<sup>577</sup> Executives instituted an "employee relations plan," which allowed workers to submit their problems to the affirmative action officer and meet with her to determine solutions. They also tried to placate employees prone to unionization by issuing an 8 percent across-the-board raise in the eight lowest-level positions.<sup>578</sup> Even after receiving the raise, which one employee described as "unheard of," most workers remained agitated and the organizing continued. Employees were interested in more than a one-time pay raise.<sup>579</sup> By October, half of the employees indicated that they would vote for union representation.<sup>580</sup> Local 153 filed a petition with the National Labor Relations Board to start the process of conducting union elections.<sup>581</sup>

Although the concerns of Local 153 and the women's group overlapped, not all members of the women's group were willing to vote for unionization. Several did not think that the union chosen was a strong one, and still others were classified as holding management positions, making them ineligible for union membership.<sup>582</sup> Still other employees cared about fair employment practices such as securing written job descriptions more than they cared about their

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<sup>577</sup> The policy claimed that there was not a problem with the distribution of women and minorities at Macmillan but if there were it would be hard to assess because statistics were not available that would allow Macmillan to compare its demographic distribution to the demographic distribution of similar companies in New York City. Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with production editor at Macmillan, #23, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library. According to Tepperman #24, Macmillan tried to avoid setting goals and timetables for a period by claiming they no longer had \$50,000 of contracts with the Department of Defense but after the Attorney General's investigation, the company had to comply with the regulations. Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with assistant vice president at Macmillan, #24, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>578</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with production editor at Macmillan, #23, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>579</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with production editor at Macmillan, #23, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>580</sup> Paul L. Montgomery, "Macmillan Book Divisions Sharply Cut Their Staffs" *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 1974, p. 1.

<sup>581</sup> Paul L. Montgomery, "Macmillan Book Divisions Sharply Cut Their Staffs" *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 1974, p. 1.

<sup>582</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with assistant vice president at Macmillan, #24, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library. District 65 of the Distributive Workers of America, led by labor feminist Margie Albert, was the other union that was organizing in the publishing industry in New York City at this time. Martin Waldron, "Two Unions Step Up Organizing Drives at Book Publishers Here," *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 1975, p. 40. District 65 was known to empower women workers and instill leadership skills in them.

salaries. One employee stated: “The thing is that publishing people have not gone into publishing for money, they have gone into it because they loved the idea of making books.”

Shortly after the 8 percent raise, Macmillan employees confirmed that some workplace concerns had “[little] to do with the lack of money, but [they] had to do with the authoritarian character and lack of dignity...the atmosphere of the company.”<sup>583</sup>

A week after Local 153 filed for a NLRB election, Macmillan executives helped to unify the union and women’s groups by ordering the firing of around two hundred workers. During the two days of firings, October 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, employees “slipped out for a quick drink or took tranquilizers” as they waited to see if they would be called into the conference room. Those fired would either be dismissed on the spot with a severance check or be told that November 8<sup>th</sup> would be their last day at Macmillan.<sup>584</sup> The director of marketing for children’s books, who also was co-chairwoman of the women’s group remembered, “At four o’clock that afternoon [October 15, 1974], after 13 years service, I was given one hour to get out, as was my staff of five.”<sup>585</sup> One worker described the atmosphere as hysterical.<sup>586</sup>

Management claimed that the firings were part of “an over-all corporate belt-tightening program,” but many Macmillan employees believed they were related to worker activity in the union drive, in the women’s group, or in both.<sup>587</sup> Although Macmillan had not fired each and

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<sup>583</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with production editor at Macmillan, #23, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>584</sup> Paul L. Montgomery, “Macmillan Book Divisions Sharply Cut Their Staffs” *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 1974, p. 1.

<sup>585</sup> Janet Schulman, “Looking Back: The 1974 Macmillan Massacre,” *Publishers Weekly*, April 10, 2008, accessed February 12, 2010, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/15635-looking-back-the-1974-macmillan-massacre.html>.

<sup>586</sup> Eleanor Blau, “Two Editors Quit Macmillan in Protest,” *New York Times*, Oct. 16, 1974, p. 40.

<sup>587</sup> Eleanor Blau, “Two Editors Quit Macmillan in Protest,” *New York Times*, Oct. 16, 1974, p. 40; Paul L. Montgomery, “N.L.R.B. Studies Macmillan Ousters,” *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 1974, p. 48. Macmillan executives attributed the dismissals to fiscal planning as they were preparing their 1975 budget, claiming that they were firing the fewest number of employees to exercise caution given the “general economic forecast for the next year.” However, the sales and revenues of Macmillan increased in 1974 from their 1973 levels, leading employees to

every member of the women's group or of Local 153, most employees believed that executives were sending a message, warning the staff against dissension. The executives dismissed the main organizer of and activists associated with Local 153. Macmillan also fired many of the most vocal participants in the women's group. Two female children's books editors resigned in protest of the terminations. They claimed that the firings disparately and permanently damaged their department, which had been one of Macmillan's most profitable.<sup>588</sup>

Unfortunately for Macmillan executives, collective resistance became stronger after the dismissals.<sup>589</sup> The women's group contacted the state Attorney General, who already was pursuing sex and racial discrimination charges against Macmillan, to ensure that he would investigate the legality of the firings. In addition, on October 15, Local 153 filed an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board, claiming that the terminations were related to the upcoming union elections.<sup>590</sup> Beginning October 17<sup>th</sup>, Macmillan employees went on strike, demonstrating in front of their Manhattan office building with colleagues from other publishing companies. Sympathetic authors joined the protest.<sup>591</sup> Anywhere from 25 to 100 picketers sang the popular union song "Solidarity Forever" and shouted, "Don't scab for Macmillan" to those entering the building.<sup>592</sup> Although the number of reported strikers varied depending on the account, hundreds of the remaining 1,100 Macmillan employees did not attend work even if they did not picket; many called in "sick" for almost a week and stayed home in

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believe that other factors accounted for the dismissals. See Paul L. Montgomery, "Macmillan Book Divisions Sharply Cut Their Staffs" *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 1974, p. 1.

<sup>588</sup> Janet Schulman, "Looking Back: The 1974 Macmillan Massacre," *Publishers Weekly*, April 10, 2008, accessed February 12, 2010, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/15635-looking-back-the-1974-macmillan-massacre.html>.

<sup>589</sup> After the 1974 firings at Macmillan, some of the most active members of the women's group joined the union effort. Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with assistant vice president at Macmillan, #24, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>590</sup> Eleanor Blau, "Two Editors Quit Macmillan in Protest," *New York Times*, Oct. 16, 1974, p. 40.

<sup>591</sup> Janet Schulman, "Looking Back: The 1974 Macmillan Massacre," *Publishers Weekly*, April 10, 2008, accessed February 12, 2010, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/15635-looking-back-the-1974-macmillan-massacre.html>.

<sup>592</sup> Paul L. Montgomery, "N.L.R.B. Studies Macmillan Ousters," *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 1974, p. 48.

protest of the firings.<sup>593</sup> About thirty employees remained on strike for eight weeks while awaiting a decision from the National Labor Relations Board on the validity of the firings and on the union's legitimacy.<sup>594</sup> The Teamsters Union purposefully slowed its shipping speed at Macmillan's New Jersey warehouse. The New York Central Labor Council announced its support of Local 153 and of the reinstatement of the dismissed workers.<sup>595</sup> Those still working during the strike admitted that little work was being accomplished, largely because "[morale] is terrible."<sup>596</sup> Macmillan, Inc. stock plummeted and remained depressed for years in the 1970s.<sup>597</sup>

Eventually the state and federal government compelled Macmillan to alter its employment policies. In 1976, the State Division of Human Rights ruled that there was probable cause to believe that Macmillan had engaged in discriminatory practices. As a result, Macmillan negotiated a settlement with the Human Rights commission to avoid going to court. Macmillan agreed to promote equal pay and benefits for men and women, to provide written job descriptions, to post available jobs, and to work towards a better distribution of women in the professional ranks. Furthermore, eleven years after the women's group initially had filed a class action complaint with the state Attorney General, Macmillan signed a consent decree in

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<sup>593</sup> Janet Schulman, "Looking Back: The 1974 Macmillan Massacre," *Publishers Weekly*, April 10, 2008, accessed February 12, 2010, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/15635-looking-back-the-1974-macmillan-massacre.html>; Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with production editor at Macmillan, #23, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library; Paul L. Montgomery, "N.L.R.B. Studies Macmillan Ousters," *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 1974, p. 48.

<sup>594</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with production editor at Macmillan, #23, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library. When the interview was conducted in mid 1970s, the subject was waiting to hear from the labor board concerning union recognition and reinstatement of fired employees. Workers from almost all departments had been fired and also had participated in the strike: maintenance, mailroom, finance, art and production, clerical, and editorial.

<sup>595</sup> Janet Schulman, "Looking Back: The 1974 Macmillan Massacre," *Publishers Weekly*, April 10, 2008, accessed February 12, 2010, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/15635-looking-back-the-1974-macmillan-massacre.html>; Paul L. Montgomery, "N.L.R.B. Studies Macmillan Ousters," *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 1974, p. 48.

<sup>596</sup> Paul L. Montgomery, "N.L.R.B. Studies Macmillan Ousters," *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 1974, p. 48.

<sup>597</sup> Janet Schulman, "Looking Back: The 1974 Macmillan Massacre," *Publishers Weekly*, April 10, 2008, accessed February 12, 2010, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/15635-looking-back-the-1974-macmillan-massacre.html>; Leonard S. Marcus, *Minders of Make-Believe: Idealists, Entrepreneurs, and the Shaping of American Children's Literature* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 267-269.

December 1985 with the EEOC and the women of Macmillan. In addition to mandating equal hiring and promotion practices, career counseling, and tuition-refund programs, the decree provided almost 2 million dollars of back pay to female employees. Lawyers' fees took \$700,000 and large sums were distributed to the employees who had administered the case. Most women who worked at Macmillan in the early to mid 1970s received checks for a few thousand dollars.<sup>598</sup>

The Macmillan workplace of the 1970s demonstrates the success of separate but parallel advocacy groups for gender- and class-based issues. The women's group connected female employees in various departments who otherwise would not have known one another in a large company.<sup>599</sup> This network allowed savvy women to learn about salary discrepancies that needed to be addressed or about company practices that needed to be altered, standardized, and recorded. The founders wanted to achieve goals such as job postings, which would allow professional women to seek promotions more easily within the company.<sup>600</sup> Similar to the members of the Women in Publishing committee within 9to5, the employees of the Macmillan's women's group sought opportunities for upward mobility. They desired the same treatment that Macmillan men enjoyed.

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<sup>598</sup> Janet Schulman, "Looking Back: The 1974 Macmillan Massacre," *Publishers Weekly*, April 10, 2008, accessed February 12, 2010, <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/15635-looking-back-the-1974-macmillan-massacre.html>.

<sup>599</sup> Although this group connected women across job positions at Macmillan, such unity may not have existed at all publishing houses. One associate editor at Houghton Mifflin wrote in the early 1970s that only three women had been appointed to the 38-member Board of Directors, "[none] of which will go to 'bat' for the other female employees." Another Houghton Mifflin editor wrote that unfair hiring practices led to "bad feelings among women...[and] other standard publishing crap." 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, "9to5 Job Survey," by 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers, 1973-1974. 79-M16—81-M121, Carton 2, folder 74. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>600</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with assistant vice president at Macmillan, #24, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library. At first the women's group existed underground, meeting during closed sessions that were not open to all Macmillan female employees. Eventually the meetings became open to all female employees.

Given the presence of the Local 153 drive, many clericals developed an interest in unionization. Clericals, because of their low salaries, became targets for Local 153 organizers.<sup>601</sup> The women's group members could stay focused on their original priorities regarding promotional tracks and unequal pay with men. They did not have to contend with new priorities for their agenda that would emerge if clericals joined their ranks. The existence of a traditional labor union and an employee association allowed workers access to two channels to pursue related but not identical interests. Thus, two feminisms were at work at Macmillan and, for the most part, they enhanced the efficacy of each other given that management was the common enemy. The different priorities of working women could co-exist through these dual tracks.<sup>602</sup>

Yet certain class-based divisions and long-standing attitudes undermined efforts to make Macmillan a more equitable workplace. Some clerical women eventually did join the Macmillan women's group when it became inclusive. Yet they rarely held leadership positions in the association and the group was viewed as representative of professional interests. One Macmillan employee said that the women's group had a reputation for being "too elitist" and having too few clerical workers in it.<sup>603</sup> Furthermore, some members of the women's group felt ambivalent about unionization because of their identification of unions with blue-collar work. Recalled a female executive at Macmillan, "some people hated the word union. They would have rather have gone with the newspaper guild [than Local 153] because it sounded more [genteel] and it

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<sup>601</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with assistant vice president at Macmillan, #24, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library.

<sup>602</sup> The higher social status of clerical workers in publishing, particularly their higher likelihood of having a college education and coming from a middle-class family, relative to those in banking or insurance, is discussed earlier in this chapter.

<sup>603</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with assistant vice president at Macmillan, #24, 1974-1975. MC366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library.

sounded more professional.”<sup>604</sup> Tensions among women of different ranks remained despite the intransigence of male Macmillan executives and their large-scale firings. Rather, the uneasy and unstable alliances of Macmillan women were channeled into two associations.

In Boston, the demands of publishing workers coincided with the needs of a new clerical union. Formed in 1975, Local 925, the sister trade union to 9to5, was seeking increased visibility and membership. It was more responsive to member participation than were previously-established unions. Publishing women wanted to ensure that they had control over the organization they were joining, and by associating with a nascent union, they had more influence over the agenda. At both Beacon Press and Allyn & Bacon, employees benefited from 9to5, receiving support from Women in Publishing and Local 925. Demands ranged from the more traditional—pay, promotions, and benefits—to the issues assumed by growing human resource departments—job postings, job descriptions, and job training. While these women shared concerns that constituted the WIP agenda, they were willing to unionize for higher salaries when not able to attain them using other strategies. The following two Boston campaigns demonstrate that intra-office organizing could escalate to union drives when management was unresponsive to workers’ priorities. WIP expedited these union movements by helping to facilitate employee discussion and by forwarding demands to management.

Employees from Beacon Press joined Local 925 after having an independent in-house union for several years.<sup>605</sup> Although it was highly structured, the Beacon Press Employees Association was having difficulty negotiating with management regarding pay, promotions, job

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<sup>604</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with production editor at Macmillan, #23, 1974-1975. MC 366, Box 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library. Genteel was actually written as “gentile” in the transcription of the interview in the Tepperman papers. But within the context of the interview, genteel makes more sense than gentile.

<sup>605</sup> Beacon Press Employees Association, Constitution and By-Laws, March 17, 1978, amended September 13, 1978, Box 7, folder 28; Memo to Karen Nussbaum from unnamed 9to5 activist, re: Beacon, September 2, 1976, Box 7, folder 28. The Beacon Press Employees Association had male and female members, a constitution and by laws, and elections for officers.

postings, job descriptions, job training, and benefits.<sup>606</sup> In 1975 the organization consulted with 9to5, which was eager to offer assistance.<sup>607</sup> Its Women in Publishing subcommittee wrote a detailed memo to Beacon Director Wells Drorbaugh, outlining recommendations for improving Beacon practices and policies. WIP recommended that benefits be provided based on length of service regardless of exemption status. Non-exempt workers, who were disparately women, were offered fewer benefits than were exempt employees, who were more likely to be men. Furthermore, the memo provided information about what should be included in equitable job descriptions, and it recommended methods of instituting job training, job postings, and grievance procedures. Lastly, 9to5 recommended that there should be an “immediate upgrade” in pay for all employees because of office workers’ low salaries.<sup>608</sup>

Beacon executives seriously considered 9to5’s concerns. Company lawyers and personnel officers were trying to resolve many of these same grievances to comply with new legal standards. Thus, Drorbaugh hired a management consultant to review WIP’s recommendations and give him advice about making changes. The consultant suggested that Beacon should be initiating policies and practices that fostered equal employment opportunity. Therefore, he recommended that Beacon institute written job descriptions, job postings, salary reviews, in-house job training, tuition reimbursement, and grievance procedures. He even suggested that persons with similar education and experience should not be hired at different salary levels. To encourage employee retention, the company should implement cost-of-living adjustments based on its “budgetary limitations.” The consultant recommended that before changing any company practices, further investigation would be needed to attach a “price tag” to

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<sup>606</sup> News from Local 925, Vol 1, no. 1, October/November 1978, SEIU, Box 7, folder 25.

<sup>607</sup> Memo to Karen Nussbaum from unnamed 9to5 activist, re: Beacon, September 2, 1976, Box 7, folder 28.

<sup>608</sup> Memo to Wells Drorbaugh from Women in Publishing, re: Recommendations for employment policies at Beacon Press, n.d. [1975], Box 7, folder 28.



each request. Once these concerns were quantified, Beacon could decide whether or not to implement them regardless of “philosophical reasons” to make changes.<sup>609</sup>

The consultant’s recommendations, which coincided with 9to5’s concerns, demonstrated that changing corporate strategy was prioritizing both equal employment opportunity and employee satisfaction.<sup>610</sup> In 1976 Drorbaugh made some adjustments, which disparately benefited Beacon’s female employees. All employees, not just exempt ones, became eligible for life insurance, severance pay, termination notices, and at least three weeks vacation time. Beacon began enforcing the state law that required time and a half pay for overtime work. In place of no maternity policy, it began to offer eight weeks paid maternity leave and two weeks paid paternity leave.<sup>611</sup>

The influence of 9to5 was clear. It had helped the Employees Association submit a memo to management, resulting in improved workplace standards at Beacon. Although conditions had improved, employees were not completely satisfied, particularly because salaries were still low. They had seen the results of exercising a collective voice, and believed that with union membership, they could obtain contractual rights for higher wages. By September 1976 most were in favor of affiliating with Local 925, which would not only continue to increase

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<sup>609</sup> Letter marked “Personal/Confidential” from Peter B. Olney, Jr., President of Olney Association Inc. Management Consultants to Mr. Wells Drorbaugh, Director of Beacon Press, September 26, 1975, Box 7, folder 28. In fact, 9to5 argued that Boston wages were significantly lower than office workers’ wages in other large cities like New York and Chicago but the consultant said that was acceptable as long as Beacon wages were competitive with other Boston area employers. “[Actual] salaries paid reflect supply and demand conditions in the local labor market” and salary equity did not require Beacon management to bring its employees’ salaries in line with those of other cities regardless of the high cost of living in Boston.

<sup>610</sup> Throughout the next decade, leading management literature, much of it about the importance of human resource development, would reflect the attention to employee satisfaction and equal opportunity. Richard Beckhard and Reuben T. Harris, *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1977); Edgar H. Schein, *Career Dynamics: Matching Individual and Organizational Needs* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978); Mary Anne Devanna, Charles Fombrun, and Noel Tichy, “Human Resources Management,” *Organizational Dynamics* (Winter 1981: 51-67); Michael Beer, Bert Spector, Paul R. Lawrence, D. Quinn Mills, and Richard E. Walton, *Managing Human Assets* (New York: The Free Press, 1984).

<sup>611</sup> Women in Publishing/9to5, “What Beacon Press Employees Have Gained Since August 1975,” February 26, 1976, Box 7, folder 28.

employee clout, but also give them access to 9to5's legal resources. Nine to Five leaders were thrilled that Beacon employees wanted to affiliate with their union. They wondered, however, about the union eligibility of all members of the current Employees Association. Some, such as those working in personnel, could be classified as management, which would make them ineligible for 925 membership.<sup>612</sup>

The Beacon Employees Association voted to affiliate with Local 925 in September 1978.<sup>613</sup> Executives had conceded on several grievances in 1976 after receiving the 9to5 recommendations. However, they were less willing to yield to demands for substantial changes in salaries and pay structures that employees raised during contract negotiations. The first contract took eight months to negotiate. However, with the second contract in December 1979, workers had achieved, on average, an eight percent salary increase. Also Beacon agreed to bring long-term workers, whose pay had fallen behind the cost of living, closer to the pay range of newer employees.<sup>614</sup>

Further negotiations continued to result in economic benefits for workers, demonstrating the power of the trade union model when seeking higher wages. In a contract ratified in January 1982, employees gained an 8.5 percent across-the-board raise.<sup>615</sup> The increases being secured by Beacon Local 925 were far higher than standard raises in non-unionized houses.<sup>616</sup> Local 925 was still securing contracts by 1985, at a time when labor activity in the private sector was in

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<sup>612</sup> Memo to Karen Nussbaum from unnamed 9to5 activist, re: Beacon, September 2, 1976, Box 7, folder 28. The men in the association were opposed to unionization but most of the group was made up of women. Also, Nine to Five really hoped it could allow the employee with the title of "business manager" to affiliate since she had provided them with valuable insider information in the past.

<sup>613</sup> News from Local 925, Vol. 1, no. 1, October/November 1978, SEIU, Box 7, folder 25.

<sup>614</sup> News from Local 925, "Beacon Press Team Keeps Agency Shop," April 1980, Box 7, folder 25. Half of an employee's tuition reimbursement would now be made halfway through a semester with the balance paid on completion of the course.

<sup>615</sup> News from Local 925, March 7, 1982, Box 7, folder 25. Also they gained a one percent merit pool raise evenly divided. They added a prescription plan to their health benefits and rejected the addition of management's proposed procedure of new performance reviews.

<sup>616</sup> News from Local 925, Vol. 3, Issue 3, August 1982, Box 7, folder 25.

decline. Employees were able to retain benefits won in prior years even if raises were only at 5 percent across-the-board, and 2 percent merit.<sup>617</sup>

The Beacon drive illustrates two main points. First, 9to5 could help an internal employee association gain power in presenting its demands to management. Its entry into the fray caused Drorbaugh to prioritize certain workplace issues and hire a consultant for help. Second, while 9to5 could help Beacon employees achieve more vacation time or attain maternity leave, winning significant pay increases was difficult, if not impossible, without the backing of a trade union. Only when the Employees Association affiliated with Local 925 were the Beacon workers able to gain notable raises.

Workers from another Boston publishing house voiced similar economic and non-economic concerns that became the platform for their union drive. After facing intransigent management, Allyn & Bacon employees became one of the first units within Local 925, organizing in March 1977.<sup>618</sup> Mobilizing began when, in 1974, women workers, both clerical and editorial, started meeting after work, complaining about their low salaries. Secretaries were earning approximately \$5,500 per year and editors were at \$7,500. They felt that their male colleagues at Allyn & Bacon earned more for the same or similar work, and that men had better opportunities for promotions. Management ignored their concerns until 9to5 urged the Massachusetts Attorney General to file a class action suit that charged Allyn & Bacon with sex discrimination.<sup>619</sup>

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<sup>617</sup> News from Local 925, Vol. 5, No. 1, March 1985, Box 7, folder 25.

<sup>618</sup> Local 925, Proposal to SEIU to Support Expanded Organizing Program by Local 925 in the Boston Area, May 22, 1981, Box 7, folder 18.

<sup>619</sup> 9to5, "Women at Work," May 23, 1978, Carton 2, folder 47, Schlesinger. The lawsuit specifically targeted one purchasing manager who favored male employees in matters of pay and promotions. Associate production editor Nancy Farrell, who would become the chairwoman of Women in Publishing, declared that men in her workplace had "nineteenth-century attitudes" towards women. See "Case Study: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.: From 9to5 to Local 925," from Amy E. Weisman, "9 to 5: Organization for Women Office Workers and Local 925: An Organizing Duo

Yet employee grievances extended beyond pay. Another issue that mobilized workers was the lack of job posting, which prevented internal employees from learning about new openings. A group of women approached President Dick Carroll, hoping that he would consider institutionalizing job postings. He agreed to meet with them and then cancelled the meeting. Instead they were shuffled to the personnel director who claimed that job postings would weaken morale because many employees would be competing for the same jobs. When someone would be turned down, she would become frustrated and resent anyone who received an interview. While jobs would not be publically posted, individually employees could check in with her about potential opportunities at any time. Her “door was always open.”<sup>620</sup> This patronizing response did not satisfy workers who wanted the hiring process to be more standardized and transparent. Besides pay and job posting, employees complained about a strict time-keeping system that penalized employees who were one-minute late.<sup>621</sup> They were further enraged when the company suddenly decreased payments to their health insurance without valid explanation.<sup>622</sup>

Employee dissatisfaction culminated when 170 employees, including editors, copywriters, designers, buyers, secretaries, and clericals, affiliated with Local 925 in early 1977.<sup>623</sup> Nine to Five and Local 925 guided the office workers as they gathered more than the 30 percent of employees’ signatures to petition for a union election.<sup>624</sup> During their organizing campaign, workers composed a song, “Allyn & Bacon Rag,” that encouraging support for the

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with New Hope for Office Workers,” Equal Employment Opportunity, Professor P. Wallace, Spring 1981, Carton 2, folder 58.

<sup>620</sup> 9to5, “Women at Work,” May 23, 1978, Carton 2, folder 47, Schlesinger. The women workers at Allyn & Bacon took a poll and overwhelmingly, by a vote of 168 to 2, favored job posting.

<sup>621</sup> “Case Study: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.: From 9to5 to Local 925,” from Amy E. Weisman, “9 to 5: Organization for Women Office Workers and Local 925: An Organizing Duo with New Hope for Office Workers,” Equal Employment Opportunity, Professor P. Wallace, Spring 1981, Carton 2, folder 58.

<sup>622</sup> Local 925 Flyer, “Introducing Local 925,” Box 7, folder 18.

<sup>623</sup> Local 925 Flyer, “Introducing Local 925,” Box 7, folder 18.

<sup>624</sup> “Case Study: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.: From 9to5 to Local 925,” from Amy E. Weisman, “9 to 5: Organization for Women Office Workers and Local 925: An Organizing Duo with New Hope for Office Workers,” Equal Employment Opportunity, Professor P. Wallace, Spring 1981, Carton 2, folder 58.

drive: “Allyn and Bacon better fear/For we’re going to win this year/We’ll unionize to have a voice/Without the union we have no choice.”<sup>625</sup>

Yet winning union affiliation did not end the employees’ struggles: they still had to establish and maintain a strong bargaining position. For this tough fight, Local 925 sought support from other unions, especially the teachers. Yet the first, eighteen-month contract that was secured was viewed in labor circles as a landmark agreement. Several other SEIU chapters used it as a model and resource for negotiation.<sup>626</sup> It called for ongoing discussion between labor and management, higher salaries, and better fringe benefits including vacation and sick leave, as well as the treatment of pregnancy as a disability.<sup>627</sup> Nine to Five had helped Allyn & Bacon workers unionize, which gave them more bargaining power. Whereas before unionization, Carroll avoided concerned employees, now he had to contend with them, given their union status.

Although management was granting some demands to Allyn & Bacon employees, it never fully accepted the establishment of the union. While it participated on joint committees to solve workers’ issues, management also continued to use several union-busting strategies to try to weaken the union. First, the managers at Allyn & Bacon held ‘captive audience meetings,’ meaning they scheduled meeting for employees and then used the time to criticize the union and attempt to sway workers’ opinions. They claimed that a much larger union controlled Local 925, and it would not remain receptive to their needs. Second, two employees were accused of chatting about the union in the mailroom and fired for organizing during work hours. Local 925 filed a discrimination suit against Allyn & Bacon and the company settled out of court, agreeing

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<sup>625</sup> “Allyn & Bacon Rag,” Box 7, folder 18, SEIU files.

<sup>626</sup> Local 925, Proposal to SEIU to Support Expanded Organizing Program by Local 925 in the Boston Area, May 22, 1981, Box 7, folder 18. Organized employees also faced a decertification attempt soon after affiliating with Local 925 while they were in the midst of attempting to secure their first contract. The decertification petition halted negotiations, but was found to be invalid because supervisors had tainted it.

<sup>627</sup> Local 925 Flyer, “Introducing Local 925,” Box 7, folder 18.

to reinstate the employees and provide them with backpay.<sup>628</sup> Management's clash with the union took its toll, resulting in a long, arduous battle for a second contract.<sup>629</sup> After five months of stalled negotiating, Allyn & Bacon workers, joined by employees from Beacon, went on strike in protest of current terms for salary and union security. Workers gained some important concessions from the strike. The second contract contained a 5 percent across-the-board raise plus the potential for 7.5 percent more based on performance as well as compensatory time off.<sup>630</sup>

Throughout the next two years, Local 925 supported employees' rights in the face of unpredictable market circumstances. In 1980 Allyn & Bacon executives claimed that they were having serious financial difficulties and would be laying off anywhere from 59 to 68 employees of the 154 person bargaining unit.<sup>631</sup> The union requested full financial information on the necessity of this action and insisted that the bargaining unit not bear the brunt of the financial difficulties alone.<sup>632</sup> However, many union employees did lose their jobs. But Local 925 ensured that laid-off employees receive contractual guarantees including a thirty-day notice and anywhere from two weeks to three months of severance pay (depending on length of employment). One Local 925 member made note of the benefits of the union contract: "While

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<sup>628</sup> "Case Study: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.: From 9to5 to Local 925," from Amy E. Weisman, "9 to 5: Organization for Women Office Workers and Local 925: An Organizing Duo with New Hope for Office Workers," Equal Employment Opportunity, Professor P. Wallace, Spring 1981, Carton 2, folder 58.

<sup>629</sup> Local 925, Proposal to SEIU to Support Expanded Organizing Program by Local 925 in the Boston Area, May 22, 1981, Box 7, folder 18. Employees filed a valid decertification petition in the fall of 1979, with the required 30 percent of employee signatures. This decertification was occurring as the first contract was set to expire; thus, the union just allowed it to expire and held elections again in November 1979, winning easily. At least half of the employees at Allyn & Bacon were part of Local 925.

<sup>630</sup> News from Local 925, Vol. II, no. 2, June 1980, Box 7, folder 25. Employees picketed on May 1, 1980 from 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at which time employees returned to work.

<sup>631</sup> Local 925, Proposal to SEIU to Support Expanded Organizing Program by Local 925 in the Boston Area, May 22, 1981, Box 7, folder 18.

<sup>632</sup> News from Local 925, Vol. II, no. 3, September 1980, Box 7, folder 25; Proposal to SEIU to Support Expanded Organizing Program by Local 925 in the Boston Area, May 22, 1981, Box 7, folder 18. Although the union requested that the layoffs be dispersed, Local 925 disparately suffered because of the job placements of union members.

the announcement of the layoffs was distressing, we [were] all fortunate to have contract provisions. Without them, it [would] have been an upsetting and hectic time for everyone.”<sup>633</sup>

After the layoffs, another challenge for employees ensued when a larger corporation, Esquire, Inc., bought Allyn & Bacon in 1981.<sup>634</sup> Negotiating for salaries became even more difficult because executives from Allyn & Bacon convincingly argued that they just did not have the money for increases.<sup>635</sup> With the second contract set to expire in May 1981, securing a third contract would be formidable amid the merger.<sup>636</sup> But Local 925 endured, winning a third contract despite the instability caused by dismissals and changes.<sup>637</sup>

Securing a contract did not guarantee that fair workplace procedures would follow. Allyn & Bacon employees often had to file grievances to rectify inequitable practices. Several temporary employees who became permanent, for example, used the union contract to gain retroactive seniority and, with it, additional vacation and personal days.<sup>638</sup> Another employee went out on maternity leave and returned to a manager who would not giving her a scheduled

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<sup>633</sup> The contract also specified that layoffs should be in inverse order of seniority and that laid off employees should be recalled for jobs in direct order of seniority if positions became available within the year. News from Local 925, Vol. II, no. 3, September 1980, Box 7, folder 25; Local 925. The layoffs did have drawbacks, of course, resulting in the union constituting around one-third of employees instead of one half. See Proposal to SEIU to Support Expanded Organizing Program by Local 925 in the Boston Area, May 22, 1981, Box 7, folder 18. Also, as a union steward noted, post-layoff challenges included maintaining momentum in the face of open-shop status, year-long contracts, and union-busting managers. See “Case Study: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.: From 9to5 to Local 925,” from Amy E. Weisman, “9 to 5: Organization for Women Office Workers and Local 925: An Organizing Duo with New Hope for Office Workers,” Equal Employment Opportunity, Professor P. Wallace, Spring 1981, Carton 2, folder 58.

<sup>634</sup> Local 925 News, Vol. 3, issue 2, March 7, 1982, Box 7, folder 25.

<sup>635</sup> Proposal to SEIU to Support Expanded Organizing Program by Local 925 in the Boston Area, May 22, 1981, Box 7, folder 18. In fact, Allyn & Bacon proposed cutting back on annual increases and eliminating across-the-board raises all together. The union was in a difficult spot not just with the company’s financial situation, but also since more than half the employees had signed a decertification petition. The union claimed that employees were signing something that they did not understand, believing that they were calling for a new election if the second contract expired before a third could be negotiated. But management countered that it no longer needed to bargain with 925 since the union did not represent the majority of workers. Also see Local 925 News, Vol. 3, issue 3, August 1982, Box 7, folder 25. Corporate reorganization did result in Allyn & Bacon laying off another nineteen employees.

<sup>636</sup> Proposal to SEIU to Support Expanded Organizing Program by Local 925 in the Boston Area, May 22, 1981, Box 7, folder 18. However, the union overcame the third decertification attempt in June and secured a third contract. Local 925 News, December 1981, Box 7, folder 25.

<sup>637</sup> Local 925 News, Vol. 3, issue 2, March 7, 1982, Box 7, folder 25. The union stood up for employee interests in discussions of the company’s pending move from Boston to Newton, Massachusetts in 1982.

<sup>638</sup> News from Local 925, Vol. 1, no. 1, October/November 1978, SEIU, Box 7, folder 25.

review. She used the union contract to argue that she was entitled to a scheduled review and should not be punished by having her review postponed. She was successful in gaining the review and even received a very good performance rating and a promotion.<sup>639</sup> An employee received approval and scheduled a three-week vacation. When personnel changed its mind and tried to give her only two weeks off instead, the union used grievance procedures to enforce the contract. Another employee was denied severance pay because the company was trying to curtail her seniority rights from an earlier period of service. The Local 925 steward settled the dispute favorably for the employee.<sup>640</sup> By 1982, Local 925 reported that stewards at Allyn & Bacon were “becoming VERY familiar with the grievance clause in the contract.” They had settled two grievances recently and had two arbitrations approaching in 1982.<sup>641</sup>

Thus, what were the functions of unions at these two publishing houses? In both cases, workers needed union status to achieve pay increases. At Beacon, the Employee Association and 9to5 had been able to secure benefits such as overtime and maternity leave without unionization. The main benefit of union status was that it promised increased pay. However, at Allyn & Bacon, employee relations were more strained. Employees needed the backing of a union to achieve their non-economic and economic demands. But the union contract promised more than pay raises. It also signified that employees gained influence in a workplace where managers were reluctant to share decision-making power with workers. A Local 925 steward claimed that because of unionization, management was treating Allyn & Bacon employees with greater respect. And in turn, employees felt more confident that they could bring about change in their

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<sup>639</sup> News from Local 925, Vol. II, no. 3, September 1980, Box 7, folder 25.

<sup>640</sup> News from Local 925, Vol. III, no. 1, January 1981, Box 7, folder 25.

<sup>641</sup> Local 925 News, Vol. 3, issue 3, August 1982, Box 7, folder 25.



own workplaces. Over time, they became less inhibited at the bargaining table and even seemed to walk “‘with a little more [confidence] in the office.’”<sup>642</sup>

## Conclusion

The experiences of women in the publishing industry demonstrate the changing contours of clerical work in the 1970s as ideas about women’s equality became more mainstream. In the 1960s, college-educated women had few choices in the workforce, which led many to accept clerical jobs in industries like publishing. Yet by the 1980s, male-dominated positions, fields, and graduate programs were becoming more accessible to women. Changes in gender norms, in legal mandates, and in corporate strategies meant that qualified women were increasingly entering companies as managers, taking jobs in sales, and attending medical school, for instance. Clerical work became further ghettoized because sex-segregated laborers appeared to be *choosing* not to work alongside men in more prestigious positions. Whereas in the 60s, clerical work was women’s work because women performed it regardless of education level, in the 80s, clerical work became low-wage, low-skill work performed mostly by women with no more than a high-school education. Clerical work remained devalued socially and economically, as some women moved into men’s jobs.

Yet in the 1970s, the massive clerical worker category still encompassed a wide spectrum of women who were performing an array of duties. Particularly in publishing, women with clerical titles were fulfilling tasks ranging from typing and bookkeeping to editing and research. They had different priorities depending on their job responsibilities, career plans, and economic circumstances. Clericals, who constituted one-third of wage-earning women, advanced their

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<sup>642</sup> “Case Study: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.: From 9to5 to Local 925,” from Amy E. Weisman, “9 to 5: Organization for Women Office Workers and Local 925: An Organizing Duo with New Hope for Office Workers,” Equal Employment Opportunity, Professor P. Wallace, Spring 1981, Carton 2, folder 58.

claims using a variety of organizing strategies. First, union drives often helped to secure systemic pay raises, which were difficult to obtain otherwise. Working to improve conditions for their present jobs, career clericals used unionization to increase wages for their current positions. Second, campaigns within individual offices presented various circumstances for women workers who came from varied economic and educational backgrounds. They could overcome class divisions to unionize and strike, as they did at Harper & Row. Yet the Harper model of a vertical union did not take shape at Macmillan. The competing priorities of women workers caused rifts among them, and the union formed because management's overreach forced women together.

Third, in Boston, several union drives received aid from 9to5's Women in Publishing (WIP) committee, which prioritized helping clericals move out of clerical work and into male-dominated professional positions. This collaboration, between unions and WIP, suggests that the struggle for economic justice was not yet distinct from women's desire to move into male-dominated professions. Yet ideas of fair wages and upward mobility became legally distinct as corporate strategies and federal law standardized definitions of sex discrimination in the workplace. Private companies sought to fulfill the broad mandates of equal employment opportunity laws, expanding personnel departments into human resource management. But in the 1970s, clericals could fight for both economic and non-economic claims as part of one conceptual battle.

Much was up for grabs in the '70s as feminists, policymakers, employers, and clericals negotiated definitions of fairness on the job. They determined what would be perceived as equitable workplace policy and behavior, what would be unfair but legal, and what would be prohibited as sex discrimination under law. During this transitional and transformative decade,

clericals contextualized their grievances in a number of ways. At times they looked to the treatment that men were enjoying in their offices and determined that they too deserved opportunities for advancement. At other times they were more concerned with gaining improved pay and benefits for themselves as career clerical workers. What clerical workers wanted could depend on their own demographic characteristics as well as the industry or specific office in which they worked.

Relative to clericals in universities, banks, and insurance companies, publishing women cared most about equality with professional men in their workplaces. Many female college graduates took clerical jobs in publishing, assuming that soon they would move into higher-status positions. Yet they remained relegated to clerical jobs even though they were as qualified as men for managerial and editorial positions. WIP tackled this embedded sex segregation, empowering its members and other women to negotiate with managers for new procedures and practices including written job descriptions, internal job postings, and paid job training. WIP believed that instituting these policies would give educated women greater access to male-dominated positions.

## Chapter Four: Privatizing Fair Employment: Labor Law and Sex-Segregated Work

Much of the scholarship that explores the intersection of women's work and the state addresses the decline of protective labor legislation as equal employment policies such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 took hold.<sup>643</sup> While Title VII certainly "opened the workplace" to women and minorities, offering them positions that previously had been reserved for white Protestant men, it did not revolutionize opportunities or conditions for clerical workers.<sup>644</sup> This chapter argues that as new government agencies began enforcing open-ended state policies concerning employment relations, employers and regulators interpreted laws as to bolster a model of formal equality between men and women. Thus, changing labor law did not address the most pressing needs of sex-segregated laborers—needs that could include both improving the pay and conditions of clerical work itself or shifting out of clerical labor and into male-dominated professions. One-third of all working women engaged in some form of office work; clericals' priorities varied depending on the circumstances within their industries and on the demographic characteristics of the workers themselves.

While new state remedies did not directly ameliorate clericals' concerns, they could increase corporate attention to clericals' voices. In some cases the law exerted indirect pressure on corporate actors so that company policy shifted to accommodate workers' complaints. As the boundaries of what would be codified as illegal took shape, many clericals' priorities—issues such as office automation, promotions, and pay raises—became matters of private negotiation

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<sup>643</sup> Several books address the conflict between protective labor legislation and Title VII for women's work. See Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006); Leo Kanowitz, *Women and the Law: The Unfinished Revolution* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969); Hugh Davis Graham, *The Civil Rights Era: Origins and Development of National Policy, 1960-1972* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Cynthia Harrison, *On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women's Issues, 1945-1968* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

<sup>644</sup> Phrase is the subtitle from MacLean, *Freedom is Not Enough*.

between officer workers and their employers. The structure and implementation of labor law in the 1970s and 1980s continued to advantage workers in male-dominated industries, failing to aid women in sex-segregated sectors such as clerical work.

Organized clerical workers had little attachment to the ideal of formal equality, which underpinned postwar policies such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title VII, and the Equal Rights Amendment.<sup>645</sup> Instead, they strategically employed whatever paradigm was necessary to attain their goals.<sup>646</sup> According to many women, the increasingly automated office was causing a number of work-related ailments: extreme stress, miscarriages, joint pain, and poor vision. Nine to Five and other labor organizations lobbied the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and various state legislatures to regulate office work more closely. Yet OSHA refused to monitor office work for decades and few state legislatures passed regulatory bills.<sup>647</sup>

Clericals' advocates, nonetheless, brought awareness to the hazards of office work, making the public more conscious of the negative consequences of office automation.

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<sup>645</sup> On the development and implementation of sex-based policies striving towards an equality paradigm see Serena Mayeri, *Reasoning from Race: Feminism, Law, and the Civil Rights Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Deborah Dinner, "The Costs of Reproduction: History and the Legal Construction of Sex Equality," 46 *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 415 (2011); Cary C. Franklin, "Inventing the 'Traditional Concept' of Sex Discrimination," 125 *Harvard Law Review* 1307 (2012).

<sup>646</sup> For instance, 9to5 claimed that VDT use was causing harm to pregnant women as well as some birth defects. Thus, it was employing women's reproductive capacity to try to improve health and safety conditions. SEIU District 925 Collection, Sample letter to Dr. J. Donald Millar, Director of NIOSH from 9to5 supporter, 1984, Box 1, folder 17, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. To view the listing of companies and locations where pregnancy problems were reported, see U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), *Automation of America's Offices* (Washington, DC., December 1985), 145. By 1984 ten clusters had been reported, the smallest group consisting of three pregnant workers and the largest being twenty four. See 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Statement of J. Donald Millar, M.D. Before the Subcommittee on Health and Safety, Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, May 15, 1984. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 155. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>647</sup> Eventually, due to public support for guidelines and increased number of reported injuries, OSHA would pass regulations to monitor work-related musculoskeletal disorders and to develop rules about ergonomically-related hazards. These rules, however, would apply to all industries, not just office work. See Remarks of Joseph A. Dear, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health, Before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on National Economic Growth, Natural Resources, and Regulatory Affairs, and the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, July 12, 1995; OSHA's final rule on Ergonomics Program (29 CFR 1910.900, November 14, 2000).

Equal employment policy such as Title VII did help to transform cultural norms, suggesting that workplaces should respect women by codifying sexual harassment.<sup>648</sup> And personnel departments expanded to formalize job descriptions, standardize hiring and firing practices, and record business practices to comply with legal regulations.<sup>649</sup> Yet the corporate policies that did change as a result of equal employment policy did not lead to higher wages for clerical workers. Furthermore, they did not change the occupational strictures of clerical work, which meant that women who held lower-level office positions continued to lack upward mobility.

This chapter has three sections. The first section explores the 9to5 campaign to regulate the automated office. As most clericals began to use keyboards attached to Video Display Terminals (VDTs) for routinized office work, complaints of certain musculoskeletal problems increased. Nine to Five headlined the dangers of office automation and sought state regulation, but to no avail. Section two turns to the efforts of 9to5 as it sought to use the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to benefit the goals of the office workers' movement. Nine to Five monitored federal and state fair employment agencies, seeking review of the low pay and lack of mobility that plagued clerical work. Yet the Commission's focus on initiatives to decrease its large backlog of complaints undercut 9to5's recommendations regarding systemic change. Third, this chapter will examine the meaning and implementation of affirmative action. Nine to Five fought to enforce its definition of affirmative action, calling for industry-wide reviews of sex segregation and the redistribution of qualified clerical workers into higher-paid office positions. Clericals did succeed in standardizing some personnel practices; but the gains

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<sup>648</sup> Carrie N. Baker, *The Women's Movement Against Sexual Harassment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Julie Berebitsky, *Sex and the Office: A History of Gender, Power, and Desire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

<sup>649</sup> See Chapter Three and Frank Dobbin, *Inventing Equal Opportunity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

won, including internal job posting and written job descriptions, did not provide clear paths for movement from clerical to professional positions. Business executives implemented affirmative action to meet minimum government requirements. Company plans measured underutilization and set goals to bring women or minorities into previously-restricted fields.

As clerical women sought to use new employment policies and agencies to their benefit, government officials and corporate managers defined workplace fairness in ways that tended to the needs of women who wanted to work in traditionally male jobs but not to those of the clerical women already confined to sex-segregated sectors of the labor market. Legal changes benefited women, both professional and working class, who were seeking to move into male-dominated industries. Women performing industrial labor would enjoy the regulatory environment fostered by OSHA, which disparately benefited blue-collar laborers. Those seeking professional positions would benefit from Title VII, which gave women greater opportunities to secure financial success and gain professional prestige. Yet to become a secretary remained a dead-end job, solidified by changing legal codes and cultural norms that offered opportunities to women in an array of previously-restricted fields. Government policies—and corporate implementation of them—were failing to address the problems of women, many of them economic, in sex-segregated office work. Thus, the 1970s and 1980s presented possibilities for women who had acquired the skills or educational advantages to compete in male-dominated areas where they were underrepresented. But the same prospects did not exist for those remaining in the office as clerical workers.

Expanding the Legal Definition of Health and Safety

Sharon Atkins, a receptionist at a large Midwestern business, described the disillusionment she felt when unable to find a meaningful career after college. As an English literature major, she never thought she would become a receptionist because that was “the dumb broad at the front desk who took telephone messages.”<sup>650</sup> Now that she was that woman, and she felt trapped at her telephone without real human contact:

The machine dictates. This crummy little machine with buttons on it—you’ve got to be there to answer it. You can walk away from it and pretend you don’t hear it, but it pulls you... You’re job doesn’t mean anything. Because *you’re* a little machine. A monkey could do what I do.<sup>651</sup>

Atkins was not alone in feeling as if her job had become mechanized to the point of being unbearable.<sup>652</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, office automation was revolutionizing the way in which businesses operated and the jobs that clerical workers performed. Although corporations saw technological innovation as progress, many clerical workers felt as if these new machines limited their autonomy on the job, and as if they lacked influence over their work lives.

Women reported numerous work-related ailments that they believed had resulted from office automation including undue stress, miscarriages, joint pain, and vision problems. Because office workers from all over the nation working in various sectors were reporting similar claims, one of 9to5’s strongest campaigns of the 1980s concerned worker health and safety. Nine to Five focused largely on the negative consequences of using Video Display Terminals, or VDTs. Their campaign attempted to expand the legal definition and public perception of occupational hazards. The federal government acknowledged that certain physical injuries resulting from traditionally male jobs were appropriate for regulation. Yet clerical workers’ organizations

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<sup>650</sup> Sharon Atkins, Receptionist,” in Studs Terkel, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 29.

<sup>651</sup> Atkins in Terkel, *Working*, 30-31.

<sup>652</sup> See the discussion of the General Motors strike in Lordstown, Ohio, 1972 in Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010); Also see U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, *Hearings on S. 3916, Worker Alienation, 1972*, 92<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> session, July 25 and 26, 1972.



pushed beyond the current legal boundaries to call for intervention into the arena of seemingly genteel office work. Advocates of office health and safety were willing to use women's biological difference to argue that white-collar workplaces needed regulation. While women turned to government bodies to address office automation and its consequences on physical and mental health, federal agencies, as well as state legislatures, provided them with limited remedies. Workers, technology manufacturers, and employers were left to negotiate appropriate standards and practices to accompany automation. Eventually business leaders adopted new strategies for sustaining and increasing production, tactics that could be reconciled with workers' demands for greater control over their machines.

In the 1960s and 1970s, certain industries, and certain jobs within them, were more prone to office automation than others. Finance and insurance companies automated many clerical jobs quickly, and positions involving data entry were most heavily affected.<sup>653</sup> Certain office jobs became less common in the 1970s such as that of bookkeeper, calculating machine operator and stenographer while new jobs such as computer equipment operator grew exponentially.<sup>654</sup> Many clericals felt uncertain and even fearful about the arrival of computers at their offices, unsure how the new technology would affect their jobs.<sup>655</sup> Introducing computer technology in America's offices potentially could upgrade jobs by mechanizing repetitive tasks, which would

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<sup>653</sup> U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), *Automation of America's Offices* (Washington, DC., December 1985), 52-54. Also, in the Jean Tepperman Papers, clerical workers from large insurance companies report the problems with routine work while many of the workers in smaller offices (of various industries) complain of being made to do everything and of having too many different responsibilities. Jean Tepperman Papers, 1974-1975, MC 366, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

<sup>654</sup> OTA, *Automation of America's Offices*, 55. Roslyn L. Feldberg and Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Technology and Work Degradation: Effects of Office Automation on Women Clerical Workers" in Joan Rothschild, ed., *Machina Ex Dea: Feminist Perspectives on Technology* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1983), 62, 64-65.

<sup>655</sup> One clerical worker summarized the prevailing ethos by saying "there's something about the electronic office that really gives me the willies." Massachusetts History Workshop Records, 1980-1984; Transcript of remarks at clerical work conference, April 24, 1982, MC 365, folder 2. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. (Identity of worker withheld for privacy reasons.)

allow employees to make more complex decisions requiring analytical thinking.<sup>656</sup> In fact, advertisers claimed that a new word processing machine “‘frees the secretary’ from routine work.”<sup>657</sup> Yet many women wondered if their jobs would be eliminated because of the efficiency promised by new technology.<sup>658</sup>

The emerging realities of the changing labor market showed that automation was affecting white-collar men and women differently. Instead of freeing female clericals from tedious work, automation further relegated women to positions as data entry clerks, receptionists, typists, and payroll clerks. In the process women’s work continued to be rationalized, their output monitored, and their position as workers devalued. Employers trained men to assume the computer jobs that held professional or semi-professional status such as computer programmer or systems analyst.<sup>659</sup> In the 1970s women constituted only 15 percent of programmers and analysts, but were 93 percent of lower-level operators at an average insurance data-processing center.<sup>660</sup> Furthermore, women of color were overrepresented in lower-level automated office positions, meaning that they held the most monotonous jobs and were most susceptible to being let go.<sup>661</sup>

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<sup>656</sup> Feldberg and Glenn, “Technology and Work Degradation,” 60-61.

<sup>657</sup> Jean Tepperman, *Not Servants, Not Machines: Office Workers Speak Out!* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), 46.

<sup>658</sup> Eileen Appelbaum, “The Economics of Technical Progress: Labor Issues Arising from the Spread of Programmable Automation Technologies” Paper presented to the Subgroup on Microelectronics and Work Process, Working Group on Reindustrialization, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, July 27, 1982, in Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), *Automation and the Workplace: Selected Labor, Education, and Training Issues* (Washington D.C., March 1983), 66. Clericals worried that they might not be able to find new positions if they need for clericals were to decrease because of technology. Appelbaum predicted that clerical growth rate would slow considerably, which happened in the 1980s and 90s. Also see Feldberg and Glenn, “Technology and Work Degradation,” 67. Clericals and scholars also wondered how the remaining workers would adapt to automated jobs and who would train them to use the computers. See OTA, “Chapter 3: Education, Training, and Retraining,” in *Automation and the Workplace*, 34-43.

<sup>659</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; “Office Work in America,” a report by Working Women, April 1982. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 147. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass; Feldberg and Glenn, “Technology and Work Degradation,” 59-66.

<sup>660</sup> Tepperman, *Not Servants, Not Machines*, 46.

<sup>661</sup> OTA, *Automation of America’s Offices*, 24. This report warned that automation could undermine the progress that black women had made in white-collar work (they doubled their representation in office work over the span of

Automation negatively affected the health of data-entry clerks in particular, who were also known as keypunchers or VDT operators.<sup>662</sup> In contrast to modern management approaches that sought to fight worker alienation and increase job satisfaction, some employers continued to believe that heavy-handed techniques such as speed-ups and scientific management practices would benefit their bottom lines. These more traditional strategies, which industrialists had developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century for factory work, had been applied to clerical labor for decades.<sup>663</sup> As late as the early 1960s, management literature detailed time motion studies for practically every clerical movement from chair activity (getting up should take .033 minutes and turning in a swivel chair .009 minutes) to “jogging” or aligning a stack of papers (first jog should take .006 minutes, second jog .009 minutes; pat following jog should take .004 minutes, but a pat following a pat should take .007 minutes).<sup>664</sup> With automation, measuring clerical performance was easier and more precise. Many clerks had to type a certain number of words per minute while keeping their errors infrequent: their computers measured speed and accuracy, sending daily reports to their supervisors.<sup>665</sup>

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1960 to 1980) because automated jobs were susceptible to being eliminated. Young workers and minority workers would be most likely to become unemployed. See OTA, *Automation of American's Offices*, 77.

<sup>662</sup> In the 1970s more progressive employers began fighting low productivity by acknowledging that the problems of worker alienation called for more respectful treatment of employees. For instance, following the Lordstown strike, General Motors and the United Auto Workers established a national Committee to Improve the Quality of Work Life in 1973. A vice president of GM wrote that quality of work life is many things including “developing among all members of an organization an awareness and understanding of the concerns and needs of others, and a willingness to be more responsive to those concerns and needs.” Stephen H. Fuller, “How Quality-of-Worklife Projects Work for General Motors,” 103 *Monthly Labor Review* (July 1980), 37.

<sup>663</sup> See Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 112-121, 304-348. For the early application of scientific management in the office see Lee Galloway, *Office Management: Its Principles and Practice* (New York, 1918) and William Henry Leffingwell, *Scientific Office Management* (New York, Chicago, London, 1917).

<sup>664</sup> Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, 319-326. Braverman relies on the following management literature: Systems and Procedures Association of America, *A Guide to Office Clerical Time Standards: A Compilation of Standard Data Used by Large American Companies* (Detroit, 1960); Richard J. Morrison, Robert E. Nolan, and James S. Devlin, *Work Measurement in Machine Accounting* (New York, 1963).

<sup>665</sup> Jeanne Stellman and Mary Sue Henifin, *Office Work Can Be Dangerous to your Health: A Handbook of Office Health and Safety Hazards and What You Can Do About Them* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1983), 79-80.

Given the seemingly negative influence that new technology was having on the jobs of female office workers, 9to5, the National Association of Working Women, launched a prominent campaign to study and influence the course of office automation. This national campaign, Project Health and Safety, developed in part from the organization's interest in the problems emerging from office automation.<sup>666</sup> The 9to5 women who were most interested in these issues took on several projects over the decade including two large-scale surveys, both of which showed that clerical workers suffered from unusually high rates of job stress that affected their mental and physical health.<sup>667</sup> Furthermore, the organization sponsored an international conference on office work and technology in 1982, instituted a national hotline to collect information from VDT operators on their health problems, lobbied for protective legislation regarding VDT use, and compiled a consumer's guide to ergonomic features of VDTs.<sup>668</sup> As

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<sup>666</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986, Working Women, "Race Against Time: Analysis of the Trends in Office Automation and the Impact on the Office Workforce," Cleveland, 1980, 88-M96--89-M104, Carton 5, folder 154, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.. This report was the first in the U.S. to describe automation problems from the viewpoint of the nation's women office workers. Also see 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Judith Gregory, "The Human Factor in Innovation and Productivity," Hearings by the Science, Research, and Technology Subcommittee of the House Committee on Science and Technology, September 18, 1981. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 154. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>667</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Working Women Education Fund, "WARNING: Health Hazards for Office Workers," April 1981, page 47. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 165. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Page 48 of this report contains a table showing that low pay and lack of promotions were also common sources of stress among bank and insurance workers. Other studies that support these connections are in folder 150. The second 9to5 survey was conducted in 1984 and specifically investigated job stress. See 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Press Release: National Secretary's Day Message for Clerical Workers: Action Best Remedy for Stress, According to National Survey on Women, Work, and Stress, April 25, 1984. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 79. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>668</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Working Women Education Fund, International Conference on Office Work & New Technology, Tentative Agenda, October 20, 1982. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 163. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5 Campaign on VDT Risks: Analysis of VDT Operator Questionnaires of VDT Hotline Callers, February 1984. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 164. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. In one month alone, the 9to5 hotline received 3000 calls about burning eyes or problems with vision. Also see Kathy Chin, "VDT Users Negatively Eye Study's Finding," *InfoWord*, August 1, 1983, p.5. The VDT bills and consumers' guide will be discussed and referenced later in the paper.

9to5 founder Karen Nussbaum stated, the organization's campaign sought to make office automation into a public debate, instead of an issue discussed among experts only.<sup>669</sup>

The rise of VDTs as standard office equipment coincided with the creation and development of a federal organization designed to regulate worker safety. Congress created the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in 1970 as a Department of Labor agency that would monitor both private and public workplaces. Its mission has been to prevent work-related injuries, illnesses, and occupational fatalities by issuing and enforcing standards for workplace health and safety. Congress also formed the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to gather data, research workplace issues, and suggest recommendations for occupational health and safety.<sup>670</sup> Labor interests have long complained that OSHA represented “a toothless tiger” or a “stillborn” on the part of the Nixon Administration and legislators. NIOSH itself was underfunded and had limited resources to conduct research, particularly on non-fatal issues facing office workers. Furthermore, when the law was passed in 1970, the maximum penalty for OSHA violations was \$1,000, which posed only a light burden on most businesses.<sup>671</sup>

Although scholars, labor leaders, and some policymakers have criticized the design and implementation of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, its passage did contribute to the clerical workers' cause. NIOSH began devoting some resources to studying the negative physical and mental effects of routinized white-collar labor, which later became recognized as

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<sup>669</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; “9to5 President Raps Office Automation, Says it Deskills, Devalues Office Jobs,” *Computerworld*, May 3, 1982. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 167. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>670</sup> “The National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH),” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed May 5, 2011, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/about.html>.

<sup>671</sup> Kitty Calavita, “The Demise of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration: A Case Study in Symbolic Action,” *Social Problems* 30, no. 4 (April 1983): 439-440; David Weil, “If OSHA is so bad, why is compliance so good?” *RAND Journal of Economics* 27, no. 3, (Autumn 1996): 618. Also the following article suggests that OSHA could benefit from congressional restructuring of the agency: Sidney A. Shapiro and Thomas O. McGarity, “Reorienting OSHA: Regulatory Alternatives and Legislative Reform,” *Yale Journal on Regulation* 6 (1989).

workplace stress. In the 1970s, before experts took workplace stress seriously, NIOSH produced several studies on stress.<sup>672</sup> Into the 1980s NIOSH continued to investigate stress: one study examined health hazards associated with San Francisco VDT users.<sup>673</sup> The researchers discovered that job design was strongly related to job stress. VDT operators who performed data entry at their machines all day had very high levels of job stress, in part because employers made demands of them and they lacked control over their tasks. NIOSH concluded that monitoring VDT use using speed and accuracy standards not only threatened workers' wellbeing by increasing their stress levels, but also it decreased workers' long-term productivity (meaning over several years).<sup>674</sup> Furthermore, NIOSH studies linked high rates of musculoskeletal problems such as back and neck pain with VDT use.<sup>675</sup> Although NIOSH issued recommendations concerning workstation design, illumination, work regimes, and vision testing, OSHA did not adopt these findings into enforceable standards. Thus, while NIOSH had made important research contributions that 9to5 often cited in its campaign, VDT operators remained unprotected by law.<sup>676</sup>

While NIOSH acted quickly to explore the linkage between VDT use and stress, it delayed investigation into the possible relationship between radiation emitted from VDT

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<sup>672</sup> Lawrence R. Murphy, "Job Stress Research at NIOSH: 1972-2002" in Pamela L. Perrewe and Daniel C. Ganster, editors, *Historical and Current Perspectives on Stress and Health* (Oxford: Elsevier Science, 2002), 4, 22.

<sup>673</sup> Murphy, "Job Stress Research at NIOSH," 28-29.

<sup>674</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Memo to Karen Nussbaum from Judith Gregory re: Recent Research Findings on Productivity, Job Stress and Trends in Office Automation, May 11, 1981. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 150. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>675</sup> Murphy, "Job Stress Research at NIOSH," 28.

<sup>676</sup> OTA, *Automation of America's Offices*, 162. Also on page 162 see footnote 150: Committee on Science and Technology, Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight, Potential Health Effects of VDT Terminals and Radiofrequency Heaters and Sealers, 97<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., May 12-13, 1981; Committee on Education and Labor, Subcommittee on Health and Safety, OSHA Oversight: Video Display Terminals in the Workplace, 98<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 1984. For NIOSH recommendations see 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Statement of J. Donald Millar, M.D. Before the Subcommittee on Health and Safety, Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, May 15, 1984. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 155. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

machines and miscarriage. Nine to Five became concerned about VDTs affecting pregnant women in the early 1980s after clusters of VDT operators from various regions reported pregnancy problems.<sup>677</sup> Although NIOSH told 9to5 in 1982 that it would research the relationship between pregnancy and VDT use, by 1984 it still had not acted. Nine to Five supporters, both men and women, wrote at least forty letters of complaint to NIOSH, demanding an investigation because millions of women of childbearing age worked daily at VDTs.<sup>678</sup> The Director of NIOSH testified before Congress in 1984 that his organization would start a study of pregnant workers although he believed that VDTs were not dangerous as a source of radiation. In his opinion, “the VDT revolution in the workplace [had] produced impressively few problems considering the scope of the technological change.”<sup>679</sup>

Many clerical workers thought otherwise. To achieve government regulation, they employed an approach that emphasized women’s difference from men in an era where most advocates of women’s rights in the workplace emphasized equality. By the early 1970s, nearly all labor unions had abandoned support for protective labor legislation, which sought to shield women from performing heavy lifting on the job and from working beyond ten hours per day

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<sup>677</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Sample letter to Dr. J. Donald Millar, Director of NIOSH from 9to5 supporter, 1984, Box 1, folder 17, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. To view the actual listing of companies and locations, see OTA, *Automation of America’s Offices*, 145. By 1984 ten clusters had been reported, the smallest group consisting of three pregnant workers and the largest being twenty four. See 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Statement of J. Donald Millar, M.D. Before the Subcommittee on Health and Safety, Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, May 15, 1984. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 155. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>678</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Forty-one letters to Dr. J. Donald Millar, Director of NIOSH from 9to5 supporters, 1984. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 155. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>679</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Statement of J. Donald Millar, M.D. before the Subcommittee on Health and Safety, Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, May 15, 1984. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 155. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

because of their allegedly more delicate natures.<sup>680</sup> Organized labor followed the lead of new feminists who argued for full enforcement of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VII promised nearly full workplace equality for men and women as long as state protective laws were nullified.<sup>681</sup> In stark contrast to this equality-as-sameness approach, by the early 1980s, 9to5 turned towards women's biological difference to pursue its goals. Unlike many other women's rights groups, it was willing to argue that the government needed to intervene in the workplace because of women's role as reproducers. In 1984, 9to5 began to publicize adverse pregnancy outcomes at VDT worksites throughout the U.S. and Canada, calling for further NIOSH investigation. In a news conference, Nussbaum acknowledged that no one was sure exactly why women were experiencing miscarriages, stillbirths, and birth defects although she explained that scientists thought that low-level radiation from VDTs could explain the problems.<sup>682</sup>

Nine to Five publicized pregnancy-related VDT problems in an attempt to gain protection for all operators. While calling for investigation into the radiation issues, 9to5 also began campaigns to lobby for state laws to regulate VDT use for all operators in the first half of the 1980s. In Massachusetts for instance, 9to5 leaders helped write the proposed VDT legislation and met with the bill's sponsors to develop strategies to market the bill and present it on the

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<sup>680</sup> While some protective labor laws could benefit women workers by mandating rest breaks, many limited their earning capacity and kept labor markets sex segregated. Banning women from working overtime or from working jobs requiring heavy lifting often meant hindering them from more lucrative opportunities. Susan Lehrer, *Origins of Protective Labor Legislation for Women, 1905-1925* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).

<sup>681</sup> Even when seeking to secure maternity leave, feminists argued that pregnancy should be treated as a gender-neutral, temporary disability. *Legislative History of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978*, Prepared for the Committee on Labor and Human Resources of the United States Senate (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1979); Susan Gluck Mezey, *In Pursuit of Equality: Women, Public Policy, and the Federal Courts* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992); Joyce Gelb and Marian Lief Palley, *Women and Public Policies: Reassessing Gender Politics*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996); Herma Hill Kay, "Equality and Difference: The Case of Pregnancy," *Berkeley Women's Law Journal* 1 (1985), 1-38; Lise Vogel, *Mothers on the Job: Maternity Policy in the U.S. Workplace* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993).

<sup>682</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Janice C. Blood, Press Release, "9to5 Discovers Possible New Adverse Pregnancy 'Cluster' at VDT Worksite," February 16, 1984. 88-M96-89-M104, folder 164. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.



House and Senate floor.<sup>683</sup> This proposed VDT law provided several protections to workers: advance notice of automation to affected employees; adjustable chairs, terminal tables and keyboards; breaks from VDT use; proper lighting, temperature and noise controls; alternate employment for pregnant operators, and employer-paid eye exams.<sup>684</sup> Yet the Massachusetts bill, like many other state bills through the 1980s, failed to pass in such a stringent form.<sup>685</sup> Some states were able to pass watered-down versions. Seven states and the District of Columbia adopted advisory guidelines, usually applicable to public employees.<sup>686</sup> And Maine, Connecticut and Rhode Island passed laws calling for further study on the health and safety effects of VDTs but did not require onsite protection of workers.<sup>687</sup> The first bill to pass containing 9to5's recommendations for protecting VDT operators was a local ordinance in Suffolk County, New York in 1988. The vote was close, as local corporations lobbied strongly against the bill, worried that the measures would prove too costly and deter future business growth. However, the testimony about the studies linking miscarriages and VDT use helped the bill pass. Said one Republican: "That was the real clincher for me. Would you gamble with your child?"<sup>688</sup>

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<sup>683</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Letter to Representative Elizabeth Metayer from 9to5 Automation Committee, March 13, 1983. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 169. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>684</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Fact Sheet: H. 4537, 1984. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 169. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. The proposed bill provided for enforcement guidelines and an advisory committee to oversee the creation of needed standard. Folder 169 also contains a poor quality photocopy of a version of the Massachusetts bill.

<sup>685</sup> Loren Stein, "Coalition Fights VDT Legislation," *InfoWorld*, September 17, 1984, 48.

<sup>686</sup> "New Jersey Issues Cautions on VDT Use" *New York Times*, November 30, 1989.

<sup>687</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5 Summary of Safety Legislation for VDT Operators, September 2, 1984. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 169. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. In Maine for instance, the resolution called for data collection using state and other public employees to determine if protective standards were necessary. See 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Letter to The Guild Reporter from Representative Edie Beaulieu, June 1, 1983. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 169. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Helena F. Rodrigues, "The Ergonomic Impact of Technology on Libraries," Johnson & Wales Universities Libraries, accessed May 5, 2011, <http://web.simmons.edu/~chen/nit/NIT%2793/93-313-rodri.html>.

<sup>688</sup> Christine Gorman, Elaine Lafferty, and Janice C. Simpson, "All Eyes on the VDT," *Time*, June 27, 1988, accessed May 5, 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,967753-1,00.html>.

The Suffolk County VDT law highlighted the debate surrounding the issue of regulating VDTs. While labor organizations like 9to5, the Service Employees International Union, the Newspaper Guild and the Communication Workers of America were in favor of protection, employers and VDT manufacturers formed alliances to campaign against the bills.<sup>689</sup> Representative Tom Hayden, sponsor of a bill in California called the opposition from manufacturers and employers “extremely heavy.”<sup>690</sup> Even in Maine, where the bill under consideration was calling for further study only, employers and manufacturers tried to stop the bill. According to the Maine State House of Representatives Chair of the Labor Committee: “As usual, New England Telephone, Associated Industries of Maine, and the state’s largest insurance company Union Mutual violently opposed the bill and conducted intense lobbying against this simple measure.”<sup>691</sup> Twenty-two national trade associations such as the American Bankers Association and the American Insurance Association formed a lobbying organization, the Coalition for Workplace Technology, to block proposed state bills. This group, created by the Computer Business Equipment Manufacturers Association, helped defeat a number of state bills in 1984 by presenting studies from scientists who claimed that individuals could remedy the discomfort themselves by blinking frequently to prevent eye strain.<sup>692</sup>

Nine to Five and its allies were fighting an uphill battle against powerful interests including leading technology, communication, insurance, and finance firms. Yet while pursuing its legislative agenda, 9to5 also was working on a consumer’s guide to VDTs. This report would

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<sup>689</sup> While these organizations are mentioned in numerous articles about VDT safety, they are all cited in Cotton Timberlake, “Expectant mothers face hard choices as VDT safety debate continues” *Houston Chronicle*, April 25, 1986.

<sup>690</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; David Tong, “Committee OKs Watered-Down VDT Measure,” *Oakland Tribune*, June 8, 1984. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 169. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>691</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Letter to The Guild Reporter from Representative Edie Beaulieu, June 1, 1983. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 169. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>692</sup> Loren Stein, “Coalition Fights VDT Legislation,” *InfoWorld*, Sept 17, 1984, 47-49.

not change the monotonous tasks expected of VDT operators or provide them with rest breaks or eye exams, but it would position various manufacturers against one another by highlighting a machine's ergonomic design. The general public largely was unaware of ergonomics, or how people and machines could achieve a best fit for safety and comfort in the workplace. However, 9to5 saw an opportunity to encourage manufacturers to prioritize ergonomics in an economic sector that was growing and becoming increasingly competitive. Production and sales of automated office equipment was expected to increase at a 500 percent rate from 1978 to 1984, and in 1980 such equipment netted \$4 billion in revenues.<sup>693</sup>

These clericals hoped to use their status as VDT users to influence product design. Knowing that VDT manufacturers cared deeply about capturing the market of users, particularly given the predicted rate of growth, 9to5 launched what it called an Office Machine Design Project to review VDTs based on features important to workers. Therefore, 9to5 decided that it would allow workers to evaluate the machines instead of having scientists review them. The women hoped that they could convince some employers to adopt what they considered to be the best machines.<sup>694</sup> Nine to Five wrote letters to several manufacturers in the Boston area explaining the project, requesting to meet with a company representative, and asking for equipment that could be used for testing.<sup>695</sup> Although most of these manufacturers were very

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<sup>693</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Judith Gregory, Testimony for 9to5, New Technology in the American Workplace, Hearings by the Subcommittee on Education and Labor, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor, June 23, 1982. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 154. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>694</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Memo to Joan Quinlan, Elaine Taber, Judy Gregory from Ellen Cassidy re: Coordination of Office Machine Design Project, November 9, 1981. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 160. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>695</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Letter to Prime Computer, Inc. from Diane Berry, Chairwoman of 9to5 Health and Safety Committee, January 14, 1982. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 160. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. The following manufacturers received letters from 9to5: Prime Computer, Lanier Business Products, Texas Instruments, Xerox Corporation, Wang Laboratories, Digital Equipment Corporation, Inforex Corporation, Data General Corporation, Raytheon Data Systems, and I.B.M. Corporation. See 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.)

critical of 9to5's proposed VDT bills, they were quite hospitable to 9to5's request to test their products. Some representatives had extensive knowledge of ergonomic issues: a representative from Phillips had been to a 9to5 office automation meeting, evidencing the importance of user preferences to machine design. Two women from I.B.M were "very proud of their equipment [and declared that] all [had] been studied by human factors people." Others admitted they knew nothing of health and safety issues regarding their machines. One even requested a copy of NIOSH's health and safety recommendations, demonstrating prior ignorance but an interest in considering 9to5's issues.<sup>696</sup> Prime Computer seemed eager to learn from 9to5 and wanted to discuss what features clericals would ask for in future products. Digital Equipment, the largest computer company in Massachusetts, was considering the development of corporate guidelines about responsibly introducing new technology into the workplace.<sup>697</sup>

In August 1982 9to5 released its consumer report entitled "The Human Factor," making it the first report of its kind to examine VDTs from a workers' point of view. The Boston 9to5 women had evaluated machines from ten different manufacturers and they found significant differences among the machines.<sup>698</sup> The four-page brochure presented the details of each machine using a large chart to show if the screen tilted or had glare, if the keyboard was detachable, the character size, and if the hardware had metal casing (which 9to5 believed would reduce radiation emissions and pose a lesser threat to pregnant workers). Although 9to5 did not

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Additional records, 1972-1986; Letters to various companies from Diane Berry, Chairwoman of 9to5 Health and Safety Committee, February 3 or 8, 1982. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 160. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>696</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Thoughts on recent visits to view office machines, March and April 1982. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 160. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>697</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Memo to Karen and Nancy S. from Judi re: Trip east to meet with computer company people, December 10, 1982. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 162. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>698</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Press Release: 9to5 Releases Buyers Guide to Word Processors, August 12, 1982. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 164. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

endorse a particular machine, it did provide a list of recommended features that correlated to the criteria listed on the chart.<sup>699</sup>

The various projects of the 9to5 health and safety campaign encouraged companies to move away from the strategies of scientific management and focus instead on ameliorating undue job stress in positions such as VDT keypunching. Such strain was leading to health problems and worker dissatisfaction, which increased absentee and turnover rates. By the second half of the 1980s, reports of carpal tunnel syndrome were increasing rapidly, and executives realized that this repetitive stress injury was physically debilitating to the worker and thus economically problematic to the employer. Furthermore, although clerical work never had high rates of unionization, some managers worried that job dissatisfaction would lead workers to join organizations that were targeting low paid, white-collar workers.<sup>700</sup>

Most employers and manufacturers strongly disliked government intervention but they realized the benefits of meeting some of the demands of organizations like 9to5. A lobbyist for business interests claimed that no evidence existed that VDT use was unsafe. Rather, employees and employers should work together to achieve a pleasant working environment: “The only real danger here is that the terminal might fall on your foot. All of the things they're talking about are comfort concerns. They're trying to mandate employee relations. What if my office chair isn't comfortable? Do I get the Legislature to pass a bill?”<sup>701</sup> A National Association of Manufacturers' (NAM) task force reported that because of the number of VDT bills pending in

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<sup>699</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; “The Human Factor: 9to5's Consumer Guide to Word Processors,” 1982. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 164. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. By using fifteen different criteria, 9to5 rated the most recent models of the manufacturers, noting that many clericals would most likely not be using the models that were rated.

<sup>700</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Articles from the American Bankers Association and American Banker about preventing employee turnover and unionization, 1980-1981. 88-M96--89-M104, folder 129. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>701</sup> Micky Baca, “Revived VDT Bill Sparks Debate Over Office Conditions,” *New Hampshire Business Review* 9, no. 35 (January 29, 1988).

state legislatures, employers should proactively offer solutions to worker discomfort. The task force chairman warned those attending a NAM convention to provide an ergonomically comfortable environment as well as to offer rest breaks or “face mandates from state legislatures that would require impractical solutions.”<sup>702</sup> By 1989, several companies including Federal Express and Aetna Insurance were preemptively designing more comfortable workstations. These companies believed that yielding to some worker demands would improve employee morale, increase productivity and help their corporation avoid costly labor and legal entanglements.<sup>703</sup>

#### Monitoring the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Nine to Five women primarily used their position as users of technology to achieve more comfortable VDT workstations. OSHA and other state remedies contributed marginally to 9to5's efforts to combat the negative effects of office automation. Similarly, 9to5 had little success working through the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), particularly relative to some other groups of sex-segregated women workers.<sup>704</sup> Although recent work argues that the EEOC in fact did prioritize sex-based employment discrimination in its beginning years of operation in the late 1960s, conventional scholarship claims that women initially had trouble accessing the agency. The National Organization for Women (NOW) originally was founded in

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<sup>702</sup> Donald Coleman, “NAM Urges Employers to Take VDT Actions,” *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, September 12, 1984, A-21.

<sup>703</sup> Laurie Flynn, “Computeritis: Who’s Responsible When PCs Make Employees Sick?” *InfoWorld*, May 1, 1989, 54.

<sup>704</sup> For instance, many unionized stewardesses successfully overturned age, weight, and marriage restrictions in their industry using the EEOC and the court system in the late 1960s. Kathleen M. Barry, *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

1966 to enforce the sex clause of Title VII, aiming to push the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to investigate cases of gender discrimination.<sup>705</sup>

Because the EEOC initially lacked enforcement mechanisms, its rulings had to be litigated in court to become mandatory workplace regulations. By the 1970s, however, EEOC guidelines became comparable to law. Court decisions had given the agency influence over an increasingly vast area of workplace concern.<sup>706</sup> In the late 70s, 9to5 began to lobby the EEOC, protesting its procedures and priorities. While Title VII gave the EEOC the authority to combat both individual and systemic discrimination, the EEOC had long favored individual claims, which could be resolved and enforced more easily with less hostility from employers. Nine to Five, however, believed that the EEOC could have a more transformative role if it would concentrate its efforts on systemic claims, which would reach a large number of women who were not involved in its organization. These disparate priorities became more pronounced in the late 1970s as the Commission, led by Eleanor Holmes Norton, sacrificed the pursuit of systemic claims to change certain practices within its organization. Nine to Five responded by mounting a formal campaign, demonstrating that the EEOC's agenda had marginalized the clerical workers' conception of fair and appropriate state remedies for discrimination.

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<sup>705</sup> Katherine Turk, "'The Problem is Not One that Can or Should be Legislated': Sexual Harassment Doctrine, Gender and Workplace Culture, 1964-1991," Paper presented at the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, January 6, 2012. Although Turk's new work claims that women accessed the agency early, most accounts claim that the EEOC did not prioritize sex-based claims. It faced an incredible backlog of cases and it saw itself as directed by Congress to address racial discrimination primarily. For an account of the CRA of 1964 legislative history with respect to the sex clause, see Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), Leo Kanowitz, *Women and the Law: The Unfinished Revolution* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), and Hugh Davis Graham, *The Civil Rights Era: Origins and Development of National Policy, 1960-1972* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). However, some sex-based distinctions remained legal. Section 703(e) states: it shall not be an unlawful employment practice for an employer to hire and employ employees ... on the basis of his religion, sex, or national origin in those certain instances where religion, sex, or national origin is a bona fide occupational qualification reasonably necessary to the normal operation of that particular business or enterprise.

<sup>706</sup> In 1972 federal law gave the EEOC the authority to initiate proceedings in federal court to enforce Title VII so that its guidelines were comparable to law. Also the 1972 amendments expanded the EEOC's power by making public employers as well as private ones subject to its laws. See Bureau of National Affairs, *The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972*, Washington D.C., 1973, 1-4, 46.

When President Carter took office in 1977, he initiated significant changes in civil rights policy.<sup>707</sup> Carter strengthened the EEOC, increasing the Commission budget by an unprecedented \$21 million.<sup>708</sup> And he chose civil rights proponent Eleanor Holmes Norton to lead the Commission. This African-American attorney had roots in the civil rights movement and in the women's movement, as well as experience as head of the New York City Commission on Human Rights from 1970 to 1977.<sup>709</sup> She had built her career by fighting for equity and justice, and by seeking redress for discrimination through government channels. Norton proved to have a positive influence on many aspects of sex-based employment discrimination. Under her tenure, the Commission defined sexual harassment as a legal category in violation of Title VII. Although sexual harassment has existed since women have worked alongside men, during the second half of the 1970s, women in varying occupations started speaking out about the issue and organizing themselves, particularly in New York and Massachusetts.<sup>710</sup> Norton, who had advised the New York organization on sexual harassment, led the Commission to respond quickly to these grassroots efforts.<sup>711</sup> By the fall of 1980 the EEOC had secured final guidelines

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<sup>707</sup> Carter created the Civil Rights Reorganization Task Force upon entering office, and its recommendations for restructuring federal employment discrimination became Reorganization Plan Number One. Hanes Walton, Jr., *When the Marching Stopped: The Politics of Civil Rights Regulatory Agencies* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), 10.

<sup>708</sup> Elected officials shaped the EEOC in significant ways, proving that politics influences EEOC policy. The strength or the weakness of the Commission, along with its efficiency, its resolve, and its visibility, depends largely on the political party in power, according to one political scientist. The President, and Congresspersons to a lesser extent, have had influence over the budget, the appointments, and the staffing of the Commission. B. Dan Wood, "Does Politics Make a Difference at the EEOC?" *American Journal of Political Science* 34, No. 2 (May 1990), 503-530 (Budgets on page 511). Furthermore, the Carter Reorganization Plan Number One gave the EEOC authority over the Equal Pay Act and age discrimination. See 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Basic Components of Reorganization Plan #1, n.d., 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 25. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>709</sup> Nancy MacLean, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), 143-144.

<sup>710</sup> Eventually two associations formed, one in Ithaca, NY called Working Women United (that eventually moved to New York City and became known as the Working Women's Institute), and another one in Cambridge, MA called the Alliance Against Sexual Coercion. Carrie N. Baker, *The Women's Movement Against Sexual Harassment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>711</sup> Baker, *The Women's Movement Against Sexual Harassment*, 34.



on sexual harassment that promised to give working women more power in legal battles against employers.

The EEOC also initiated procedural changes that affected the claims process. First, Norton decided to separate individual and systemic charges, believing that a claim concerning a single person required treatment different from a class claim concerning a group of similarly situated persons. To prevent further backlog, individual charges would undergo “rapid charge processing,” a new procedure that Norton hoped would move the parties closer to settlement much faster. This type of processing could declare no fault on either party but still give some award to the initial complainant. Furthermore, Norton created a “backlog processing system” that encouraged early settlement of cases and a consistent push to reduce the extant backlog.<sup>712</sup>

These innovative reforms brought the EEOC success in the late 1970s and earned Norton acclaim as one of the best, if not the best, leader of the Commission to date. Her record supported this praise: Norton began her term with 130,000 backlogged cases while resolving 115 cases for every 100 received. Also during her term, the processing time of individual cases decreased from two years to six months. Settlements, meaning cases resolved without litigation that gave the complainant a benefit, reached 30 percent, the highest level thus far in Commission history.<sup>713</sup> Norton boasted that by using rapid charge processing as her model, offices could more quickly distinguish appropriate Title VII complaints from problems that should be referred elsewhere. New intake procedures and face-to-face fact-finding phases constructively reduced

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<sup>712</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Model for Improved Charge Processing in Selected EEOC Field Offices; New Field Structure; Testimony of Kathleen Blunt, Women Employed before the House Subcommittee on Equal Opportunities, November 29, 1978, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 25. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Furthermore, Norton altered the field structure and internal functions of the Commission offices. At the lowest level, the area offices would offer intake and fact-finding services and some investigative capacity to the parties. District offices would now offer all services including the ability to handle individual and systemic charges, as well as the means to investigate and litigate cases. Norton tagged three of these district offices as model offices so that she could test the Commission’s new claims processes.

<sup>713</sup> B. Dan Wood, “Does Politics Make a Difference at the EEOC?” 519-522.

the Commission's intake by 38 percent during 1978.<sup>714</sup> Clearly this quantitative data, as well as Norton's addition of sexual harassment to the list of Title VII prohibitions, established her as important in the Commission's history as well as pivotal in the lives of many working women in the late 1970s and beyond.

Yet not all working women were celebrating the tenure of Eleanor Holmes Norton. Dissenting voices from 9to5 had a number of complaints with her initiatives. These clerical workers thought that the new EEOC procedures, which sought to make the Commission more efficient, actually chipped away at the rights of charging parties. Norton's revamping of EEOC procedures clearly was reducing the backlog; however, according to 9to5, it proved cursory, lacked thoroughness, and forced inequitable settlements for individual claims. Furthermore, because the Commission was concentrating on its backlog and on rapid processing, it could not devote ample resources to claims of systemic discrimination. Nine to Five believed that one of its best strategies to gain promotions, benefits, and higher pay for clericals was to initiate class claims against large corporations that employed women disproportionately in the lowest paying jobs. But the office workers thought that her approach disadvantaged "pattern or practice," or systemic claims, which meant that the EEOC was not transforming the structural hierarchies that plagued clerical work.<sup>715</sup> While clerical workers faced both individual and systemic discrimination, 9to5 wanted to make sure that its legal tactics targeted pattern or practice discrimination in order to benefit the greatest number of workers, including those not directly involved in bringing forward specific charges.

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<sup>714</sup> Statistic is representative of an 18-week period in 1978. Eleanor Holmes Norton, "Reform at the EEOC," *The Personnel Administrator* (June 1978), 25.

<sup>715</sup> "Pattern and practice" comes from Section 707 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The original text gives the U.S. Attorney General the authority to investigate pattern and practice discrimination. And the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 extends much of that investigative authority to the EEOC. Subsection (e) of 707 states: the Commission shall have authority to investigate and act on a charge of a pattern or practice of discrimination, whether filed by or on behalf of a person claiming to be aggrieved or by a member of the Commission.

Nine to Five affiliates led a campaign to supervise the EEOC's activities during Norton's tenure.<sup>716</sup> The EEOC Monitoring Campaign, initiated in 1978 by the Legal Rights Committee of the 9to5 Boston office, had two goals: to safeguard the charging party's rights and to shift attention towards systemic discrimination. This six-month campaign had goals and timetables, which included publicizing its cause to other women's and civil rights groups, polling charging parties about the new intake procedures, and lobbying local EEOC directors for their support. Also 9to5 affiliates were to obtain data from their local EEOC directors regarding backlogs, current claims, and settlement terms. From the information acquired, 9to5 planned to offer recommendations to the national Commission on how to improve EEOC procedures.<sup>717</sup>

In particular, the Monitoring Campaign emphasized the great potential of systemic claims, noting that the Norton Commission was failing to devote sufficient resources to this type of discrimination. Women of Boston 9to5 lobbied their local EEOC branch to review the banking and insurance industries for instances of pattern and practice sex discrimination since so many lower-paid women worked in those offices.<sup>718</sup> The San Francisco affiliate, Women Organized for Employment, joined Boston 9to5 in pushing for greater EEOC instigation of and attention to class claims.<sup>719</sup> Chicago's Women Employed complained that by separating individual and systemic claims, "systemic work was all but eliminated in the crush of

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<sup>716</sup> In theory the EEOC stood behind systemic discrimination and maintained that it wanted to devote equal resources to systemic and individual claims. Norton stated that "pattern and practice cases are a much more effective and cost-saving way" to fight discrimination and that her Commission was going to devote more resources to systemic claims. Norton, "Reform at the EEOC," 23.

<sup>717</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Monitoring the EEOC, page A, n.d. [1979], 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>718</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Recommendations to EEOC, n.d. [1979], 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 23. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>719</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Letter from Elaine Taber, Chair, 9to5 Legal Rights Committee, to Everett Ware, Director, Boston EEOC, June 18, 1979, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 24; Letter from Regina Marchione, Member, Women Organized for Employment, to Frank Quinn, Director, San Francisco EEOC, March 26, 1979, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 23. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

backlogged cases.”<sup>720</sup> The 9to5 affiliates had specific recommendations for improving systemic processing. Women Employed of Chicago wanted more staffpersons devoted to class actions as backlogs decreased. The 9to5 affiliates wanted more involvement in the construction of class action claims.<sup>721</sup> And Women Employed wanted the EEOC to authorize interest groups such as 9to5 to be able to initiate systemic claims on behalf of disadvantaged persons.<sup>722</sup> Furthermore, 9to5 disliked the fact that intake workers were discouraging systemic claims. When two 9to5 women went to their local EEOC to file a class action, the Commission staff encouraged them to submit complaints as individuals.<sup>723</sup>

Besides disputing the inattention given to systemic discrimination, the Monitoring Campaign also protested the Commission’s rapid charge processing—a system that attempted quickly to distinguish appropriate complainants and turn away all others. Nine to Five believed that the Commission might reject complicated charges too soon or that it might draft the specific charge too early in the process. An early drafting could preempt multiple claims of

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<sup>720</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Testimony of Kathleen Blunt, Women Employed, November 29, 1978, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 25. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. The Systemic Charge Processing System created by Norton was supposed to use new computer technology to identify companies with low minority and female representation. Then the Commission itself was supposed to initiate complaints against the discriminatory companies. Norton proposed that each EEOC district office would have personnel that could manage systemic claims. Norton, “Reform at the EEOC,” 21.

<sup>721</sup> Besides the Chicago affiliate, the San Francisco affiliate, for instance, wanted an EEOC that would work alongside worker associations like itself, envisioning dual control over the construction of systemic claims. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980, Letter from Regina Marchione, Member, Women Organized for Employment, to Frank Quinn, Director, San Francisco EEOC, March 26, 1979, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 23. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>722</sup> Instead of allowing only the EEOC to initiate complaints against systemic discrimination, Women Employed believed that it was the “best source for class action, systemic-type charges” since female office workers, whom it saw as a disempowered group of laborers, constituted its membership. Yet case law in the late 1970s, in Chicago at least, did not permit interest groups to file Commission charges as the complainants. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Testimony of Kathleen Blunt, Women Employed, November 29, 1978, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 25. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>723</sup> “What’s Wrong with the New EEOC?” *ACLU Women’s Rights Report*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer 1979, Carton 17, folder 1069.

discrimination against an employer or the pursuit of a class action charge.<sup>724</sup> In addition, Norton's revisions encouraged parties to reach a "no-fault settlement" in order to resolve cases more swiftly. Yet Boston 9to5 maintained that these agreements could leave the charging party with a smaller award than she would have received if she had pushed the case through the entire system.<sup>725</sup>

As the Monitoring Campaign continued, it took issue with matters of equity and access that predated Norton's term. The office workers recommended that the EEOC provide the complainant with a pamphlet discussing the details of the process since many workers were unfamiliar with the Commission and its regulations. Nine to Five pushed to permit lay persons (advocates who were not necessarily attorneys) in pre-charge and fact-finding sessions. The Commission had determined that each party could only have one attorney present; employers always had attorneys but often the complainant was without counsel.<sup>726</sup> Thus, 9to5 also wanted the Commission to provide complainants with a list of local attorneys who handled employment discrimination cases. If the complainant did not have her own attorney, then 9to5 wanted the EEOC to take affirmative steps to ensure that she would have one present as intake began. Nine to Five also wanted the EEOC to establish an appeals board so that a complainant could have her

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<sup>724</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Monitoring the EEOC, D, D-2, n.d. [1979], 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Women Employed of Chicago had similar concerns about the number of claims filed as individual complaints given that the Commission could have delayed labeling the claim and possibly framed it as a class action that would have more influence. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Testimony of Kathleen Blunt, Women Employed, 11-13, November 29, 1978, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 25. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>725</sup> Furthermore, 9to5 knew that the backlogged cases were most susceptible to no-fault settlement since so many of them existed and since the Commission emphasized decreasing their numbers. Often settling them faster involved reducing class charges to individual ones as well as agreeing to settlements that did not compensate the charging party equitably. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Monitoring the EEOC, D-2, n.d. [1979], 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>726</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Letter from Elaine Taber, Legal Rights Chair to Everett Ware, Director of Boston EEOC, copy to E.H. Norton, June 18, 1979, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 24. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

case reconsidered by the Commission.<sup>727</sup> These recommendations attempted to remedy an imbalance between employee and employer regarding information and resources (both human and monetary). Nine to Five knew that banking executives had access to the highest quality lawyers who knew the minutiae of equal employment law while office workers often did not know how best to present their claims or approach the process.

The Monitoring Campaign successfully voiced its concerns to various government officials. Nine to Five affiliates publicized the campaign and gained the ear of their local EEOC directors.<sup>728</sup> Sometimes the local director did not just listen, but also initiated inquiries on behalf of female office workers. Women Organized for Employment of San Francisco convinced its EEOC director to investigate fifteen insurance companies for systemic discrimination against women.<sup>729</sup> Kathleen Blunt, Associate Director of Chicago's Women Employed, testified before the U.S. House of Representatives in a congressional oversight hearing in November of 1978. Blunt's statement made the complaints, strategies, and demands of the Monitoring Campaign part of the public record. She reviewed the perceived shortcomings of the Commission and then outlined proposed solutions. Blunt also testified that the Commission should combat working women's problems by remaining open to new possibilities. She recommended that Title VII be

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<sup>727</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Recommendations to EEOC, 2, n.d. [1979], 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 23. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Testimony of Kathleen Blunt, Women Employed, 8, November 29, 1978, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 25. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>728</sup> For instance, Boston's 9to5 had at least two meetings with its district director, Everett Ware. In 1978 he listened to their grievances but did not promise to do anything to change Commission practices without first talking to regional directors. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Minutes of Monitoring Campaign meeting, December 18, 1978, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Ware attended another meeting with 9to5 in May 1979, listening to the demands of the Boston 9to5 about the EEOC. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Letter from Elaine Taber, Legal Rights Chair to Everett Ware, Director of Boston EEOC, copy to E.H. Norton, June 18, 1979, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 24. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>729</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Letter from Regina Marchione, Member, Women Organized for Employment, to Frank Quinn, Director, San Francisco EEOC, March 26, 1979, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 23. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

used to achieve pay equity. Since President Carter's Reorganization Plan Number One transferred enforcement of the Equal Pay Act from the Department of Labor to the EEOC in 1977, Blunt called on the Commission to enforce the Act in a manner that would expand the definition of equal pay. Although she commended the Commission for its investigation into job worth and comparable worth, from her perspective the EEOC could help to redefine pay equality as pay equity under the law.<sup>730</sup>

Those in the government willingly listened to the grievances of the 9to5 affiliates; however, 9to5 had difficulty mobilizing other progressive organizations to support their efforts. Avowedly feminist organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) did not prioritize 9to5's procedural criticisms. Perhaps NOW was focused on Norton's accomplishments, particularly her codification of sexual harassment. Boston 9to5, along with its affiliates, seemed to be mounting this campaign against the Commission alone. In a 1979 letter to NOW, even 9to5 co-founder Ellen Cassedy addressed legal strategy in the pending Sears Roebuck and Company suit against the Commission but failed to mention the ongoing Monitoring Campaign.<sup>731</sup>

Besides lacking collaborators on this campaign, 9to5 found that gathering data from the charging parties was more formidable than expected. Nine to Five members were attempting to question current charging parties to assess the influence of the Norton intake procedures on the

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<sup>730</sup> Kathleen Blunt testified on behalf of the Chicago office and the Women's Legal Defense Fund, a Washington D.C. group of feminist attorneys who specialized in sex-based Title VII claims. Blunt acknowledges that the EEOC had started to investigate the matter. It had a contract with the National Academy of Sciences to study the feasibility of using job evaluation systems to address the issue of comparable worth. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Testimony of Kathleen Blunt, Women Employed, 15, November 29, 1978, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 25. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>731</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Letter from Ellen Cassedy, Staff Director of 9to5 to Arlie Scott, NOW Action Center in Washington D.C., March 16, 1979, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 24. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Thus far I have not found much correspondence between 9to5 and other progressive organizations like NOW either specifically concerning the Monitoring Campaign or concerning other matters.

rights of the complainant. The Boston 9to5 Legal Rights Committee created a survey to distribute to the charging party after she went through the EEOC process.<sup>732</sup> This written questionnaire attempted to assess the thoroughness of the new intake procedures. And 9to5 believed that more thorough procedures—not necessarily quicker processing—resulted in more equitable treatment for the complainant. Nine to Five groups had planned to find complainants by contacting Title VII lawyers and congresspersons, by approaching persons leaving EEOC offices, by cooperating with other progressive organizations that used the EEOC, and by partnering with local EEOC directors.<sup>733</sup> However, locating complainants to question proved more formidable than expected because 9to5 affiliates found that their presumed allies, such as local EEOC directors, were unwilling to participate. Boston 9to5 lobbied the Massachusetts Bar Association and advertised on the Boston radio to try to distribute surveys.<sup>734</sup> After about six months of field work, however, the Boston affiliate had just ten surveys.<sup>735</sup>

When 9to5 was still forming its agenda in early 1975, the Steering Committee suggested “the possibility of getting EEOC people to expand guidelines for officeworkers” as a general campaign issue. Instead of aiming to change federal guidelines, 9to5 chose to take on a state-level agency, lobbying the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) to more

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<sup>732</sup> Boston 9to5 disseminated this survey to the other affiliates.

<sup>733</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Monitoring the EEOC, C, C-2, n.d. [1979], 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>734</sup> 9to5 records. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Memo from 9to5 Organization for Women Office Workers to Members of Massachusetts Bar Association, March 6, 1979; Memo: For Release: January 8 through March 31 [1979], 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 25. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>735</sup> Boston 9to5 hoped to get thirty more before presenting its results to the Boston EEOC director. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Memo from Elaine Taber, “Legal Rights Committee Up-Date,” March 9, 1979, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 25. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.



fully enforce its standards.<sup>736</sup> Yet as 9to5 became more established, it insisted that the EEOC institute changes that suited their needs. Sometimes clericals demanded an intake process that would provide workers with access to monetary resources and legal networks that employers enjoyed. At other times 9to5 wanted a Commission that would respond to its tips regarding illegal activities in white-collar workplaces and investigate accordingly. Or it sought to craft a Commission that would allow 9to5 to advance its own class action claims.

While the EEOC did not prioritize the clericals' agenda, as a whole it greatly increased women's status in the workplace. Furthermore, it initiated its own class action claims against giants like AT&T and Sears, both of which involved clerical workers.<sup>737</sup> Still, 9to5 remained dissatisfied with the Commission's record on systemic claims. Nine to Five wanted the EEOC to tackle the banking and insurance industries, where 9to5 perceived the most flagrant and widespread violations of equal employment opportunity law occurring. Equal employment law was having little effect on the wages and conditions of sex-segregated workers in these sectors as seen by the rise of the comparable worth movement in the 1980s.<sup>738</sup> Nine to Five wanted greater

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<sup>736</sup>9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Carol G. Berk, Secretary, 9to5, Report of Steering Committee Meeting, February 18, 1975. 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 6. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>737</sup>Nine to Five rallied in Boston to support the EEOC in its case against Sears. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; 9to5 Legal Rights Committee, petition and rally against Sears, April 7, 1979, 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 24. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. It demanded that Sears drop the suit against the ten government agencies, settle with the EEOC, provide back pay to employees, and adopt an effective affirmative action program. 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Elaine Taber, Chair, 9to5 Legal Rights Committee, Statement at Sears, April 7, 1979. 79-M16--81-M121, Box 5, folder 125. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. For more on the EEOC case against AT&T and Sears, see Marjorie A. Stockford, *The Bellwomen: The Story of the Landmark AT&T Sex Discrimination Case* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, 2004); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall and Sandi E. Cooper, "Women's History Goes to Trial: EEOC v. Sears, Roebuck and Company" *Signs*, Vol. 11, no. 4 (Summer 1986): 751-779.

<sup>738</sup>Leaders of feminist and labor organizations, such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the Coalition for Labor Union Women (CLUW), collaborated to revive pay equity as an issue of national concern for working women in the 1980s. See Linda M. Blum, *Between Feminism and Labor: The Significance of the Comparable Worth Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Dennis A. Deslippe, "Rights Not Roses": *Unions and the Rise of Working-Class Feminism, 1945-1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); 49; Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America*

government attention and more extensive investigations of sex-segregated workplaces. Thus, while the 9to5 Monitoring Campaign may not have transformed the EEOC's practices, it did represent a competing perception of fairness that contrasted with the Norton Commission's choices. With limited resources at its disposal, the EEOC could not tailor its strategies and its procedures to best fit the needs of all workers. Yet clericals—who constituted one third of all working women—were hardly a small faction among the nation's employees. How else could 9to5 try to mitigate the clustering of women in low-paid clerical work if the EEOC was taking little action? The answer could be using affirmative action guidelines.

### A Lost Meaning of Affirmative Action

Another major legal campaign launched by 9to5 contested the way that the federal government was implementing Executive Order 11246, or affirmative action. Relative to Title VII, affirmative action was intended to advance workplace equity not just to prohibit discrimination. President Lyndon B. Johnson had issued Executive Order 11246 in 1965 to ascertain that all companies with federal government contracts would not “discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, creed, color, or national origin [and would] take affirmative action” to ensure that applicants were employed and treated fairly.<sup>739</sup> Executive Order 11375 amended 11246 by adding “sex” to the list of prohibited forms of discrimination in 1967, giving working women access to affirmative action in companies with

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(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Susan M. Hartmann, *The Other Feminists: Activists in the Liberal Establishment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>739</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson, Executive Order 11246, September 28, 1965.

government contracts. The Nixon Administration recommended that these businesses compose goals and timetables (not quotas) for women under Revised Order Number Four.<sup>740</sup>

The specific meaning and practice of affirmative action was in flux throughout the 1970s. While the broad language of Executive Order 11246 seemed to promise extensive intervention for workers at all occupational levels, defining and executing affirmative action would depend on choices, resources, and personalities of corporate, labor, and regulatory leaders. How would companies be monitored? What workplace data would be gathered and measured? And what would constitute compliance? To its advocates, affirmative action was an attempt to further equality and more fully enforce Title VII while conservatives countered that affirmative action fostered reverse discrimination against white men. Just how to apply the executive order produced a number of theoretical and partisan debates including whether numerical quotas should be required and which government agency, the EEOC or the Office of Federal Contract Compliance (OFCC), would be the regulatory body.<sup>741</sup> Yet by the end of the 1970s, competing interests in public and private arenas were settling upon an approach to implementation whereby affirmative action would measure underutilization. Corporate affirmative action plans ultimately benefited demographic minorities—both women and people of color—who had been excluded from certain jobs. Black women, who historically had been prevented from holding white-collar jobs particularly in the private sector, were recruited into the clerical ranks. Yet affirmative action did not mandate mobility for the current clerical labor force. Government and corporate policies emphasized antidiscrimination and underutilization, which meant that affirmative action did not specifically help those who constituted the majority in sex-segregated occupations.

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<sup>740</sup> Hanes Walton, Jr., *When the Marching Stopped: The Politics of Civil Rights Regulatory Agencies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 10. Nancy MacLean, “The Hidden History of Affirmative Action: Working Women’s Struggles in the 1970s and the Gender of Class,” *Feminist Studies* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1999), 57.

<sup>741</sup> Herman Belz, *Equality Transformed: A Quarter-Century of Affirmative Action* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991).

This section will focus on the 9to5 battle to make affirmative action more effective for clerical workers in banks and insurance companies. This sector paid extremely low salaries even though they depended heavily on the work of clerical women. Women constituted 87 percent of the clerical workers in Boston insurance industries, ensuring that daily operations occurred.<sup>742</sup> Yet at these same insurance firms, 58 percent of full-time file clerks made less than 6,200 dollars per year, a salary considered to be around or below the poverty line.<sup>743</sup> Many full-time, finance-sector clericals who served as head of their households were eligible for food stamps and other government subsidies.<sup>744</sup> Economic security and upward mobility were either elusive or nonexistent for these working women. Yearly raises often did not keep up with the costs of living. Furthermore, insurance employers rarely promoted women into higher paying positions.<sup>745</sup>

Karen Nussbaum believed that affirmative action could help with these and other economic hardships. Low-paid office workers perceived affirmative action as having great potential in the fight for equal employment opportunity.<sup>746</sup> Beginning when the organization was founded in 1973, 9to5 waged campaigns to rectify a number of unfair employment practices, calling for job postings, career counseling, salary reviews, promotions, raises, and even pay

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<sup>742</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; 9to5, "Statistical Study of Boston Area Employment," November 1973. 79-M16--81-M121, Box 5, folder 127. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>743</sup> The report gives 6,200 dollars as the official CSA poverty line. 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; "Office Work in Boston: A Statistical Study" n.d. [1978/1979]. 79-M16--81-M121, Box 5, folder 127. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>744</sup> Statement of Karen Nussbaum at Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Women's Action Alliance Records, Box 92, folder 31, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.

<sup>745</sup> 9 to 5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; 9to5, "Claim Against Boston's Insurance Industry: A Study of the Treatment of Women Office Workers in Insurance," September 1974. 79-M16--81-M121, Box 5, folder 127. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>746</sup> MacLean, "The Hidden History of Affirmative Action," 56-57.

equity under the umbrella term of ‘affirmative action.’<sup>747</sup> While she defined affirmative action broadly, Nussbaum also wanted her organization to devote energy and resources to monitoring affirmative action implementation.<sup>748</sup> Nine to Five perceived the clustering of women in low-paid clerical work as a violation of affirmative action guidelines, and it sought the help of the federal government to end the problem.<sup>749</sup> Specifically 9to5 was working to ensure that companies with federal contracts had written goals and timetables, as well as evidence of concrete results, in their affirmative action plans.<sup>750</sup> Focusing on contracts compliance proved fruitful in some instances: workers won internal job posting and written job descriptions from large publishing houses, as well as from banks and insurance companies across the nation.<sup>751</sup>

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<sup>747</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records; Text of speech from Karen Nussbaum, 1976; 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 1, folder 3, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Carton 1, folder 18, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute.

<sup>748</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Text of speech from Karen Nussbaum, 1976; 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 1, folder 3, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Beginning when the organization was founded in 1973, 9to5 called for job postings, career counseling, and salary reviews under the umbrella term of ‘affirmative action.’

<sup>749</sup> It used its own statistical reports to show that women were ushered into and limited to the lowest-paying office jobs in a host of industries: publishing, banking, insurance, education, and the civil service. For a set of many of the 9to5 reports on pay and sex segregation in various industries see 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980, Box 5, folder 127, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>750</sup> The weakness of using the goals and timetables approach for employment discrimination became clear by 1979, if not earlier. Much confusion arose over issues such as the difference between quotas and goals and concerning the manner in which enforcement of affirmative action goals and timetables would occur. The Supreme Court declared in *United Steelworkers of America v. Weber* (1979) that employers could follow voluntary affirmative action plans that gave preference to minority groups. *Weber* was the first decision on affirmative action in private employment because *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), which had ruled against quotas, had concerned a public university. Companies with federal contracts had to submit quantitative data about their workforce for OFCCP to review. If their data did not parallel percentages of women and minorities in the general population, then they had to construct goals and timetables to show a “good faith effort” towards affirmative action. (The “good faith effort” standard comes from Richard Nixon’s Philadelphia Plan of 1969 although many subsequent affirmative action programs adopted it, including Revised Order Number 4 for women.) If the companies did not show that they had constructed any of these policies, then they could lose their federal contract. Alternatively the disadvantaged workers could file a claim with the EEOC under Title VII. According to the 9to5 records, many large insurance, publishing, and banking companies were not showing good faith efforts to remedy workforce inequities through goals and timetables. “What the *Weber* Ruling Does,” *Time*, July 9, 1979.

<sup>751</sup> Publishing activities are discussed in Chapter Three. In publishing houses more so than in other industries, women clerical workers were able to win tangible victories. As was discussed in Chapter Three, a particular committee of 9to5, Women in Publishing (WIP), worked to improve career opportunities for women in the field. Because publishing women cared as much or more about promotional tracts as they did about salaries, what became known as affirmative action guidelines allayed some of their concerns. They wanted notification of internal job openings so that they could increase their mobility; they wanted job descriptions so that they could more clearly

However, affirmative action did not materialize into a remedy for the female-dominated field of office work. And most clerical workers did not tangibly gain from their company's affirmative action policies. Government agencies did not mandate that companies curtail the clustering of women in low-paying, clerical jobs. Managers continued to categorize clerical work as low skilled and distinct from other professional and managerial work. Women who became secretaries remained confined to dead-end positions even though they perceived their work as giving them experience for internal promotions.

Across the country, government officials and interest groups were noticing that pay and promotional problems plagued women's work in the banking industry. In 1972, the former chairman of the EEOC declared that banking was “one of the three worst industries with regard to employment discrimination (along with construction unions and electric and gas utilities).” The Council on Economic Priorities, a New-York based research organization, wrote a 1972 report on the banking industry, emphasizing that as long as current banking practices persisted, women and minorities would continue to be “overwhelmingly concentrated in low-level, poorly paid jobs.” The Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) filed a class-action law suit against twenty-seven Dallas banks in 1971 for several sex-based practices. WEAL claimed that women were fired upon becoming pregnant, promoted less often than male employees, and paid less than men for the same work.<sup>752</sup>

Nine to Five began taking action at the state level in the 1970s to ensure that affirmative action would apply to clericals' problems in the banking industry. Along with the Congressional Black Caucus, 9to5 lobbied Democratic Governor Michael Dukakis to reissue Executive Order

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define promotional opportunities; and they wanted in-house and external training so that they could advance in their careers. For college-educated, white women, like those working in publishing, what became the policies of affirmative action were supposed to facilitate opportunities for upward mobility.

<sup>752</sup> Carol S. Greenwald, *Banks Are Dangerous to Your Wealth* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 8.

74, a 1970 prohibition against racial discrimination in public employment, public schools, public accommodations, and housing.<sup>753</sup> To reinvigorate state mandates for equal employment opportunity, Dukakis issued Executive Order 116, which amended E.O. 74 by adding sex, age, and national origin to the list of protected categories. It also called for further action to remedy past employment discrimination, ordering state agencies to formulate affirmative action plans within 30 days.<sup>754</sup>

In addition to issuing E.O. 116, one of Dukakis' staff appointments in 1975 became a 9to5 ally in the fight against employment discrimination. Carol Greenwald, the Massachusetts Banking Commissioner, took her duty to oversee the industry seriously. She investigated banking employment practices, working tirelessly to ameliorate ongoing sex and race discrimination. Greenwald claimed that the U.S. Department of the Treasury, which was charged with monitoring affirmative action compliance in the banking industry, rarely conducted reviews or forced meaningful action. In fact, in 1974 only 35 people nationwide were charged with enforcing affirmative action in the banking industry. And only 2 percent of all banks were reviewed in 1974.<sup>755</sup> The General Accounting Office (GAO) reported in 1976, "Treasury had not only failed to enforce the law, but had undermined the credibility of all affirmative action

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<sup>753</sup> Francis W. Sargent, Governor, Executive Order No. 74: Governor's Code of Fair Practices, July 20, 1970, <http://www.lawlib.state.ma.us/source/mass/eo/eotext/EO74.txt>. While Dukakis was in office, his administration, in general, "[supported] the goals of 9to5 without reservation," including 9to5's push to allocate more money to the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) during a time when Massachusetts was having budget concerns. See 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1985; Letter from John R. Buckley, Massachusetts State Representative to Fran Cicchetti, 9to5 leader, December 26, 1974. 82-M189-86-M213, Carton 16, folder 1028, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Nine to Five complained that after Governor Dukakis left office and was replaced by a Republican in 1979, MCAD became increasingly understaffed, underfunded, and was led by officials who were only nominally committed to affirmative action. See Affirmative Action in Banking and Insurance—Position Paper, n.d. [1982/1983], 82-M189-86-M213, Carton 16, folder 1033.

<sup>754</sup> Michael Dukakis, Governor, Executive Order No. 116 (Revising and Amending EO 74), May 1, 1975, <http://www.lawlib.state.ma.us/source/mass/eo/eotext/EO116.txt>.

<sup>755</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Text of speech from Karen Nussbaum, 1976. 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 3. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

efforts by its record of nonenforcement.”<sup>756</sup> Inertia at the federal level meant that Greenwald and 9to5 were fighting an uphill battle in Boston-area workplaces.

When 9to5 filed formal charges of sex discrimination against New England Merchants National Bank of Boston in 1976, the U.S. Treasury mismanaged the compliance review. Nine to Five had charged that the bank with denying women access to managerial training programs; forcing women to train men to be their supervisors; and denying women equal pay for comparable work. Treasury officials began to investigate Merchants soon after 9to5 submitted the charges, finding that the bank was not in compliance and was refusing to conciliate. However, no government action was taken against Merchants because Treasury claimed that it lost its own work records when it moved regional offices. The initial stages of the investigation began a second time in 1978 when the OFCCP gained enforcement authority from the Treasury Department. Four years later, the investigation was still in its initial stages. Greenwald perceived the federal government’s delaying tactics as “[undercutting] the credibility of 9to5 as an effective organization.”<sup>757</sup> Nine to Five expressed outrage at the handling of the investigation, declaring that “this case [has been] mismanaged to the point where it is unclear whether the Dep. Of Labor or Merchants is conducting the investigation.”

When complaining to the OFCCP about the investigation, 9to5 pointed to three events that it perceived as inequitable. First, in 1977 when Treasury found that Merchants was not in compliance, Treasury nonetheless continued to grant numerous extensions to Merchants, claiming that it was allowing the bank to decide whether or not it wanted to conciliate. Yet 9to5 claimed that Merchants was not moving towards conciliation; thus, a finding of noncompliance should have been just cause to begin enforcement proceedings. Second, when the OFCCP took

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<sup>756</sup> Carol S. Greenwald, *Banks Are Dangerous to Your Wealth* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 7.

<sup>757</sup> Greenwald, *Banks Are Dangerous to Your Wealth*, 9.



over the case in 1978, Leonard Biermann, OFCCP regional official, allowed Merchants to submit entirely new data. Nine to Five had evidence that Merchants submitted revised records to Biermann. These records claimed that employees had received promotions and raises although the employees themselves were not aware of receiving these benefits. Third, Biermann claimed that he lost the records of the Treasury interviews with Merchants employees; still, he did not conduct new interviews, which meant that the new investigation omitted workers' perspectives.<sup>758</sup> Employees had lost the opportunity to formally contradict Merchants managers' statements.

While 9to5 was outraged over the mishandling of the Merchants investigation, these and other types of dubious practices were occurring routinely, according to Greenwald. For instance, banks engaged in "title inflation" giving women managerial titles with little or no change in job responsibility or salary. This practice allowed employers to reclassify their female employees into higher categories on EEO forms. In compliance reviews of the nation's largest banks, employers reported a 50 percent increase in numbers of managerial women and a corresponding 50 percent decrease in clerical women. Greenwald concluded that such "games make for lots of paper work, but no progress; they are simply means of preserving the status quo, and thus ought to serve as grounds for a finding of noncompliance." Yet the U.S. Treasury rarely took action against banks who manipulated data, which, according to Greenwald, "implicitly condoned" the practice of manipulating or even falsifying facts.<sup>759</sup> Furthermore, Treasury found banks in compliance even if they did not have the required affirmative action data on file. The GAO reported that from 1971 to 1975, Treasury had not once sanctioned a bank for noncompliance. It

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<sup>758</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1985; Letter from Ruth Olds, Banking Chair, 9to5 to Weldon J. Rougeau, Director of OFCCP, December 18, 1979. 82-M189--86-M213, Carton 16, folder 1028. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>759</sup> Greenwald, *Banks Are Dangerous to Your Wealth*, 10-11.

had never removed any federal deposits, which should have been the penalty implemented as a “potent sanction.”<sup>760</sup>

In Massachusetts, Greenwald allied with the NAACP, 9to5, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Anti-Defamation League, and the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) to call for public hearings on the regulation of the banking industry.<sup>761</sup> Greenwald, along with labor and civil rights advocates, conducted studies on affirmative action in 1976 and 1978, charging banks with discriminatory hiring and employment practices. This survey focused not only on numbers of women and minorities in certain job categories but also on whether women and minorities with comparable experience and education were receiving the same pay as were white men.<sup>762</sup> As Greenwald, 9to5, and their allies sought to publicize their findings on the industry’s practices, banking leaders attempted to silence their efforts.<sup>763</sup> The industry claimed that Greenwald’s 1978 report contained personal information about the managers of many financial firms; thus, the Massachusetts Savings Bank Association was able to obtain a court order to limit the report from public distribution. Only the banking commissioner, the attorney general, and the data processing personnel would view it.<sup>764</sup>

Greenwald, 9to5, and their allies expressed dismay at the court order. They believed that the banking industry was trying to hide evidence of its noncompliance and that labor regulators were pawns of the banking industry.<sup>765</sup> Greenwald claimed that initially the OFCCP regional

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<sup>760</sup> Greenwald, *Banks Are Dangerous to Your Wealth*, 17.

<sup>761</sup> Greenwald, *Banks Are Dangerous to Your Wealth*, 15.

<sup>762</sup> Greenwald, *Banks Are Dangerous to Your Wealth*, 20.

<sup>763</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Chronology of Events, n.d. [1979]. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 4, folder 119. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>764</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Anson Smith, “Legislator Wants Look at Bank Study,” *The Boston Globe*, February 9, 1979. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 4, folder 119. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>765</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Anson Smith, “Legislator Wants Look at Bank Study,” *The Boston Globe*, February 9, 1979. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 4, folder 119. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

director seemed concerned about her survey, maintaining that it could help him find discriminatory patterns in the industry. Yet after the court order muzzling the data, he recanted, stating that the report would be “‘of minimal importance to us . . . [and] would not help us target a bank for an affirmative action compliance review.’” What could account for the OFCCP’s changing interest? Greenwald believed that the Massachusetts Savings Bank Association exerted “improper influence” on the Department of Labor and on the OFCCP, leading the regional OFCCP to decide that he should disregard the 1978 findings on bank employment patterns.<sup>766</sup>

Given the unreliability of regulators, Greenwald and 9to5 wanted to make sure that the public could gain access to their data. To overcome the court order, Greenwald omitted specific names from the report and used the Freedom of Information Act to release the survey in January 1979.<sup>767</sup> The survey results confirmed the presence of inequitable pay and discriminatory employment practices in banking.<sup>768</sup> In response to the report, the director of the OFCCP assured 9to5 that his agency was committed to regulating banks and that it had thirteen reviews scheduled in the New England region for 1979.<sup>769</sup> This data, along with the industry’s attempt to silence the findings, further propelled 9to5 to keep a vigilant watch on the banking sector and its regulators alike.

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<sup>766</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Letter from William Proxmire, Chairman of Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee to the Honorable Ray Marshall, Secretary of Labor, January 4, 1979. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 4, folder 119. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>767</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5, Chronology of Events, n.d. [1979]. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 4, folder 119. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>768</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Press release, 9to5’s Claims Substantiated by Greenwald Survey, Contact: Anne Serino, Joan Quinlan, January 3, 1979. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 4, folder 119. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>769</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Letter from Weldon J. Rougeau, Director of OFCCP to Joan Quinlan, 9to5, January 29, 1979. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 4, folder 119. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

During these same years, the first bank strike in Minnesota was capturing considerable national attention.<sup>770</sup> When eight women walked out of a Willmar, Minnesota bank in December 1977, issues that 9to5 had discussed for several years—pay equity, upward mobility, and white-collar unionization, for instance—became discussion points in the mainstream media. Yet the events that occurred in Willmar demonstrated that even if regulators examined clericals' complaints, the law did not provide them with much remedy. Similar to overall industry patterns, sex segregation went hand-in-hand with pay inequity at Citizens National Bank in Willmar. No men worked in teller or clerical positions, jobs which held the least prestige and paid the lowest wages. Only one woman worked among the male-dominated professional class, positions which were considered to require greater skill and thus compensated more lucratively. Female clericals began collective activity in 1976 when bank executives hired a young, inexperienced male for a management position without considering any of the internal female clerical employees. This new hire began earning \$700 a month, which was more than the average \$400 to \$450 per month that most female employees were earning. While the bank president argued that clerical experience did not qualify the women for management positions, the women claimed that not only did they have the requisite skills for the job, but also that they were victims of pay inequity. The president responded, “We’re not all equal, you know.” All female bank employees filed a sex discrimination complaint with the EEOC. In addition, four bookkeepers and four tellers began Willmar Bank Employees Association, Local 1. After trying

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<sup>770</sup> The strike received coverage in major papers such as the New York Times (December 17, 1978), the Wall Street Journal (January 30, 1981), The Washington Post (December 17, 1977; December 17, 1978; June 12, 1978), and the Los Angeles Times (March 26, 1981). Female strikers appeared on the Phil Donahue Show in early 1979.

to negotiate a contract, Local 1 went on strike for two years, continuing to picket during extremely cold Minnesota winters.<sup>771</sup>

Although the strike helped to publicize the problems facing clericals, the Willmar employees gathered only fairly negligible backpay as compensation. The women's disappointment with the outcome reinforced the disparity between clericals' understanding of equal employment law and the way that the state was implementing it. After months passed without action by the EEOC, the National Organization of Women (NOW) offered to help to monitor the claim. Eventually the EEOC negotiated a conciliatory agreement in which the bank would provide \$11,750 in backpay (only about \$1000 to each of eleven complainants). While the bank promised to obey the law in the future, the women forfeited their right to sue the bank in the future or to be immediately reinstated in their past positions. After receiving this lackluster package from the EEOC, the Willmar 8 also experienced mediocre results from union efforts. Although the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) acknowledged that the bank had engaged in a number of unfair labor practices, it issued minimal penalties to the bank. In fact, it denied the women the right to be reinstated to their previous jobs following the end of the strike.<sup>772</sup>

While state and union remedies were failing to help white-collar employees, employers were getting more savvy about personnel practices that could help mitigate workplace conflict. The 1981 documentary "Willmar 8," which appeared nationwide on PBS, chronicled the

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<sup>771</sup> One female officer with twelve years of experience earned \$750 a month. Dorothy Sue Cobble, "Willmar, Minnesota, Bank Strike of 1977-1979" in Ronald L. Filippelli, ed., *Labor Conflict in the United States: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 572. For \$400 a month salary see "8 Women Protest Low Salaries, Begin First Bank Strike in Minn.," *Washington Post*, December 17, 1977. For president's quote, see Bill Peterson, "Women's Strike at Bank: 6-Month Walkout Roils Minnesota Town," *Washington Post*, June 12, 1978.

<sup>772</sup> Dorothy Sue Cobble, "Willmar, Minnesota, Bank Strike of 1977-1979" in Ronald L. Filippelli, ed., *Labor Conflict in the United States: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 571-574.

adversity faced by these women and the confidence they gained when campaigning.<sup>773</sup> Bankers remained anxious about the potential threat of bank unionization even though only 30 of the country's 15,000 banks were unionized in 1981. The American Bankers Association (ABA) warned its members that the industry could be under attack as a result of film's negative portrayal of the Willmar bank management. It showed the documentary to 300 bank personnel directors at its annual conference in 1981. The Washington D.C.-based Bankers Association also showed the film to its members. Many banking personnel directors responded by distancing their bank's procedures from the practices of the Willmar bank's president. The human resource director at Pittsburgh's Equibank claimed that Willmar did not represent "the whole industry and its problems," calling the working conditions "unusual."<sup>774</sup> Even Minnesota bankers turned their backs on the Willmar president, who was soliciting support from other bank presidents for his legal defense fund. Another small-town Minnesota banker claimed that "Leo [the Citizens National Bank president] wouldn't have had a labor problem if he'd treated his people the way I treat mine." He compared bank president Leo Pirsch to Bert Lance, former Office of Management and Budget director who had to resign from the Carter Administration because of financial scandal. The anonymous Minnesota banker continued, "I feel he's like Bert Lance. His bank is giving banking a poor image just like Lance did."<sup>775</sup> Union remedies and state remedies were failing to improve employees' work problems. Yet employers were becoming more willing to offer concessions to their employees. No dramatic wage restructuring was taking place, but many employers claimed they were treating their employees with greater respect.

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<sup>773</sup> Kevin Thomas, "Willmar 8: Women Strike for Rights," *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 1981.

<sup>774</sup> Julie Salamon, "Bankers Flock to See Saga of 'Willmar 8' Before Public Does," *Wall Street Journal*, January 30, 1981.

<sup>775</sup> Bill Peterson, "Women's Strike at Bank: 6-Month Walkout Roils Minnesota Town," *Washington Post*, June 12, 1978.

The bank strike generated intangible gains for the Willmar 8 and for working women across the nation, emphasizing the importance of economic issues to employees during a rights-conscious era when trade unions in general were fighting to retain members.<sup>776</sup> The events that occurred in this small, Midwestern town brought awareness to the issue of the low pay that female banking clericals were facing. These women were far from radical or unreasonable, which made them more appealing to conservatives and progressives alike. They maintained that they were working to supplement their husbands' incomes, which made their status as wage earners seem appropriate for the greater good of the nuclear family. Women who did not consider themselves feminists could demonstrate great resilience when fighting for matters such as fair pay and fair treatment. In fact, one of the strikers claimed she did not know what the term 'feminist' meant when she became a part of the sex-based collective resistance at the bank. As she began to hear the word in association with her actions, she had to look it up in the dictionary.<sup>777</sup> A Willmar resident expressed her surprise that white-collar women went on strike: "Sure, every once in a while those railroad guys go on strike for a couple of days. But a bunch of women? Never. Some people haven't gotten over it yet."<sup>778</sup> The Willmar 8 raised awareness of the issues facing low-paid clerical workers and demonstrated that, anywhere in America, any woman could protest her working conditions. Yet the events in Willmar did not spark a wave of bank strikes throughout the 1980s. As the broad directives of affirmative action narrowed, clericals realized that the state regulation promised little in the way of raises or promotions.

This trajectory for affirmative action held true in the insurance industry as well. While Commissioner Greenwald was monitoring the banking industry and before the Willmar 8 strike,

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<sup>776</sup> Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>777</sup> Kevin Thomas, "'Willmar 8': Women Strike for Rights," *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 1981.

<sup>778</sup> Bill Peterson, "Women's Strike at Bank: 6-Month Walkout Roils Minnesota Town," *Washington Post*, June 12, 1978.

9to5 was lobbying for affirmative action implementation in Boston-area insurance firms. Nine to Five requested that the Massachusetts Insurance Commissioner more vigorously enforce Executive Order 74, claiming that he was dragging his feet and allowing non-compliant insurance companies to continue their practices.<sup>779</sup> In 1975 9to5 held public hearings to expose these discriminatory practices, inviting corporate representatives as well as state and federal lawmakers, including the Insurance Commissioner. As 9to5 presented statistical information about the clustering of women in the lowest-paying positions, Governor Michael Dukakis and the State Secretary of Consumer Affairs were in “total” support of the campaign. Insurance industry representatives, on the other hand, were arguing against several 9to5 recommendations. They contended that posting salaries for job positions was an invasion of privacy for candidates; that setting goals to promote women and minorities constituted reverse discrimination; and that the Insurance Commissioner lacked the authority to enforce certain proposed guidelines on any private industry.<sup>780</sup>

On the federal level, 9to5 also confronted the insurance industry, attempting to use Executive Order 11246 to remedy the crowding of women in the lowest-paid office jobs. Nine to Five investigated the standards for compliance, finding that the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) was responsible for monitoring the insurance industry, and within HEW, the Social Security Administration (SSA) was assigned to conduct reviews.<sup>781</sup>

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<sup>779</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Minutes of Insurance Committee Meeting, October 3, 1973. 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 1, folder 3, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>780</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Report of General Meeting, January 27, 1975. 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 1, folder 6, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Nine to Five sought to convince the Massachusetts Attorney General that he should investigate Boston-area insurance industries much in the same way that he was investigating the publishing industry.

<sup>781</sup> Until 1978 the OFCC only supervised the various agencies that conducted compliance reviews in each industry. Bernard E. Anderson, “The Ebb and Flow of Enforcing Executive Order 11246,” *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 86, no. 2, Papers and Proceedings of the 108<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association, San Francisco, CA, January 5-7, 1996 (May 1996), 299.



Insurance companies with federal contracts were required by executive order to have an affirmative action plan. But only if the SSA decided to review the company did the corporation have to submit its plan. Thus, unless the SSA requested the plan, no one really knew if the company had a plan or if it was effective or substantial. The SSA reviewed companies depending on the time and staff available; or, it might pursue a company if given a reason to investigate.<sup>782</sup> Sometimes companies resisted the review process even if eventually they submitted the necessary information.<sup>783</sup> Such disputes cost the SSA and HEW time and money given their scarce human and financial resources.<sup>784</sup>

Nine to Five believed that the SSA should have more comprehensive data about as many companies as possible throughout the insurance industry. It sent its 1974 report on the condition of women office workers to the SSA, presenting data about low salaries and sex segregation in

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<sup>782</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Letter from Janet Selcer, 9to5 Staff, to Insurance Committee Members, July 30, 1974; Attachment to letter, "Boston Insurance Companies and Affirmative action Requirements," 1974, 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 105, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Jonathan S. Leonard examines the record of compliance reviews in "Affirmative Action as Earnings Redistribution: The Targeting of Compliance Reviews," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series, Working Paper No. 1328, April 1984, Cambridge, Mass. A first "pathbreaking study" in 1972 by two economists showed "no evidence of a systematic government policy for reviewing contractor firms." In other words, they find an essentially random enforcement process. Leonard analyzed compliance reviews between 1974 and 1980. The OFCCP maintained that it had formal targeting systems that selected establishments for review with a low proportion of minorities or women relative to other establishments in the same industry. "But interviews with OFCCP officials in Washington and in the field suggest that these formal targeting systems were never really used," 11.

<sup>783</sup> For instance, when Everette Friedman, chief compliance officer at the SSA, was planning to review Prudential in Boston, Prudential fought to keep its records confidential. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986, Letter from Janet Selcer, 9to5 Staff, to Insurance Committee Members, July 30, 1974 and attachment to letter, "Boston Insurance Companies and Affirmative action Requirements," 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 105; Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass; 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5 chart, Insurance Committee Activity with the Social Security Administration, n.d. [1976]. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 110, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>784</sup> In addition, Frank B. Hall and Marsh & McLennan maintained that they did not have to submit information to the SSA. Both claimed that they did not have more than \$50,000 in federal contracts, which was the minimum required for a company to be subject to affirmative action guidelines. Despite delays and disputes, the SSA scheduled reviews at Blue Cross Blue Shield and Travelers Insurance; eventually 9to5 convinced the SSA to review both John Hancock and Liberty Mutual. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5 chart, Insurance Committee Activity with the Social Security Administration, n.d. [1976]. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 110, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. John Hancock review mentioned in 9to5, Women's Insurance News, Vol. 1, no. 2, n.d. [Summer 1976], 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 111. Liberty Mutual mentioned in 9to5, Women's Insurance News, n.d. [Summer 1977], 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 111.

the Boston insurance workforce.<sup>785</sup> According to 9to5, almost 60 percent of the Boston insurance labor force was comprised of women; but 86 percent of female employees held low-wage clerical positions. Nine to Five wrote, “No one could accuse the Insurance Industry in Boston of not hiring women . . . But where are these many women employed within the companies?” Only 2 percent of women in insurance earned over \$10,000 while 51 percent of men earned above that amount. Nine to Five blamed the ineffectiveness of affirmative action for the continued clustering of women in low-paying jobs. To 9to5, sex-based segregation existed because government officials failed to enforce its interpretation of federal guidelines. The organization viewed the hiring and promotional practices at these firms as not just unfair but illegal as well.<sup>786</sup>

The SSA was quite receptive to 9to5’s appeal to influence compliance practices. It agreed to take the 9to5 report into account when selecting offices for reviews.<sup>787</sup> Furthermore, the SSA sent two compliance officers to Boston in early 1975 to meet with 9to5 insurance committee members, advising them on how to initiate complaints. The SSA officers disclosed that “the best way to get action” was to file a charge with the SSA, the OFCC, or both, and then lobby the SSA to launch the review. Although 9to5 reported that it had a “good” meeting with the SSA, it remained dissatisfied with the overall investigation model.<sup>788</sup> The SSA was primarily

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<sup>785</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5 chart, Insurance Committee Activity with the Social Security Administration, n.d. [1976]. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 110, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>786</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5 Boston, Finance Committee, “Claim Against Boston’s Insurance Industry: A Study of the Treatment of Women Office Workers in Insurance,” September 1974, 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 110, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>787</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5 chart, Insurance Committee Activity with the Social Security Administration, n.d. [1976]. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 110.

<sup>788</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5 chart, Insurance Committee Activity with the Social Security Administration, n.d. [1976]. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 110.

investigating complaints that had been forwarded by specific charging parties; 9to5 wanted more systemic review of all insurance companies to achieve more far-reaching change.

Nevertheless, 9to5 took the advice of the SSA officers and issued a complaint against the affirmative action plan at Marsh & McLennan (Marsh). Boston 9to5 and two sister organizations, Chicago's Women Employed (WE) and San Francisco's Women Organized for Employment (WOE), launched a tri-city campaign against what was then the largest insurance brokerage firm in the world. These organizations insisted that Marsh "begin obeying the equal opportunity laws," and they argued that the goals and timetables set by personnel managers were inadequate to remedy the existing discrimination. Working women's organizations claimed that Marsh was not in compliance because women were clustered in the lowest-paying clerical positions. Only 4.4 percent of the 1101 officials, managers, and supervisors in all of Marsh's offices worldwide were women. However, 82 percent of the women employed by M&M were in low-paying clerical jobs. And of the almost 6,000 total employees, only 214 were black women (and 181 of those were clericals).<sup>789</sup> In its 1974 affirmative action plan, Marsh declared that it would try to fill 19 percent of all positions that pay \$10,400 per year with women. Clericals' advocates were outraged. "That means 81% of those jobs will remain in the male domain. The [Affirmative Action] Guide goes on to say that this 19% 'goal' need not even be accomplished in one year!"<sup>790</sup> Nine to Five perceived the Marsh plan as inequitable and not complying with affirmative action guidelines. However, it did in fact fulfill Department of Labor requirements by reporting current underutilization areas and setting goals for improvement.

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<sup>789</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5, Marsh & McLennan Newsletter for Women Employees, Vol. 1, no. 1, October 1975, 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 111, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>790</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5, Marsh & McLennan Newsletter for Women Employees, Vol. 1, no. 1, October 1975, 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 111, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass..

There was clearly a disconnect between what 9to5 saw as fair, even as legal, and what businesses were required to do to avoid penalty. Nine to Five viewed Marsh & McLennan as engaging in illegal employment practices because its affirmative action plan sought to fill only 19 percent of higher-paying jobs with women. Women Employed Chicago wrote, “[Marsh’s] discriminatory employment practices are clearly illegal. We may not be able to change their basic philosophy about women, but we can force them to obey the laws.” What did the law require from the perspective of the clerical coalition? Marsh should develop “meaningful goals and timetables for training and promoting women and minorities” unlike its current affirmative action plan. It also recommended regular salary reviews, raising the salary range for many jobs, as well as establishing written job descriptions, internal job posting, and on-the-job training. In addition, “[career] ladders should be instituted with bridge positions allowing clericals to move into professional positions.”<sup>791</sup> When the women’s organizations met with a Marsh vice president of personnel, they received answers that were only partially satisfactory. The vice president claimed that Marsh was committed to affirmative action even though the 1976 Affirmative Action Guide would not be available to employees. When asked about written job descriptions and personnel standards, he claimed that written standard practices seemed too “rigid.” Although Marsh would begin a job posting system on January 1, 1976, it would only post non-management jobs, which clericals perceived as hindering upward mobility. Any disgruntled employees might just be “confused” about policies and procedures. Employees should talk to personnel about any problems they are experiencing; “the door is always open” for

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<sup>791</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5, Marsh & McLennan Newsletter for Women Employees, Vol. 1, no. 1, October 1975, 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 111, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

discussions of personnel matters. He acknowledged that employee relations had been strained in the past, but “good changes are now in the making.”<sup>792</sup>

Following the Marsh campaign, the 9to5 Executive Board voted in the fall of 1975 to make affirmative action enforcement its primary issue above other key concerns such as maternity benefits or cost-of-living raises.<sup>793</sup> “[Affirmative action] will aid in our campaign for improved working conditions in the insurance industry,” declared a 9to5 leader.<sup>794</sup> The organization emphasized that affirmative action “[was] more than reports. It [was] hiring, promoting, and training women and minorities within the company.”<sup>795</sup> Nine to Five demanded that affirmative action go beyond the approach of measuring underutilization, and then subsequently setting goals and timetables. Instead, clericals maintained that “results [were] the best indication of a good plan.”<sup>796</sup>

The insurance committee devised a three-month plan to improve affirmative action enforcement at the state and federal levels. One goal of the campaign was to lobby officials at MCAD and at the OFCC, placing pressure on the agencies to review reported offenders. To engage more insurance clericals in the cause, 9to5 decided to produce and distribute an insurance newsletter, which would encourage women to evaluate their own company’s affirmative action

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<sup>792</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5, Marsh & McLennan Newsletter for Women Employees, Vol. 1, no. 1, October 1975, 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 111, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass..

<sup>793</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Minutes of Executive Board, November 17, 1975. 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 1, folder 6, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>794</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5, Women’s Insurance News, Vol. 1, No. 1, n.d. [1976], 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 111. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>795</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5, Women’s Insurance News, Vol. 1, No. 1, n.d. [1976], 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 111. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>796</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5, Women’s Insurance News, Vol. 1, No. 1, n.d. [1976], 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 111. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

practices.<sup>797</sup> Nine to Five planned to initiate task forces at particular companies around the city so that employees could discuss their job problems. Then to help determine solutions, 9to5 could assist employees in constructing “criteria for what we [the employees] view as an acceptable a.a. plan.” Nine to Five planned to pressure companies with weak practices to strengthen their plans by comparing them to the companies with stronger ones.<sup>798</sup>

Nine to Five disseminated information about affirmative action to employees, showing them how the principles of the federal policy should be applied to their own workplaces. In a worksheet, “How to Evaluate your Company,” 9to5 recommended that changes in personnel practices could remedy the sex-segregated nature of clerical work. For instance, for a common problem such as lack of access to promotions, employees should urge their managers to implement the affirmative action solution of “job posting.” According to 9to5, affirmative action mandated that “all jobs should be conspicuously posted,” preferably internally for two weeks. For clericals who were told that their experience was not relevant for internal openings, employees should make sure that the company was using “fair requirements” when choosing applicants to hire. In other words, employers might have required certain irrelevant skills or experience purposefully to exclude clerical women from changing jobs. “The company should look at related job experience, and periodically survey to find qualified women in the company,” according to 9to5. If clericals had lacked mobility for numerous years, employees should suggest that “training programs” become part of the company’s affirmative action plan. Training

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<sup>797</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; 9to5, Committees Three Month Plan, Insurance, 1976. 79-M16--81-M121, Carton 1, folder 7. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>798</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1985; 9to5, Planning Committee, 3 Month Plan, July, August, September 1976. 82-M189--86-M213, Carton 16, folder 1024. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. It envisioned five employees as constituting a task force, and having potentially seven task forces in various industries such as law and advertising.

programs that would “bridge clerical and other jobs should be provided, in order to eliminate dead-end positions.”<sup>799</sup>

And select insurance companies did change particular policies that clerical women saw as vital in their quest for promotions and upward mobility. Similar to the way that the publishing industry began to institute more standardized personnel practices, some players in the insurance industry, when pushed to implement affirmative action, started to alter their policies regarding job postings and job descriptions.<sup>800</sup> For instance, Frank B. Hall and Massachusetts Mutual began internal job postings in 1976.<sup>801</sup> Also the OFCC began to negotiate with Prudential in 1976, pushing the company to institute more equitable hiring and promotion policies. Employees from Liberty Mutual, Blue Cross, and Aetna gathered to read and discuss their affirmative action plans, and to make suggestions for improvements. At Aetna, several women met with company managers and secured job postings.<sup>802</sup> Nine to Five filed charges against Travelers for failing to institute job postings, provide accurate job descriptions, and offer job training for promotions.<sup>803</sup> Once 9to5 filed complaints with the SSA, Travelers started posting some jobs on the lunch room bulletin board.<sup>804</sup>

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<sup>799</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1985; “How to Evaluate Your Company,” n.d. [1976], 82-M189--86-M213, Carton 16, folder 1034. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>800</sup> See Chapter Three on publishing industry.

<sup>801</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5, Women’s Insurance News, Vol. 1, No. 1, n.d. [1976], 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 111. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>802</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5, Women’s Insurance News, Vol. 1, No. 2, n.d. [Summer 1976], 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 111. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass..

<sup>803</sup> However, at Liberty Mutual an employee relations manager refused to speak with 9to5 about job postings; Liberty remained one of the last major Boston companies that refused to alter its posting practices. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5, Women’s Insurance News, n.d. [1976/1977], 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 111. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass..

<sup>804</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5, Women’s Insurance News, n.d. [Summer 1977], 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 111. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. For more on campaigns and potential campaigns in specific offices see 9to5,

By early 1977, change was occurring in a piecemeal fashion. However, many Boston-area insurance companies still were not following clericals' ideas about affirmative action compliance. Nine to Five detailed the practices of eleven firms, accounting for their current policies on job posting, written job descriptions, employee training, and promotions. Most companies did not offer training for promotions to their clerical workers. Nine to Five recorded that at Travelers "jobs [were] filled from the outside" and at John Hancock "promotions [occur] from outside, not [from] within." Training for promotions was available for those working in sales, management, or underwriting but not for clerical work. And job postings were common for "lower level positions" or "lower level clerical positions" but not for managerial openings.<sup>805</sup> This data revealed that finding and accessing higher-paid positions remained elusive for clerical women, even within their own companies. Many companies preferred to hire externally for professional positions rather than to train or promote an internal clerical worker. While 9to5 considered many insurance companies' practices to be unfair, most of their practices were not illegal. Companies did not have to promote clericals to managerial positions as long as external female candidates were being recruited to fill these underutilized positions.

To be sure, 9to5 influenced personnel procedures in the insurance industry, as well as in banks and publishing houses during the mid to late 1970s. It helped to win internal job posting, written job descriptions, and paid job training in workplaces across the nation. Nine to Five intended for these corporate policy changes to provide promotional paths for women out of low-paid clerical work, particularly because for at least a decade, the percentages of women working

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Minutes of the Women's Insurance Forum Steering Committee, September 15, 1976, 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 110.

<sup>805</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1985; 9to5, Attachment to Demands to SSA, January 27, 1977. 82-M189--86-M213, Carton 16, folder 1033. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.



low-paid clerical jobs had not changed. The existence of the law alone—without subsequent pressure from an interest group such as 9to5—was not improving the clericals' lot.<sup>806</sup>

From 1964 (when Title VII passed) to 1979, the density of females in the clerical occupations had actually increased and the wages of women clericals compared to men clericals had dropped.<sup>807</sup> According to Nussbaum, in banks throughout the 1970s more women than ever were working sex-segregated jobs, which she perceived as meaning that affirmative action was not working.<sup>808</sup> In a 1976 speech, she expressed dissatisfaction at government attentiveness and corporate response to affirmative action. "It seems that a good amount of federal money, company action, and public attention has focused on progress in hiring women and minorities in occupations where they have traditionally been shut out." Nussbaum continued, "We, in offices throughout Boston, would like to share in some of [the] improvement. It's time to reexamine government priorities and see that we move to the top of the list."<sup>809</sup>

Nine to Five perceived affirmative action as granting any employee the opportunity to train for a new internal position. Nussbaum stated, "We've found that a company where you feel respected for being 'just a secretary' is likely to be one where you feel comfortable moving up, too." Thus, employers who did not value clerical work were unlikely to see clerical workers as capable of promotion into higher-paid positions. Nussbaum believed: "there should be no such

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<sup>806</sup> The percentage of black female clerical workers did increase in the 1970s in part because companies made concerted efforts to recruit black women in categories where they were underutilized.

<sup>807</sup> Ruth Blumrosen, Rutgers Law Professor, Equal Pay Workshop, Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Box 91, folder 32, Women's Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>808</sup> Karen Nussbaum, National Association of Working Women, Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Box 92, folder 31, Women's Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>809</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Text of speech from Karen Nussbaum, 1976; 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 1, folder 3, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. She acknowledged that affirmative action had succeeded in part because 9to5 had won job posting, career counseling, salary reviews, and promotional opportunities for women in various businesses. Also some firms were increasing minority hiring for clerical positions.

thing as a dead-end job for anyone.”<sup>810</sup> Nine to Five believed that with properly-enforced affirmative action, “so-called dead end jobs such as many clericals now feel they have would be opened up for promotion to positions of increased responsibility.” Affirmative action would produce economic results for low-paid workers by training them to perform higher-paid jobs. It would rectify the “unbalanced composition of [the corporate] workforce” and provide “more equitable sex distribution in all job categories.”<sup>811</sup>

Whereas clericals saw affirmative action as a tool to achieve promotions and gain greater economic security, affirmative action became a measure of underutilization. Although “underutilization” was not stated directly in the language of the executive orders, the concept guided the government’s interpretation and implementation of affirmative action.

Underutilization meant that no job category should contain a percentage of minorities or women that was lower than the percentage available in the surrounding population.<sup>812</sup> Nine to Five wanted the government to monitor overutilization as well so that the clustering of women in low-paying clerical positions would also trigger compliance reviews. However, the government did not attend to overutilization, reasoning that women or men could be choosing certain types of work over other types. The OFCC did require companies to submit statistics that measured the utilization of women and minorities in specific jobs relative to the surrounding population.<sup>813</sup>

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<sup>810</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; Text of speech from Karen Nussbaum, “Women at Work,” May 23, 1978, 88-M96-86-M104, Carton 2, folder 47.

<sup>811</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1986; 9to5, “Enforcement Research Committee Report” concerning affirmative action, n.d. [early 1980s], 88-96-89-M104, Carton 4, folder 144. Openings for “Third World women,” meaning minority women, would especially be improved since “advancement and immediate employment opportunities...would be expanded.” Nine to Five recognized that the Third World woman was discriminated against “both by sex as well as race...[and we] need to united all discriminated women if we ever plan to eliminate sex discrimination.” The median annual salary for black women in Boston insurance companies was only \$3,672 in the early 1980s.

<sup>812</sup> Nathan Glazer, *Affirmative Discrimination: Ethnic Inequality and Public Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 43-50.

<sup>813</sup> Affirmative action initially was implemented as a way to ensure that there were enough minorities in certain construction jobs. Scholars of all political persuasions agree that it emerged as a plan with vague directives that were somewhat subjective and arbitrary. See Peter G. Nash, “Affirmative Action Under Executive Order 11246,”

Little if any corporate attention was dedicated to the mobility of women in sex-segregated positions in part because overrepresentation did not trigger compliance reviews. For instance, Honeywell Information Systems reported in 1974 that it had no EEO problems in the clerical category because underutilization of women was not a problem there.<sup>814</sup> The Cabot Corporation reported similar findings. Only areas with too few women or minorities were marked as problematic and in need of remedy. Cabot claimed to have a “general policy of promoting from within” although it had no formal training programs to move women out of clerical positions.<sup>815</sup> A female human resource officer from the Norton Simon conglomerate explained the ways that she fulfilled government mandates in companies such as Max Factor, Canada Dry, Hunt’s Tomato Paste, and Avis Rent-a-Car. Each of her nine companies had to report EEO statistics quarterly to show that they were working towards more equitable distributions of women and minorities in underutilized categories. No numerical goals, however, had to be established to increase the percentages of men in female-dominated jobs.<sup>816</sup>

Yet affirmative action did aid some women who sought male-dominated work.<sup>817</sup> An EEO compliance officer at Heublein Spirits, a major alcohol and food distributor, claimed that

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*New York University Law Review* 46 (April 1971), 231; Terry Eastland, *Ending Affirmative Action: The Case for Colorblind Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 49; Herman Belz: *Equality Transformed: A Quarter-Century of Affirmative Action* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 37.

<sup>814</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Honeywell Affirmative Action Plan, 1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 3, folder 92, Schlesinger Library. Overall women constituted 87 percent of its office workforce.

<sup>815</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 1972-1985; Dorothy G. Curnane, Manager of Personnel and EEO Coordinator, “Affirmative Action Program,” Cabot Corporation of Boston, May 1, 1976, 82-M189-86-M213, Carton 16, folder 1037, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>816</sup> Evelyn Ray, EEO compliance at Norton Simon, Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Box 92, folder 31, Women’s Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>817</sup> The proceedings of a national conference on women in work in 1979 demonstrate that corporate strategies towards and implementation of EEO laws focused mainly on underutilization. The Women’s Action Alliance (WAA), which was a feminist organization founded by Gloria Steinem to mobilize resources for a number of national and local women’s advocacy groups, sponsored this conference. Participating organizations included 9to5, the Coalition of Labor Union Women, the Alliance Against Sexual Coercion, the NOW Legal Defense Fund, the EEOC, the National Federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs, the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Women’s Rights Project of the

with the help of affirmative action guidelines, as well as self-determination, “we have opened the board room doors for ourselves and others” and made “significant gains in employment.” This compliance officer declared that “these laws (affirmative action and Title VII) have created more options for women than any other social movement or legislation since we got the right to vote in 1920, and to our credit we have taken full advantage of them.”<sup>818</sup> Yet clericals were rarely the ones climbing the corporate ladder.

Company practices often favored younger workers, and many affirmative action programs privileged college graduates over current employees. An executive vice president noted that Mobil recruited intensively at colleges to fill new openings for professional positions.<sup>819</sup> Similarly, at the Polaroid Corporation, personnel officers recruited talented minorities and women from college campuses. The company strategically advertised in publications such as *Black Collegian*, *Collegiate Women's Careers*, as well as female- and minority-specific issues of *MBA* and *New Engineer* to reach new graduates.<sup>820</sup> The Honeywell

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American Civil Liberties Union, the Women's Bureau, the Women's Department of the United Auto Workers. Workshop topics ranged from equal pay to upward mobility to equal employment opportunity (EEO) compliance to workplace health and safety to sexual harassment. For more on the specifics of the conference including list of speakers, seminar topics, corporate and other sponsors and conference programming information from the previous year, see Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Box 93, folder 8, Women's Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. For more on the Women's Action Alliance, see Cynthia Harrison, “Creating a National Feminist Agenda: The Women's Action Alliance and Feminist Coalition Building in the 1970s,” in Stephanie Gilmore, ed., *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 19-47.

<sup>818</sup> Patricia McGreeny, EEO Compliance Officer, Heublein Spirits, Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Box 92, folder 31, Women's Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. In the 1970s Heublein controlled brands such as Sminoff Vodka, Guinness Stout, Jose Cuevo, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Grey Poupon.

<sup>819</sup> P.C. Krist, Executive Vice President of Mobil, Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Box 93, folder 3, Women's Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. In a program called “Explore the Business World,” twenty female college sophomores spent a week at the Mobil headquarters each spring to learn the functioning of a business and to start planning their careers.

<sup>820</sup> Polaroid Corporation Corporate Services Division, “Affirmative Action Plan,” July 1979 to July 1980, HR-18, I.388, Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, Mass. Polaroid participated in career days at black colleges as well as at a career exposition for minority university students. For employee complaints about external hiring, see Minutes from Employees Committee (EC)-Personnel Policy Committee (PPC) meeting, April 15, 1976 and Minutes from EC-PPC meeting, May 20, 1976, HR-5, I.377, Baker Library. See March 31, 1977 meeting, HR-5, I.377, for Employees Committee slide show presentation on the problems of outside hiring.

Affirmative Action Plan declared that recruiters should solicit applicants at local minority employment agencies. Yet concerning the recruitment of internal applicants for internal positions, Honeywell promised only to publically post its commitment to EEO laws in the lobby and in the company newspaper.<sup>821</sup> Programs at these companies offered new openings to young, well-educated women and minorities. Yet managers overlooked the potential internal pool of talent, perceiving seasoned office workers as lacking in experience and managerial potential.

## Conclusion

As the civil rights movement and the new feminism of the 1960s and 1970s increased workplace opportunities for a host of underprivileged demographic groups, those remaining in clerical work did not benefit to the same extent as did workers in other sectors. In the face of mandates to push women into higher-valued, male-dominated positions, clerical work remained economically and culturally devalued. Secretaries were restricted by low salary ranges and occupational segregation even though arguably they performed work that made them capable for internal promotions. Whereas office work had once been the domain of genteel, white, middle-class women, by the 1980s, many women avoided clerical work if possible.

Some women without college degrees found refuge in the increasing number of openings within the construction industry and the building trades. As affirmative action standards increasingly focused on underutilization and as Title VII superseded state protective legislation, blue-collar work became a promising option for many women. To be sure women could face hazardous working conditions on job sites as well as verbal, sexual, and emotional abuse from male workers who wanted to preserve their occupational territory. They did, however, have the

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<sup>821</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 1972-1980; Honeywell Affirmative Action Plan, 1974, 79-M16-81-M121, Carton 3, folder 92, Schlesinger Library.

full backing of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which responded principally and promptly to injuries occurring in overtly physical male-dominated industries. And although women entering male-dominated, blue-collar workspaces had to endure hostile environments that could degrade and sexualize women, they found some strength in the EEOC's new guidelines on sexual harassment.

In contrast to the manner in which corporate and state leaders applied affirmative action in white-collars offices, the federal government took an active role in creating and funding programs to help train women for construction work. The Department of Labor devoted millions of grant dollars to programs like the Recruitment and Training Program and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act to move more minorities and women into the skilled trades.<sup>822</sup> And most importantly for some women who had worked in sex-segregated fields, the pay scales were higher in blue-collar work because it had traditionally been men's labor. A former receptionist explained that she shifted into manual labor primarily because of the salary; furthermore, she had no trouble finding employment because affirmative action programs had led some companies to actively recruit women. She enjoyed her job because it paid relatively well although she faced public criticism from colleagues and acquaintances who claimed she was taking the job of an unemployed man.<sup>823</sup> Legislation could not directly dismantle cultural notions of men's work and women's work. Yet labor laws and regulatory agencies that did not attempt to provide financial opportunities for women in low-paid, sex-segregated labor markets were contributing to the cultural as well as the economic devaluing of clerical work.

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<sup>822</sup> Proceedings of Making Pipe Dream Come True, Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Box 92, folder 38, Women's Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>823</sup> Audrey Jones, Long Island Lighting Company (LILCO), Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Box 92, folder 33, Women's Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

## Chapter Five: Redefining the Office: Employee Relations and Individual Ambition

Nine to Five leaders and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 925 organizers invoked two distinct lines of reasoning to improve the lives of clericals, depending on the industry at hand and the priorities of the workers campaigning. In university campaigns, women were more likely to prioritize a reevaluation of the contributions they were adding to the overall university enterprise, calling for higher pay scales for all clerical jobs.<sup>824</sup> A slightly different method of argument had emerged in the publishing industry. Nine to Five publishing women maintained that they were capable of doing the same work as those with higher pay and higher status in the company. Yet those more prestigious managerial and editorial jobs were reserved for men regardless of the aptitude, education, experience, and seniority of clerical women.<sup>825</sup> This chapter explores threats that undermined both approaches to progress for clerical workers. The first and second parts of the chapter explain how new management strategies regarding worker productivity and the health of corporations challenged the economic claims of clericals who thought they deserved fair compensation. Unions struggled to take hold in the private sector as management improved clericals' quality of work life at the expense of inhibiting collective bargaining from the modern workplace. The third part argues that changing management strategies undercut clerical women's economic claims at the same time that new-found esteem for professional women continued to devalue the work and status of clerical women. As sex-segregated jobs like clerical work remained low paid, educated women used resources to move into higher-paying positions with greater status.

Discussion of worker alienation became part of the national consciousness as the social movements of the 1960s changed employees' expectations of what they deserved from their

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<sup>824</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>825</sup> See Chapter Three.

daily work. The discourse—grouped under the umbrella term “quality of work life”—usually highlighted the dissatisfaction of blue-collar workers although 9to5 emphasized that the newly automated office also was a source of worker alienation. Executives began prioritizing employees’ quality of work life (QWL) as experts identified worker dissatisfaction with high turnover and low productivity, which would negatively affect the bottom line. The attention placed on QWL in the 1970s and 1980s caused employers to experiment with and adopt new techniques to increase job satisfaction. QWL strategies undercut white-collar unionization efforts, encouraging employees and employers to cooperate through internal corporate channels. As clerical unions like SEIU District 925 struggled to gain members in the 1980s, employers also hired labor consultants to subvert potential and ongoing campaigns. Questions of pay and promotion became individual negotiations between employer and employee, separate from the growing number of equal employment opportunity (EEO) regulations that enlarging human resources departments were managing.

While District 925 struggled for members amid the institutionalization of new management strategies, clerical workers—organized or unorganized—struggled for visibility and voice as college-educated women gained new opportunities for mobility. Changing legal and cultural norms encouraged sex equality, offering women access to more career choices than they ever had before. A new genre of self-help literature arose to guide career-minded women into formerly male-dominated professional positions. These advice books and articles reflected and inspired admiration for women who proved assertive and ambitious by moving into new territory. Yet clerical work, according to these experts, would not lead to promotions into exciting professional positions. With much of the literature minimizing the systemic barriers that women continued to face, those remaining in clerical jobs seemed to be choosing to be left



behind. In reality, however, clerical workers usually did not have the educational background and social capital necessary to ascend into higher-paying positions alongside men.<sup>826</sup> As increasing opportunities allowed women a greater number of career choices, clerical work—in large part because it remained sex segregated—became a more working-class job than ever before.<sup>827</sup>

The first three chapters demonstrated that certain qualities of the feminist movement contributed to the emergence and momentum of the office worker's movement. New ideas about the social construction of gender norms facilitated clerical mobilization around office conditions such as low pay, access to promotions, and lack of respect from superiors. Chapters four, however, turned to the limitations placed on the office worker's movement given the shifting legal climate. New employment laws prioritized formal equality between men and women instead of pushing for equity in sex-segregated work. While some women gained access to new professional positions, state remedies continued to elevate men's jobs over women's work. This chapter explains two reasons that clerical work remained low paid and dead end despite the achievements of feminism and the establishment of a national clericals' union. The 1970s and 1980s presented possibilities for women who could afford to move into male-dominated professions while bringing further financial hardship and social stigma to sex-segregated clerical work. *Nine to Five* was calling for both a reevaluation of the pay allotted to current clerical jobs and a reconsideration of the promotional tracks from clerical to professional work. Yet the establishment of new management strategies and new opportunities for career women advanced contrasting notions of fairness that overlooked the rights and respect pursued by the office worker's movement.

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<sup>826</sup> Pamela Walker Laird, *Pull: Networking and Success since Benjamin Franklin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>827</sup> Dorothy Sue Cobble, editor, *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2007).

## Quality of Work Life

Collective workplace resistance in the 1970s emphasized the importance of job satisfaction and employee engagement instead of focusing only on bread-and-butter issues. To be sure, the average income of workers, when adjusted for inflation, fell through most years of the 1970s.<sup>828</sup> As real wages declined, many of the New Left activists, who had come of age in the 1960s, left school and started work in the 1970s. However, their jobs in offices and factories did not fulfill the larger political and social goals that had engaged them in the '60s.<sup>829</sup> Although dissatisfied, these young people rarely looked to unions to improve their situations. The declining appeal of unions, even among industrial workers, is what made a 1972 wildcat strike representative of the current state of worker dissatisfaction.<sup>830</sup> Mostly young, male workers, both members and nonmembers of the United Auto Workers (UAW), who were African American and white, stood together to protest the speed of the line and the lack of control they possessed over their work at a General Motors (GM) plant in Lordstown, Ohio.<sup>831</sup> The press took hold of the three-week strike, portraying the “blue collar blues” of the workers who were longing for meaning in their work and striving for dignity. On a larger scale, the strike represented a “collective national symbol for that new breed of worker and [it was] emblematic of a widespread sense of occupational alienation.”<sup>832</sup>

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<sup>828</sup> Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

<sup>829</sup> Robert H. Guest, Professor of Organizational Behaviour, “Quality of Work Life: Prospects for the 80s,” *Vital Speeches of the Day* 46, issue 10 (March 1, 1980), 310-314.

<sup>830</sup> “Wildcat” meaning it was not planned or sanctioned by the United Auto Workers (UAW) local in Lordstown.

<sup>831</sup> Jefferson Cowie, “Chapter One: Old Fashioned Heroes of the New Working Class” in *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010), 23-74. Also see Nelson Lichtenstein, “Chapter 5: Rights Consciousness in the Workplace,” in *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 178-211 on the “rights conscious strategy” that arose in the 1960s and 1970s and weakened the organized labor movement in the U.S.

<sup>832</sup> Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive*, 47-48.

The Lordstown strike became a national concern, such that the problem of worker dissatisfaction needed urgent attention. Because low work productivity could threaten the national welfare by making the U.S. less economically competitive, the federal government began action immediately. Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) co-sponsored the Worker Alienation Research and Technical Assistance Act of 1972. This bill allocated \$20 million for a two-year research program to investigate the negative effects of and potential remedies for worker alienation. Although the bill died in committee, it demonstrated the significance of these sentiments. Kennedy stated that alienation, resulting from routinized jobs, was causing mental and physical illnesses and that job satisfaction could help workers “function more effectively as parents and citizens.” Kennedy claimed that universally, across different industry and various demographics, workers were interested in the content of their jobs not just their paychecks.

According to Senator Kennedy:

[Millions] of Americans are alienated because they see their jobs as dead-ends, monotonous and depressing and without value. And we in the Congress have a responsibility to see what can be done to end that alienation and return the sense of excitement and adventure that traditionally has characterized our people.<sup>833</sup>

The implications of worker alienation were serious when considered on a collective scale.

Alienation caused harm to individual workers who felt uninspired by their daily jobs; but also it decreased rates of productivity, which resulted in costs to the United States economy.<sup>834</sup> GM workers who participated in the Lordstown strike testified in favor of the bill, reminding the public that wages were not a priority for many of the younger workers. Those men were feeling “apathy—apathy within our union movement towards union leaders and to the Government”

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<sup>833</sup> Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, “Worker Alienation,” U.S. Senate, 92<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session, July 25-26, 1972, p. 8.

<sup>834</sup> Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, “Worker Alienation,” U.S. Senate, 92<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session, July 25-26, 1972, p. 9.

because neither represented their needs, which were more concerned with satisfaction and contentment in their daily tasks than with wages and benefits.<sup>835</sup>

In addition, in 1971 Republican President Richard Nixon stated in his Labor Day remarks that “we must always remember that the most important part of the quality of life is the quality of work, and the new need for job satisfaction is the key to the quality of work.” These remarks inspired the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) to convene a special task force regarding what he called the “*quality of working life*” not just “wages and fringe benefits.”<sup>836</sup> In the task force’s report, *Work in America*, the experts reported that the work itself—dull, boring, meaningless—had not so much changed as had the workers themselves.<sup>837</sup> Much like the Senate hearings on worker alienation, this report emphasized that workers had new attitudes, aspirations, and values, as well as increased educational status. Blue-collar workers in the 1970s were more educated than had been most of their fathers in the immediate postwar period.<sup>838</sup> They wanted not only jobs that paid well but also jobs that were interesting and meaningful.<sup>839</sup>

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<sup>835</sup> Gary Brynner, president, UAW Local 1112, Lordstown, Ohio, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, “Worker Alienation,” U.S. Senate, 92<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session, July 25-26, 1972, p. 10-17. The Local 1112 President explained that automation was disconnecting employees from their work and from having interest in unionization. He stated, “The use and turning to alcohol and drugs is becoming a bigger and bigger problem, and apathy—apathy within our union movement towards union leaders and to the Government.” A Lordstown Local 1112 member, echoing the ambivalence that many younger workers felt towards organized labor, explained that the UAW needed more “young blood and ideas.” Instead of concentrating on “wages and petty things,” the union should focus more on “man and the environment” so that more workers could have “peace of mind.”

<sup>836</sup> Elliot L. Richardson, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, “Foreword,” *Work in America: Report of a Special Task Force to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare*, W.E Upjohn Institute for Employment Research (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), vii-ix.

<sup>837</sup> *Work in America: Report of a Special Task Force to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare*, W.E Upjohn Institute for Employment Research (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), 10-13.

<sup>838</sup> *Work in America: Report of a Special Task Force to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare*, W.E Upjohn Institute for Employment Research (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), 34.

<sup>839</sup> Younger workers did not share their parents’ work ethics, perhaps because they were more affluent overall and had more education. They might have rejected conventional definitions of hard work and did not want to submit to authority.

Current workers labored only at 55 percent of their potential, which could threaten the health of the U.S. economy.<sup>840</sup>

While the discourse on alienation usually referenced factory work and male laborers, it included discussion of white-collar workers as well. In *Work in America*, the task force explained that “white-collar woes” were plaguing many office workers, most of them secretaries, clerks, and bureaucrats:

The office today, where work is segmented and authoritarian, is often a factory. For a growing number of jobs, there is little to distinguish them but the color of the worker’s collar: computer keypunch operations and typing pools share much in common with the automobile assembly-line.<sup>841</sup>

Like blue-collar workers, white-collar workers also were feeling “estranged” from the decisions and goals of the company since they were no longer treated as possessing important skills.<sup>842</sup> Socialist author Harry Braverman captured the changing nature of office work by arguing for the similarities between blue-collar and white-collar labor in the 1970s. The continued routinization and mechanization of office work were making “the traditional distinctions between ‘manual’ and ‘white-collar’ labor. . . represent echoes of a past situation which has virtually ceased to have meaning in the modern world of work.”<sup>843</sup>

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<sup>840</sup> *Work in America: Report of a Special Task Force to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare*, W.E Upjohn Institute for Employment Research (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), 39-40; Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 32-35.

<sup>841</sup> *Work in America: Report of a Special Task Force to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare*, W.E Upjohn Institute for Employment Research (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), 38.

<sup>842</sup> *Work in America: Report of a Special Task Force to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare*, W.E Upjohn Institute for Employment Research (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), 39-40. The deskilling of clerical work had a long history dating back to the beginning of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. See Margery W. Davies, *Woman’s Place Is at the Typewriter: Office Work and Office Workers, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982); Elyce J. Rotella, *From Home to Office: U.S. Women at Work, 1870-1930* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981); Sharon Hartman Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Lisa Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper: Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Engendering Business: Men and Women in the Corporate Office, 1870-1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

<sup>843</sup> *Work in America: Report of a Special Task Force to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare*, W.E Upjohn Institute for Employment Research (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), 315, 325-326.

In some industries such as insurance, managers had rationalized the work and set strict rules to regulate the women. Nine to Five started an industry-wide campaign to bring attention to the work practices that allowed managers to control many aspects of insurance clericals' worklives. A woman from a New England Life typing pool reported that at the end of each day, a supervisor would count the number of pages that each woman had typed to make sure she was keeping up with company standards. At another firm, an employee described late and absence slips which supervisors and workers had to sign jointly with a proper excuse noted for the corporate record. Some women felt that the vigilance of employers turned the workplace into a grammar school, making the female clericals like children who consistently were monitored.<sup>844</sup>

While employer practices alienated clerical workers, 9to5 documented and publicized the "white-collar woes" most significantly through its office automation campaigns.<sup>845</sup> In April 1980, 9to5 issued the first U.S. report to describe office automation problems from the viewpoints of women office workers. "Race Against Time" argued that workers—not just managers and scientists—should make decisions about the use and application of new technology in the workplace. Computers and video display terminals (VDTs) in and of themselves were not the problem.<sup>846</sup> Rather, the problem lay in how the technology was being employed. Instead of using the technology to design training programs that would give greater occupational mobility to disadvantaged groups, 9to5 maintained that management was using it to

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<sup>844</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, 9to5 Finance Committee, "Claim Against Boston's Insurance Industry: A Study of the Treatment of Women Office Workers in Insurance," September 1974. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 3, folder 110. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Women made up a majority of the insurance industry workers, holding virtually all the clerical positions in Boston (86.2 percent), jobs such as secretary, typist, file clerk, and key punch operator.

<sup>845</sup> Nussbaum saw automation as a time-limited "window of opportunity," believing that women would be more receptive to collective resistance efforts when the organizational structure of their offices was in flux. Ellen Cassedy, Karen Nussbaum, Debbie Schneider, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 1, 2005. For more on attempts to regulate VDTs and expand definitions of worker health and safety, see Chapter Four.

<sup>846</sup> See first section of Chapter Four.

monitor the pace and organization of work and to control the decision-making capacities of clericals.<sup>847</sup> At some firms, management brought in consultants to measure clericals' speeds and set minimum rates for production. Variety in work duties, contact with other people, and changes in routine became less common, leading to lower job satisfaction among clericals.<sup>848</sup> Beyond the fact that managers were instituting technology to make clerical work more dull and meaningless, office automation was having negative physical effects on clericals. Clericals were complaining about eye strain, neck and back pain, and aching wrists. Also automation was causing increased job stress, which could have serious physiological consequences. Nine to Five often quoted the results of the February 1980 Framingham Heart Study, which showed that women clerical workers developed coronary heart disease (a stress-related disease) at almost twice the rate of other women workers. In 1981, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) reported that VDT operators had the highest stress level of any occupational group studied including air traffic controllers. While professionals could use the VDT to enhance their current jobs, for clericals the VDT "took more and more meaning out of their work," according to Judith Gregory, research director at 9to5.<sup>849</sup> Gregory's testimony before Congress reinforced the connection among office automation, health problems, and worker dissatisfaction. She called on the government to help clericals curtail the adverse health effects—stress, visual, musculoskeletal, and nervous system problems—resulting from

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<sup>847</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, Judith Gregory, Research Director, Testimony for 9to5, National Association of Working Women, "New Technology in the American Workplace," Hearings by the Subcommittee on Education and Labor, Committee on Education and Labor, U.S. House of Representatives, June 23, 1982. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 5, folder 154, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>848</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, Judith Gregory, Research Director, Testimony for 9to5, National Association of Working Women, "The Human Factor in Innovation and Productivity," Hearings by the Science, Research, and Technology Subcommittee of the House Committee on Science and Technology, U.S. House of Representatives, Sept. 16, 1981, 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 5, folder 154, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>849</sup> Judith Gregory, SEIU Women's Conference in Storrs, Connecticut, "Safety and Health for the Office Worker with an Emphasis on Job Stress," June 3, 1981. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 5, folder 154, Schlesinger Library.

automation. According to Gregory, “action must be taken now before irreparable harm is done to office workers’ jobs, health, and quality of working life.”<sup>850</sup>

In the 1970s, executives looked to new managerial approaches such as job enrichment and labor-management cooperation to improve worker satisfaction, and thus improve productivity. Most management scholars and practitioners agreed that the best remedy for turnover, absenteeism, dissatisfaction, unrest, and unproductivity were practices grouped under an umbrella term: quality of work life (QWL). The new field of QWL could even be called a movement, according to one management scholar, because its emergence was “marked by the appearance of consultants, professional groups, and public and private study centers” around the country. QWL included new approaches to personal and professional development, team building, work scheduling (ideas such as flextime and job sharing) and work redesign (including job enrichment and job rotation).<sup>851</sup>

Some companies were already experimenting with QWL projects. Instead of higher pay or paths to promotions, job enrichment was one of the emerging principles that sought to increase worker satisfaction and productivity.<sup>852</sup> The program substituted whole tasks that had a start and a finish for the single, repetitive tasks that had resulted from the new machines, in effect reversing some of the negative effects of automation.<sup>853</sup> Executives had strategies to improve the

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<sup>850</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, Judith Gregory, Research Director, Testimony for 9to5, National Association of Working Women, “The Human Factor in Innovation and Productivity,” Hearings by the Science, Research, and Technology Subcommittee of the House Committee on Science and Technology, U.S. House of Representatives, Sept. 16, 1981, 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 5, folder 154, Schlesinger Library.

<sup>851</sup> Herman Gadon, “Making Sense of Quality of Work Life Programs,” *Business Horizons* 27, issue 1 (January/February 1984), 43.

<sup>852</sup> Louise Kapp Howe, *Pink Collar Workers: Inside the World of Women’s Work* (New York: Avon Books, 1977), 154.

<sup>853</sup> In the group claims department, for example, “each clerk [was] handling the records of individual customers from beginning to end, instead of just fragmented pieces of the job,” according to the personnel manager. But bread and butter issues like higher pay and paths to promotions were not in the realm of job enrichment according to personnel: “No, those are separate issues; important issues to be sure, but separate issues from what we’re talking about here—which is improving the job itself.” Howe, *Pink Collar Workers*, 155.



work lives of clericals, helping to increase worker satisfaction and productivity without raising wages or restructuring the organizational hierarchy.<sup>854</sup> One insurance firm offered free lunch to all employees at an onsite company cafeteria.<sup>855</sup> Furthermore, it offered “we’re-all-one-big-family activities” such as picnics, employee sporting events, holiday parties, travel clubs, tuition reimbursement, and bowling parties. Apparently clericals enjoyed all of the same perks that were available to management. However, clericals did not enjoy fair pay (clericals were earning as little as \$108 per week) or promotional opportunities (there were hardly any).

The QWL field flourished in the early 1970s as managers looked for new organizational approaches to manage worker alienation. Although these projects could improve worker satisfaction, QWL strategies were not challenging power relations within the corporate structure. At Polaroid, for example, a committee of wage and salary employees came together to create a QWL program, but management specified that there be “no wildcat experiments,” meaning unauthorized programs that would overturn established managerial procedures.<sup>856</sup> Management retained final veto over any ideas that arose in the committee; implementing QWL in the workplace remained a top-down pursuit. Polaroid hired David E. Berlew, a management professor at MIT, to help executives devise a QWL plan.<sup>857</sup> He and his colleague Roger Harrison had developed a popular training program to help managers learn how to communicate

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<sup>854</sup> 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Additional records, Adrianna Nasch Stadecker, “9to5: Women Office Workers Interpret a Social Movement,” MIT dissertation, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, pgs. 203-205, 1976. 88-M96-89-M104, Carton 2, folder 57, Schlesinger Library. Stadecker reinforces the point that at times employers would calm irritated workers by granting some of their requests. Granting certain requests could cause 9to5 members to become less interested in activism or have a more difficult time mobilizing workers.

<sup>855</sup> Howe, *Pink Collar Workers*, 146-147. The food was much better than the standard institutional fare. The cafeteria itself was comfortable: decorated attractively with an adjoining lounge that contained Ping Pong and a TV.

<sup>856</sup> Polaroid Corporation Administrative Records, Memo from M. Elkind to G. Sudbey and R. Wood re: Project 2808, Quality of World Life Program Status, February 23, 1976, Box I.388, folder 27, Baker Library Historical Collections. Harvard Business School, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>857</sup> Polaroid Corporation Administrative Records, Memo from W.R. Page to Quality of Working Life Group re: Notes on Discussion with Page, Duncan, Berlew on the QWL in Polaroid, April 6, April 22, 1976, Box I.388, folder 27, Baker Library.

with their employees without using an authoritative approach. Berlew's training program, which supported the use of cooperation to solve internal problems, led Polaroid executives to declare that the adversarial relationship between management and labor was "a pernicious relic of nineteenth-century raw capitalism."<sup>858</sup> Polaroid exemplified the way that executives instituted QWL programs so that progress in modern offices meant preempting union intervention.

While in some ways QWL maintained traditional power structures where employees were subject to the decisions of employers, in other ways, QWL advanced radical recommendations from the academic community. QWL strategies challenged long-standing assumptions about productivity and efficiency that had been established by Frederick Winslow Taylor. Advocates of QWL believed that Taylorism focused on hierarchy and efficiency at the expense of the human experience. Professor of Organizational Behavior Robert Guest, one of the initial developers of job enrichment programs, pointed out that Taylor's way of thinking had been dogmatically followed for decades although it was not benefiting the organization as a whole unit: "those working at the grassroots levels of our organizations are unfortunate victims of a system, a system that says. . . that human effort should be fractioned. . . made repetitive, given little room for human judgment."<sup>859</sup> Other experts also agreed that Taylorism was becoming obsolete and inefficient given changing social conditions and expectations: "The simplistic authoritarianism [of Taylorism] would appear ludicrous to the young worker who is not the uneducated and irresponsible person on whom Taylor's system was premised." This

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<sup>858</sup> Polaroid Corporation Administrative Records, Notes—Polaroid PP 101, Work Life Quality Etc., April 25, 1976, Box I.388, folder 27, Baker Library. Berlew's Power Program was first used by Xerox in 1973.

<sup>859</sup> Robert H. Guest, "Quality of Work Life: Prospects for the 80s," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 46 issue 10 (March 1, 1980), 311.

social scientist agreed that it was time to retrain industrial engineers in methods of than those of Taylor.<sup>860</sup>

The federal government supported the QWL movement for most of the 1970s, establishing a center for working life and funding experimental projects on job design, labor-management cooperation, flexible scheduling, and job sharing. In 1972, the special task force to HEW that had published *Work in America* called for the government to encourage unions and managers to work together to redesign work tasks, “especially since the failure to do so is adding to the tax burden of all Americans through increased social costs.”<sup>861</sup> In 1975, President Gerald Ford signed a bill to create the National Center for Productivity and Quality of Working Life (NCPQWL) to provide “a unique forum for cooperative labor, management, and government efforts.” Ford cited the need to maintain a competitive position in the international economy as well as to improve the standard of living of all Americans by raising productivity.<sup>862</sup> The NCPQWL collected evidence from across the nation about the rising number of labor-management committees in the 70s. The federal government further supported the alliances by passing the Labor-Management Cooperation Act (LMCA) of 1978, which funded programs to allow workers and managers to improve their relationships and interactions, and to explore innovative approaches to communicating and solving problems. In 1982, the DOL formed a new division, the Cooperative Labor-Management Programs Division to encourage cooperation between labor and management. In 1982, the DOL listed 700 examples of cooperative

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<sup>860</sup> Harold Sheppard, Upjohn Institute, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, “Worker Alienation,” U.S. Senate, 92<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session, July 25-26, 1972, p. 89.

<sup>861</sup> *Work in America: Report of a Special Task Force to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare*, W.E Upjohn Institute for Employment Research (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), 114.

<sup>862</sup> Gerald R. Ford: “Statement Announcing Formation of the National Center for Productivity and Quality of Working Life,” December 10, 1975, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed July 1, 2013, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=5429>.

experiments around the nation.<sup>863</sup> Along with the trend to scale back Taylorism, the government was also supporting an end to the adversarial approach to employee relations.

Besides the federal government, the popular media was announcing the shift from an adversarial model to a cooperative model of union-management relations. According to “New Industrial Relations” in *Business Week*:

Quietly, almost without notice, a new industrial relations system with a fundamentally different way of managing people is taking shape in the U.S. Its goal is to end the adversarial relationship that has grown between management and labor and that now threatens the competitiveness of many industries.<sup>864</sup>

Academics debated whether the new model of cooperation was here to stay.<sup>865</sup> Some thought yes while others thought no. Economist John Dunlop believed that no fundamental changes had taken place and that “the basic features of U.S. industrial relations arrangements have not been altered. . . the labor movement in the United States is here to stay.”<sup>866</sup> Management professor Thomas Kochan argued differently, claiming that the 1970s had been a historic period of transition, allowing for new employee relations models to arise.<sup>867</sup> Whether or not QWL projects were revolutionary, they were effective. Most QWL projects in the 1970s resulted in increases in job satisfaction, feelings of personal growth, and decreases in absenteeism, turnover, and tardiness.<sup>868</sup>

From the perspective of union organizers, however, QWL changes could be problematic. As managers were changing their approaches to communicating with labor unions by becoming

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<sup>863</sup> Michael Schuster, “Introduction” in *Union-Management Cooperation: Structure, Process, Impact* (Kalamazoo, MI: Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 1984), 1-15.

<sup>864</sup> “New Industrial Relations,” *Business Week*, May 11, 1981, p. 85

<sup>865</sup> Thomas A. Kochan and Michael J. Piore, “Will the New Industrial Relations Last? Implications for the American Labor Movement,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 473 (May, 1984), 177-189.

<sup>866</sup> John T. Dunlop, “Have the 1980s Changed U.S. Industrial Relations?” *Monthly Labor Review* (May 1988), 33.

<sup>867</sup> Thomas A. Kochan, Harry C. Katz, and Robert B. McKersie, *The Transformation of American Industrial Relations* (New York, Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1986).

<sup>868</sup> Paul S. Goodman, “Realities of Improving the Quality of Work Life: Quality of Work Life Projects in the 1980s,” *Labor Law Journal* 31, issue 8 (August 1980), 487-494.

more cooperative, District 925 organizers had more difficulty getting clericals to unionize. District 925 organizer Jackie Ruff described the difficulty encountered when employers started improving conditions. Workers were deciding, “Well, this is a better way to go. I’d rather have a relationship with my employer that is not conflict-ridden, that I don’t have to worry that it could be adversarial, and where I’ll get some improvement, than to go the other route” and try unionization.<sup>869</sup>

Some trade unionists criticized QWL programs because they perceived employers as imposing union-free workplaces through cooperative labor-union committees. Ultimately the QWL programs could satisfy employees temporarily without allowing them to take hold of any reins in the corporate power structure. Their economic status might be uncertain in the future. A public policy director in the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME) blamed QWL programs such as job enrichment in part for the decline of private-sector unions. She argued that businesses wanted to maintain depressed wages for clericals to sustain higher profit margins; thus, executives were willing to experiment with QWL programs that were less likely to affect the bottom line.<sup>870</sup> Other union leaders argued that increased pay would have been the best way to compensate dissatisfied workers. According to the General Vice President of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, “To enrich the job, enrich the paycheck.”<sup>871</sup>

## Union Busting

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<sup>869</sup> Jackie Ruff, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 7, 2005.

<sup>870</sup> Roberta Lynch, Organizing Clericals: Problems & Prospects, *Labor Research Review* 1, no. 8, (1986), 90-101. Also see Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 238-245.

<sup>871</sup> Rosabeth Moss Kanter, “Work in a New America,” *Daedalus* 107, no. 1 (Winter 1978), 51.

Employers used QWL programs not only to improve clericals' work satisfaction levels but also to discourage unionization. Both succeeded. The decreasing rate of job satisfaction meant that employers increasingly became concerned that employee discontentment could lead to unionization. Employers' fears were confirmed by evidence showing that white-collar unionization increased by 46 percent in the 1960s.<sup>872</sup> Further adding to the anxiety, a 1971 article in the *Harvard Business Review* predicted that larger numbers of clerical workers would unionize because of negative feelings towards management and towards their jobs. According to over 25,000 workers in over 90 companies, office workers had more adverse feelings towards their employers than ever before. Workers no longer believed their employers to be fair, and they saw management as impersonal and unresponsive to their needs.<sup>873</sup>

As traditional blue-collar industrial unions struggled to maintain political clout and membership numbers in the 1970s, which one scholar has called the "last days of the working class," more than 50 percent of all new union members in the 70s were women.<sup>874</sup> Unions of the 70s had been winning 59 percent of the representation elections where women's issues had been the focal point, as opposed to the 50 percent average win rate for all elections regardless of issue.<sup>875</sup> In 1980 the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) conducted 625 union representation elections among clerical or white-collar employees. Clerical unions won 53.6

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<sup>872</sup> *Work in America: Report of a Special Task Force to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare*, W.E Upjohn Institute for Employment Research (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), 39. Between 1958 and 1968 there had been a 46 percent increase in white-collar unionization; also there was a 34 percent decline in the belief that an employer would do something to address an individual workers' problem during that same period.

<sup>873</sup> Alfred Vogel, "Your Clerical Workers are Ripe for Unionism," *Harvard Business Review* (1971), 48-51.

<sup>874</sup> Quote is subtitle of Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*. SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum, Comment: "Can Women Save the Labor Movement?" *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, Section F, pgs. 1, 4, September 5, 1982, Box 14, folder 81, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. Statistic is from 1967 to 1982.

<sup>875</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum, Comment: "Can Women Save the Labor Movement?" *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, Section F, pgs. 1, 4, September 5, 1982, Box 14, folder 81, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

percent of their elections, better than the average win rate of 45 percent.<sup>876</sup> Thus, when the private-sector unions gained members, they were probably women in service or clerical jobs.

Articles from the popular press noticed the rise of white-collar unionization, asking “can women really save the labor movement?” To sustain the labor movement, unions needed to learn to attract and organize women, many of whom worked in white-collar but low paid jobs in unorganized offices.<sup>877</sup> As the *Nine to Five* movie was released, Karen Nussbaum announced the formation of a clerical division with the SEIU. Articles in national papers discussed the popular movie alongside information about new organizing opportunities for clericals.<sup>878</sup> The SEIU announced that it was responding to the influx of women in the labor force and the unique needs of female clericals by partnering with Nussbaum and 9to5 to create a clerical division: District 925 was a “historical new union alternative linking the women’s movement with the trade union movement.”<sup>879</sup> Nussbaum remembers, “we sailed into the ‘80s with this enormous momentum.”<sup>880</sup> The service sector of the workforce, which historically had been female-dominated and unorganized, was growing at an unprecedented rate.<sup>881</sup> In fact, in the 1970s

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<sup>876</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, John G. Kilgour, “Office Unions: Keeping the Threat Small,” *Administrative Management*, page 23, 24, 58, 59, Nov. 1982, Box 6, folder 8, Reuther Library.

<sup>877</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Karen Nussbaum, Comment: “Can Women Save the Labor Movement?” *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, Section F, pgs. 1, 4, September 5, 1982, Box 14, folder 81, Reuther Library.

<sup>878</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, *Los Angeles Times*, March 6, 1981; *New York Times*, March 4, 1981; *Cincinnati Post*, March 4, 1981; *Longview*, *WA News*, March 18, 1981; Box 5, folder 25, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI. The story also appeared in many other papers including the *Cincinnati Post*, the *San Francisco Post*, the *Bowling Green*, *Ohio Sentinel-Tribune*, the *Arizona Business Gazette*, the *St. Paul, Minnesota Pioneer Press*, the *Pomona Progress-Bulletin*, and the *Longview*, *Washington News*. Other articles from named newspapers in the previous sentence can also be found in Box 5, folder 25.

<sup>879</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, District 925 Press Release, Washington D.C., February 24, 1981, Box 5, folder 25, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

<sup>880</sup> Ellen Cassedy, Karen Nussbaum, Debbie Schneider, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 1, 2005.

<sup>881</sup> Not just a growth in clerical unionization but also a rise in female unionizing among teachers, librarians, social workers, autoworkers, electricians, and bus drivers. Public sector unionism was incorporating clericals well, too. Roberta Lynch, Organizing Clericals: Problems & Prospects, *Labor Research Review* 1, no. 8, (1986), 90-101.

approximately 90 percent of all new jobs were in service sector.<sup>882</sup> And in the 1980s, over two-thirds of all new jobs would be in the service and clerical sectors.<sup>883</sup>

Yet at the same time that the clerical and service sectors were expanding, another industry was emerging. Labor relations consultants, disdainfully referred to as “union busters,” were specialists in labor law and behavioral psychology. Most were attorneys who had worked in management-side labor law. They sought to eliminate the conflicts that were leading to union drives and ultimately to decertify existing unions.<sup>884</sup> Even though the consultants usually had management-side work experience, some had backgrounds in the labor movement and worked as moles alongside management.<sup>885</sup> According to 925 leader Debbie Schneider, the “rise of the union-busters really came right when we founded District 925 [in the] late 1970s. You couldn’t go anywhere without them [even though] it was really a new industry.”<sup>886</sup> District 925’s public relations consultant Ray Abernathy explained, “these companies were willing to spend anything to defeat the union and do anything to defeat the union.”<sup>887</sup> In the 1980s the labor relations consultancy business grossed an estimated \$500 million a year.<sup>888</sup> Seventy-five percent of all white-collar employers were hiring “labor-management consultants,” demonstrating the

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<sup>882</sup> SEIU District 925, AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work, “The Changing Situation of Workers and their Unions,” p. 5, Feb. 1985, Box 3, folder 12, Reuther Library.

<sup>883</sup> Statistic was a prediction of the Department of Labor. Anne Field, “The Management: Union Busters Target Women,” *Working Woman* 5, no. 12, December 1980, 68-72; 94.

<sup>884</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Anti-Union Seminar Held,” *Charleston, Illinois Times-Courier*, January 20, 1982, Box 5, folder 38, Reuther Library.

<sup>885</sup> The University of Pittsburgh hired a firm that had a former SEIU official. SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Karen Nussbaum to George Hardy, President of SEIU, May 11, 1978, Box 3, folder 4, Reuther Library. Former counsel for the National Labor Relations Board, for instance, began to consult on these issues in Chicago. SEIU District 925 Collection, “Anti-Union Seminar Held,” *Charleston, Illinois Times-Courier*, January 20, 1982, Box 5, folder 38, Reuther Library.

<sup>886</sup> Ellen Casedy, Karen Nussbaum, Debbie Schneider, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 1, 2005.

<sup>887</sup> Denise Mitchell and Ray Abernathy, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 5, 2005.

<sup>888</sup> Joann S. Lublin, “Labor Strikes Back at Consultants That Help Firms Keep Unions Out,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 2, 1981.



widespread use of consultants to preempt, defeat, and decertify unions.<sup>889</sup> The labor relations consultancy industry gained professional importance by preying on employers' anxieties about the increasing unionization rate of women and white-collar workers relative to the average rate for all employees. One labor relations consultant warned a room of bank managers: "'It's not so much the major unions like the Teamsters or the United Auto Workers that non-unionized employers should worry about. It's the new ones like '925.''"<sup>890</sup>

In addition to convincing management that they were necessary to prevent widespread unionization, consultants relied on established gender norms to undermine union support among women workers. According to Abernathy, "the workers were easily intimidated," especially because the women needed the money they were earning.<sup>891</sup> Consultants played into conventional wisdom that women could be influenced more easily than could men because they constantly struggled for praise and acceptance. In *Working Woman* magazine, an SEIU union organizer claimed that the consultants "'[specialized] in the manipulation of women'" by using tactics that appealed to the fears of women. Women tended to want to please others, and they had a greater fear of violence, according to several union leaders who had experience trying to organize women. One common tactic that consultants used was to train supervisors to socially isolate union supporters.<sup>892</sup> Supervisors would convince employees who were uninterested in the

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<sup>889</sup> "In 1957, the NLRB secured reinstatement for 922 workers who had been fired for union activity. By 1980, that figure had reached 10,000. Professor Paul Weiler of HLS [Harvard Law School] has concluded that in 1980 there were at least 1.5 discriminatory discharges for every representation election conducted." SEIU District 925, AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work, "The Changing Situation of Workers and their Unions," p. 10, Feb. 1985, Box 3, folder 12, Reuther Library. Seventy-five percent statistic was according to the AFL-CIO by the early 1980s.

<sup>890</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, "Anti-Union Seminar Held," *Charleston, Illinois Times-Courier*, January 20, 1982, Box 5, folder 38, Reuther Library. Quote is from a labor attorney at the State of Illinois Chamber of Commerce meeting in Chicago during a "how to stay nonunion" seminar attended by many bank representatives.

<sup>891</sup> Denise Mitchell and Ray Abernathy, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 5, 2005.

<sup>892</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, John G. Kilgour, "Office Unions: Keeping the Threat Small," *Administrative Management*, page 23, 24, 58, 59, Nov. 1982, Box 6, folder 8, Reuther Library. Also recommended was to make sure supervisors felt that they were part of the management team.

union to “gang up against a union sympathizer.” According to union leaders, this strategy worked because women were more sensitive to being outsiders and to being disliked than were men.<sup>893</sup>

District 925 leader Doreen Levasseur maintained that labor relations consultants were waging “psychological warfare” against women in particular when they used these peer-pressure tactics. In fact, blue-collar men were unfamiliar with the consultants’ approaches:

And I talked to them about some of the tactics that were being used against us in some of these campaigns. And they’d look at us quizzically, like, ‘What are you talking about?’

Levasseur watched women transition from “feeling strong and like we needed to do something, to feeling like totally terrified to do anything, and paralyzed.” She claimed, “it was not only as bad as we thought, but worse.” According to Levasseur, consultants attempted to persuade women that the union was a “monster” that would control their lives. For instance, they would have to go on strike against their will if they joined.<sup>894</sup> Consultants used strategies that portrayed union membership as not just isolating, but also as losing control instead of gaining it.

Some consultants—who sought to eliminate the supposed adversarial system of collective bargaining—adopted a very confrontational approach towards workers and unions. Stephen Cabot, known as the ‘winningest’ management labor lawyer in the country “was delighted in the phone calls he [was] getting from worried management about white-collar campaigns.” Cabot loved being described as a “the biggest, no-good, union-busting S.O.B. that ever lived,” which was rare for a consultant to embrace the union buster label to the media.<sup>895</sup> Usually consultants marketed themselves differently even if they utilized aggressive tactics towards

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<sup>893</sup> Anne Field, “The Management: Union Busters Target Women,” *Working Woman* 5, no. 12, December 1980, 72.

<sup>894</sup> Doreen Levasseur, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Feb. 23, 2005.

<sup>895</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Ellen Karasik, “Union Organizing Office Workers,” *Philadelphia Business Journal*, n.d. [1982], Box 5, folder 38, Reuther Library.

employees, as in the case of Anthony McKeown and Herbert G. Melnick who led Modern Management Methods or 3M. Melnick described himself as “a marriage counselor between worker and boss to keep them working positively together so that they [could] have less conflict and more harmony.”<sup>896</sup> On ABC News’ “The Last Word,” television host Phil Donahue asked Melnick about reports that 3M engaged in and supported practices that intimidated, threatened, and interrogated employees. Melnick denied any such behaviors.<sup>897</sup> Thus, while labor relations consultants were hired to prevent conflict and promote cooperation between employees and employers, some were notorious for trampling on employees’ rights to organize.

Although some consultants approached unions hostilely, most consultants in the industry usually described themselves as in favor of human resources instead of against unions. In reality many consultants were promoting human resources departments and undermining unions at the same time. They recommended QWL practices that would foster compromise and cooperation amid labor conflicts, which would allow management to preempt unionization. If union campaigns did arise, according to consultants, employers should not react with animosity towards employees or directly punish sympathizers. Instead, employers should respond by offering improved benefits and by attempting to collaborate. “We teach management to listen,” claimed one consultant, viewing himself as a mediator between employee and employer.<sup>898</sup> In another office, management announced the implementation of a suggestion system that would communicate employees’ ideas to senior managers.<sup>899</sup> Labor organizers

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<sup>896</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Steve Askin, “Female Rights Spell Trouble for Bosses,” *In These Times*, July 27-August 9, 1983, Box 5, folder 38, Reuther Library.

<sup>897</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Transcript from Phil Donahue, “The Last Word,” ABC News, January 31, 1983, Box 6, folder 8, Reuther Library.

<sup>898</sup> Anne Field, “The Management: Union Busters Target Women,” *Working Woman* 5, no. 12, December 1980, 70.

<sup>899</sup> Women’s Work Project (Julie Boddy, Judy Flora, Lyn Goldfarb, Kathy Monk, Elizabeth Schneider, Kathy Schoen, Bob Sherry, Nancy Wieggersma), *Women Organizing the Office* (Washington D.C: Women in Distribution, 1978), 50-51. Other tactics included management holding conferences on “preventative labor relations.”

worried that the increased use of ‘quality circles’ or regular meetings of workers and managers to discuss work problems, could prevent unionization.<sup>900</sup>

Communication between employees and employers became one of the principal strategies to prevent unionization. Not allowing employees to have a voice in workplace decisions could cause strife. When human resource managers attending an industry conference expressed concern about the recent District 925 election at Equitable Life Insurance in Syracuse, New York, labor relations consultant John Sheridan told them not to worry. Equitable exemplified “bad management,” according to Sheridan, and anyone could have organized those women, even Karen Nussbaum who “‘doesn’t know anything about organizing.’” What exactly went wrong? Sheridan reported that when Equitable managers introduced VDT equipment in their offices, management ignored employee concerns about health and safety. Other experts at the conference agreed that that management could have avoided unionization if it had allowed employees to participate in the automation process. An employee grievance system should have been implemented and employee attitudes should have been measured by survey.<sup>901</sup> Company managers should regularly and often measure employee attitudes and consider employee perspectives when making decisions.

Greater engagement with employees became necessary for employers who were trying to increase worker satisfaction. But managers who were preventing unionization instituted a range of additional organizational changes from small perks to raises and promotions. When a union campaign developed in one office, management created a more pleasant work space by

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Management also held “captive audience meetings,” where a supervisor or employer would mandate that employees attend a one-sided discussion of the negative consequences of joining the union.

<sup>900</sup> Robert S. Greenberger, “Quality Circles Grow, Stirring Union Worries,” *Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 22, 1981.

<sup>901</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Conference Report: ABA (American Bankers Association)” and “National Conference on Human Resources,” *White Collar Report* 56, (Washington D.C.: Bureau of National Affairs), pgs. 370-373, September 26, 1984, Box 6, folder 8, Reuther Library.

purchasing new, expensive furniture.<sup>902</sup> But a more appealing environment would not be enough to stop a union in most cases, according to one consultant. White-collar workers in banks and insurance companies were “ripe for union organization,” in part because firms distributed “pseudo benefits [that] just don’t cut water anymore” such as a turkey or a party at Christmas. Raising pay and giving employees a voice in decision making would be the best way to preempt unionization, particularly because employees were “better educated and more independent. They don’t want to take any baloney.”<sup>903</sup> Upon recommendation from a consultant, a company provided employees with unexpected raises when a union campaign began. The strongest union sympathizers were promoted into supervisory positions, making them ineligible for union membership.<sup>904</sup>

Although bread-and-butter issues would quell dissatisfied workers, employers usually tried to avoid offering across-the-board raises. They did not want to set precedents of offering regular or extensive wage increases. Thus, consultants urged them to support a new rights consciousness that was pervading the office, which managers already were encountering through government employment regulations. Advancing individual rights and equal employment opportunities did not require adjusting pay scales.<sup>905</sup> And supporting fair practices and equal opportunities could undercut union appeal. At a seminar of personnel managers, consultants recommended that managers could “make unions irrelevant by attacking discrimination.” A respectful workplace environment that valued individual employees, according to consultants,

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<sup>902</sup> Tessa Melvin, “Alternative to Unions Suggested,” *New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1982.

<sup>903</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Carol Pucci, “His Business is Breaking Unions and Keeping them Out,” *Seattle Times*, November 28, 1982, Box 5, folder 38, Reuther Library.

<sup>904</sup> Women’s Work Project (Julie Boddy, Judy Flora, Lyn Goldfarb, Kathy Monk, Elizabeth Schneider, Kathy Schoen, Bob Sherry, Nancy Wiegiersma), *Women Organizing the Office* (Washington D.C: Women in Distribution, 1978), 50-51.

<sup>905</sup> Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, 210. Lichtenstein demonstrates that the rights discourse “has proven increasingly incapable of grappling with the structural crisis, both economic and social, that confronts American society.”

could prevent unionization as easily as could significant wage increases.<sup>906</sup> When the American Bankers Association (ABA) held its National Conference on Human Resources in 1984, the rising importance of individual workplace rights was evident. Workshops included discussions about sexual harassment, affirmative action, comparable worth, employment at will, and unionization. Employers began to restructure their policies to bolster federal equal employment opportunity regulations. Workplace practices supported individual rights for workers based on protected demographic characteristics instead of collective rights for unions.<sup>907</sup> Consultants promoted a vision of fair employment where the absence of unions would allow for the rights of individual workers to thrive.

While the concept of labor relations consultants was not new to the 70s and 80s, the notion that unions could cease to exist in fair employment workplaces was new. Industrialists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries had hired Pinkertons to undermine union campaigns and to serve as strikebreakers. Labor economist Robert W. Dunn wrote about employers' strategies to prevent unionization through violence and by forming company unions in the 1920s and 1930s. He claimed that the labor relations consultants of the 70s and 80s carried "briefcases instead of brass knuckles and they [left] no visible marks on their victims."<sup>908</sup> Besides the tactics, what had changed from the 30s to the 80s was the idea that workplaces could become union free. By the 1980s, employers believed that unions could be eliminated from the workplace.<sup>909</sup> The legal

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<sup>906</sup> Tessa Melvin, "Alternative to Unions Suggested," *New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1982. According to a labor relations lawyer at a seminar held by the Personnel Management Association of Westchester, NY, this workplace strategy had successfully defeated union campaigns in several New York City banks including a District 925 effort. .

<sup>907</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, "Conference Report: ABA (American Bankers Association)" and "National Conference on Human Resources," *White Collar Report* 56, (Washington D.C.: Bureau of National Affairs), pgs. 370-373, September 26, 1984, Box 6, folder 8, Reuther Library.

<sup>908</sup> Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers Records, Phyllis Payne, "The Consultants Who Coach Violators," *AFL-CIO American Federationist*, Sept. 1977. MC 624, Box 21, folder 6, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>909</sup> John Logan, "The Union Avoidance Industry in the United States," *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 44, no. 4 (Dec. 2006), 654.

right of workers—both public and private—to unionize was weakened when President Ronald Reagan dismissed 12,000 striking air traffic controllers and decertified their union.<sup>910</sup> A labor attorney and “human resources consultant” wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* that the 1980s were the ideal time for management to “develop productive relations” with employees, particularly because the president had shown that he “[would] not tolerate union abuse.” Employers had an opportunity to stop “[putting] out fires,” meaning fighting union campaigns, and instead to develop HR programs that would operate “without the intrusion of third-party agents,” meaning unions.<sup>911</sup> These human resources programs would become the central home for the QWL programs that were proving to raise productivity, satisfaction, and to prevent unionization.

As human resource departments were becoming more integral to the functioning of firms, unions were in danger of becoming obsolete. Although fear of extensive white-collar unionization drove human resources development, the actual number of successful union campaigns in private-sector offices was minimal. In reality, only 29 of the 14,000 national commercial banks were organized in 1980.<sup>912</sup> In 1982, of the 18.5 million U.S. clerical workers, 6.5 percent were unionized, and most of those were in the public sector.<sup>913</sup> By 1983, District 925 had organized 6,000 office workers in three years.<sup>914</sup> As a 925 leader described, “It was tough because we weren’t necessarily responding to an uprising of workers. Several people could want

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<sup>910</sup> Joseph McCartin, *Collision Course: Ronald Reagan, the Air Traffic Controllers, and the Strike that Changed America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>911</sup> Thomas J. Raleigh, “Adapting to a Union-Free Environment” *Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 22, 1984.

<sup>912</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Steve Askin, “Female Rights Spell Trouble for Bosses,” *In These Times*, July 27-August 9, 1983, Box 5, folder 38, Reuther Library.

<sup>913</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, John G. Kilgour, “Office Unions: Keeping the Threat Small,” *Administrative Management*, Nov. 1982, Box 6, folder 8, Reuther Library.

Statistic is compared to a 20 percent unionization rate for the labor force as a whole. Many public sector clericals were more likely to unionize, leaving few private sector unionized clericals.

<sup>914</sup> “Blue-Collar Boomers: The Most Frustrated of All,” *Business Week*, July 2, 1984.

a union in a workplace but the collective energy sometimes was not there.”<sup>915</sup> Consultants had successfully implemented QWL programs; for instance, Modern Management Methods consultancy had a 98 percent success rate for preventing unionization.<sup>916</sup> Arguably improved worker satisfaction undermined union power and bolstered existing corporate power structures.

Karen Nussbaum circulated several articles and reports to other 9to5 leaders about recommendations for the future of the labor movement given the public perception that unions were unnecessary and irrelevant. Leading economists such as James Medoff published academic and popular work demonstrating that the popular opinion of unions determined their success as organizations. His findings showed that in the past fifteen years, most people disapproved of unions, viewing them as monopolies, not as ways that workers could express their grievances. Furthermore, polling firm Louis Harris and Associates conducted a study showing that those who voted against a union did so almost entirely because they did not believe it could solve their work problems. There was no huge outpouring of hatred and vitriol against unions, according to the Harris poll, just the belief that unions were not helpful.<sup>917</sup> Labor organizers were fighting an uphill battle in the 1980s, meaning that employers were undermining their campaign efforts and employees did not perceive unions as useful remedies.

As the prevailing public sentiment turned against unions, management scholars began to emphasize the importance of human resources (HR) to the strength of a corporation. Numerous

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<sup>915</sup> Denise Mitchell and Ray Abernathy, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 5, 2005. At most District 925 had 15,000-20,000 members. In contrast, SEIU public sector and health care sector unions could have 250,000 members.

<sup>916</sup> Anne Field, “The Management: Union Busters Target Women,” *Working Woman* 5, no. 12, December 1980, 70.

<sup>917</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Memo from Karen Nussbaum to Department Heads of Working Women re: AFL-CIO Committee on the Future, January 3, 1985, Box 3, folder 11, Reuther Library. Attached to the memo: John Hoerr with Michael Pollock, “Labor Prescribes Some Strong Medicine for Itself,” *Business Week*, Dec. 17, 1984, p. 35; Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., “A Study on the Outlook for Trade Union Organizing,” Submitted to the Labor Institute for Public Affairs and The Future Work Committee, 1984. Also in Box 3, folder 11: James L. Medoff, “The Public’s Image of Labor and Labor’s Response,” Harvard University, National Bureau of Economic Research, Nov. 1984.



articles and books in the late 1970s and 1980s stressed that HR departments were integral to a firm's financial success.<sup>918</sup> Academics argued that HR was central to the health of organization: "human resources can make the difference between organizational failure and success," according to one scholar, who advised that HR planning should be part of an organization's strategy.<sup>919</sup> While QWL programs had focused on cooperation between labor and management, HR frameworks did not consider unions in their analysis, presumably because of the growing scarcity of unions. Instead, HR was focused on aligning the needs of the organization and the needs of the individual: "Neither organizational effectiveness nor individual satisfaction [could] be achieved unless there [were to be] a better matching of what the organization needs and what the individuals who spend their working lives in those organizations need," according to an MIT professor.<sup>920</sup> An emerging ideal held that the needs of an organization could be fulfilled by individuals who were doing work that they had chosen and jobs that they found inherently interesting. Individuals became more responsible to take a proactive stance toward their own career planning to find their best fit within the organization.<sup>921</sup> Thus, within model organizations, HR meant that individuals had opportunities for mobility in ways that did not exist when workers depended on unions for movement. However, the burden of initiative and action was shifted largely to employees to determine their own paths.

### How to Succeed in a Man's World

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<sup>918</sup> Richard Beckhard and Reuben T. Harris, *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1977); Edgar H. Schein, *Career Dynamics: Matching Individual and Organizational Needs* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978); Mary Anne Devanna, Charles Fombrun, and Noel Tichy, "Human Resources Management," *Organizational Dynamics* (Winter 1981: 51-67); Michael Beer, Bert Spector, Paul R. Lawrence, D. Quinn Mills, and Richard E. Walton, *Managing Human Assets* (New York: The Free Press, 1984).

<sup>919</sup> Edgar H. Schein, *Career Dynamics: Matching Individual and Organizational Needs* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978), 189, 192.

<sup>920</sup> Schein, *Career Dynamics*, 243.

<sup>921</sup> Schein, *Career Dynamics*, 250.

Certain feminist beliefs—individualism, equality, and opportunity—aligned with the new industrial relations regime that was becoming human resources management. Feminism was transforming interpersonal relationships, family arrangements, and institutional structures. Arguing that a woman’s biological sex was not her destiny, feminists believed that women should not have to fulfill certain social or cultural roles just because they were women. Feminine qualities were not innate. Women were not born more nurturing or docile; some were socialized to behave in that way. They should not have to devote themselves to childbearing or childrearing as their primary life purpose if they did not want to do so. Feminists helped women access opportunities that previously had been open only to men. Emphasizing that women had choices as individuals, feminists helped to lead assertiveness training to teach women how to speak up for their needs.<sup>922</sup> The message of feminism was not only about choice but also about taking control. Women should determine their own paths in life: whether to have children, when to have children, how many to have, whether to marry, when to marry, and whom to marry. Women could decide what career to pursue now that an array of opportunities—options that previously had been restricted to men—were available. But without an older generation of female mentors to offer insight on how to succeed, a wide range of mostly female experts arose—from the academy and the real world—to provide advice on moving into unknown

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<sup>922</sup> Literature on second-wave feminism includes: Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How The Modern Women’s Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000); Sara Evans, *Tidal Waves: How Women Changed America at Century’s End* (New York: Free Press, 2003); Donald G. Mathews and Jane Sherron DeHart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA: A State and a Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain: The Women’s Movement in America Since 1960* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991); Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1999); Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Random House, 1979); Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women’s Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and Its Relation to the Policy Process* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1975). For women and work in the 1960s see Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006); Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

territory. Women with professional aspirations were eager to learn about the strategies of other upwardly-mobile women.

However, certain goals of professional women and their advocates stood in stark contrast to many of the priorities of the officer worker's movement. Most career women did not experience the class-based struggles that were afflicting the women remaining in clerical work. To be sure, 9to5 wanted promotions for the clericals who wanted them. But it also advocated for improving the pay and working conditions of those remaining in sex-segregated clerical work. In both the legal and cultural realms, the influence of "corporate feminism" was undermining the labor demands of working-class, clerical women.<sup>923</sup> Historian Elizabeth More has defined corporate feminists as high-achieving women who had attended elite universities and earned advanced degrees. They were not necessarily active in the larger, more public feminist movement nor were they usually concerned with women's status outside of the workplace. Corporate feminists were focused, however, on moving themselves and other similarly-situated women into professional jobs that had traditionally been for men only. And they wrote about what it took to achieve a professional position alongside a man. By taking advantage of new openings to work alongside male professionals, savvy, educated, career-oriented women inadvertently and indirectly disadvantaged other women who had fewer resources at their disposal. The economic priorities of the office workers' movement were diverging from the solidifying definition of gender inequality. As a result, the distance grew between the goals of professional women and the concerns of clerical workers.

As best-selling books taught women how to behave in order to get ahead, many spoke frankly and directly about the dead-end nature of clerical work. In *Games Mother Never Taught*

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<sup>923</sup> Elizabeth More, "Public Good to Private Profit: The Rise of Corporate Feminism," Paper presented at the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, January 6, 2012.

*You* (1978), Betty Harragan, a longtime member of the National Organization for Women (NOW), told women that working was a game and that they must learn how to play it.<sup>924</sup> She suggested that female employees who were seeking promotions should draw a pyramid to better understand the company's hierarchy. One of the "unfortunate truths" resulting from this exercise was that "secretarial functions *do not belong anywhere*. These jobs are *outside* the pyramid, nowhere entwined in the network."<sup>925</sup> According to Harragan, too many women were wasting time trying to satisfy demands of supervisors and were operating as "deluded 'Aunt Toms' who thought authority came from longevity or assumed officiousness."<sup>926</sup> Used in undergraduate courses and in business schools, *Games Mother Never Taught You* sold more than one million copies.<sup>927</sup>

Another popular managerial manual for women arose as two professors became increasingly frustrated with the lack of emphasis placed on gender in business education. After Margaret Hennig and Anne Jardim—the first two women to have received doctorates from the Harvard Business School (HBS)—taught at HBS, they decided that for women to navigate the male-dominated business world, they needed specialized management instruction. Hennig and Jardim opened the first business school for women only, attempting to combine the rigorous quantitative courses and case method instruction from HBS with a focus on gender differences in organizational management.<sup>928</sup> Together Hennig and Jardim authored *The Managerial Women* (1977), based largely on their research in organizational behavior. The book told women how to

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<sup>924</sup> Margaret Hennig and Anne Jardim, *The Managerial Woman* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977).

<sup>925</sup> Betty Lehan Harragan, *Games Mother Never Taught You: Corporate Gamesmanship for Women* (New York: Warner Books, 1978), 38.

<sup>926</sup> Harragan, *Games Mother Never Taught You*, 40.

<sup>927</sup> Edwin McDowell, "Betty Harragan, 77, Advocate of Women's Workplace Rights," *New York Times*, July 14, 1998.

<sup>928</sup> Nan Roberston, "For Ambitious Women, A Survival Guide to the Land of Bosses," *New York Times*, June 28, 1977; Rhonda Seegal, "Business School Started by 2 Women Professors," *Nashua Telegraph* (New Hampshire), November 8, 1977.

not self-sabotage, or fall into certain patterns that were common to women who were striving to reach the managerial or executive levels. The authors warned against secretarial work, which some women chose after earning a liberal arts degree because they needed to find employment. Female college graduates “[were going] to secretarial school to acquire something they [could] tell themselves *is* a skill because there is a demand for it, it is tangible, it can be used.”<sup>929</sup> As secretaries, superiors would praise their accuracy and compliance but, according to Hennig and Jardim, secretaries were not on promotable tracks, even to “middle management.” Annual reviews declared that women in secretarial work were “lacking in management potential” and would remain “terminal in [their] present position,” according to their supervisors. Thus, secretaries should not mistaken consistent praise for promises of promotions.<sup>930</sup>

These two bestselling advice books did not intend to degrade clerical workers but rather sought to warn aspiring female executives of the realities of the corporate hierarchy. Both books took approaches whereby individual women were responsible for their own successes. The authors believed that women should not blame lack of mobility on institutional barriers.<sup>931</sup> Despite the fact that feminists had fought systemic legal and cultural traditions to allow women access to these jobs, the focus, according to Hennig, should be less on existing structural challenges and more on adapting to the current corporate environment. “‘The difference between us and the women’s movement,’ Dr. Hennig said, ‘is that they say we have to make men change and we say we have to change first.’”<sup>932</sup> Professional women promoted achievement through women’s incorporation into the male domain. Thus, many corporate feminists did not

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<sup>929</sup> Hennig and Jardim, *The Managerial Woman*, 58.

<sup>930</sup> Hennig and Jardim, *The Managerial Woman*, 60.

<sup>931</sup> In some ways this attitude overlooked the fact that legal and cultural changes, initiated by the feminist movement, had undermined traditional policies and norms which had been preventing women from access to executive positions.

<sup>932</sup> Marilyn Bender, “Behavioral Differences Stressed in Women’s Management Training,” *New York Times*, February 11, 1974.

confront the economic or cultural devaluation of women's work. Instead they wanted to help women adopt the strategies and behaviors that had helped men to succeed in higher-paid, higher-status positions.

Career advisors usually did not consider constraints imposed by class, which meant that they described workplaces as full of endless possibilities depending on one's ambitions and desires. They seemed unaware of economic and educational limitations, as well as variable social networks that could explain why some women remained in low paying or unfulfilling jobs.<sup>933</sup> Rather, their comments suggested that women had the power to define the course of their own careers. The editor of *Working Woman* magazine explained in 1980 that she had been receiving "an unusual number of letters from readers who feel they are stuck in their careers . . . [but] most of the stuckness is in our heads."<sup>934</sup> Women were hindering themselves by not learning how to climb corporate ladders that men had been ascending for decades. This motivational, can-do attitude masked structural barriers such as low pay and lack of upward mobility and that disparately affected women in clerical jobs more so than women in professional work.

Employers also endorsed a message of individual responsibility since growing human resource departments were supposed to be ensuring that employees had equal opportunities to advance in a workplace that promoted fair practices regardless of race, sex, religion, or other demographic characteristics. In the popular workplace video "You Pack Your Own 'Chute" (1972), the message was clear: each person possessed the answers to her personal and professional problems and no one else could be blamed for an individual's failures. Some companies showed this thirty-minute video at lunchtime hoping to inspire wage and salaried

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<sup>933</sup> For a discussion of social capital see Laird, *Pull*, 266-338.

<sup>934</sup> Kate Rand Lloyd, "To Our Readers," *Working Woman* 5, no. 10, October 1980, 6.

employees to take greater responsibility for their duties at work. This video was based on the first career counseling guide, *What Color Is Your Parachute?* by Richard Nelson Bolles.

Updated almost every year since it was first published in 1970, the bestselling book encouraged Americans to examine their own state in life and to take the initiative to make it better.<sup>935</sup>

As some women gained insight and confidence from the messages in career self-help books, they could decide to leave female-dominated work and move into business-related fields. Former teacher Judy Boston revealed that her search for a new career began upon reading *What Color Is Your Parachute?* The book helped her to determine that she wanted a job that offered more “money and power,” but when she sent out resumes, “she discovered that being an ex-teacher was worse than having no experience at all.” According to Boston, “You [had] to hide the fact that you’ve taught . . . as though it were a communicable disease.” Ultimately she found a commission-based job selling advertising space, from which she had not yet earned much money after six months. However, her husband was supporting them financially, allowing her to remain in the position. She felt challenged in her new job, claiming she was learning skills that would allow her to move into a number of different business-related areas.<sup>936</sup> In the article “Is There Life After Teaching?” *Working Woman* described a “national problem” of burnout that was afflicting teachers, most of whom were underpaid and overworked. Over 100,000 teachers had left the classroom in 1980 to pursue other jobs. Through career counseling and self-help

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<sup>935</sup> Richard Nelson Bolles, *What Color Is Your Parachute?* (self published, 1970; Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1972). Numerous articles in *Working Woman* suggested this book including Jaqueline Mason, “Career Fixers,” *Working Woman* 2, no. 9, Sept. 1977, 80. Also about workplace videos see Letter from Tamara L. Browne, National Association of Banking Women to Sylvia Kramer, Women’s Action Alliance, June 30, 1983, Box 82, folder 28, Women’s Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. To improve women’s management skills for these types of positions, the National Association of Women in Banking, a group of female professionals in the industry, produced a five-part video series in the early 1980s that emphasized the importance of self-reliance. In “Looking at Leadership,” thirty successful women discussed their roles as productive professionals and emphasized that women could become leaders in all realms of their lives.

<sup>936</sup> Karen Levine, “Selling Big,” *Working Woman* 2, no. 12 December 1977, 30.

manuals, many—like Judy Boston—were making the “difficult transition” to work in business and government jobs.<sup>937</sup>

Women’s work took a defensive position as books and articles celebrated new opportunities for professional women. The Institute for Managerial and Professional Women claimed that many women were avoiding clerical work if possible because they were unwilling “to accept the attitudes and behaviors directed towards secretaries.” Although demand for clericals was increasing, the lack of respect afforded clericals was leading to an alleged “shortage.” Women were “leaving the secretarial field,” similar to how they were leaving teaching, to find higher-paying opportunities.<sup>938</sup> During the job search, career advisors recommended that they minimize their experience as secretaries if they wanted to make the transition into management. One career counselor suggested that a secretary in search of a management position emphasize certain skills on her resume but “underplay the secretarial role.” itself.<sup>939</sup> This advice demonstrated that some personnel managers considered clerical work not just irrelevant experience, but possibly contrary to the desired knowledge, skills, and abilities of an ideal candidate. Although no clear path existed from clerical to management positions, some determined and resourceful clericals sought to move out of their “dead-end jobs” and into something that they could call a professional career.<sup>940</sup> In a letter to the editor of *Working Woman* magazine, a secretary claimed to use the magazine articles, which largely concerned the

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<sup>937</sup> Rochelle Distelheim, “Is There Life After Teaching?” *Working Woman* 5, no. 12, December 1980, 52-54, 59. Also see Enid Harlow, “Learn, Grow, Prosper” *Working Woman* 3, no. 9, August 1978, 40-45. In this article, Harlow suggested that teachers leave a dead end field and find work that was better paid. She featured the story of a teacher who becomes a broker at Goldman Sachs.

<sup>938</sup> “The Vanishing Secretary,” in *Network News* from the Institute for Managerial and Professional Women, Vol. 1, no. 9, October 1979, Carton 3, Women’s Newsletter and Periodical Collection, PR-4, 77.1.3, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>939</sup> Vicki W. Kramer, “HOTLINE,” *Working Woman* 5, no. 11, November 1980, 114.

<sup>940</sup> “Corporate Woman: Teaching Women How to Manage Their Careers,” *Business Week*, May 28, 1979, pp. 148-150, Box 92, folder 15, Women’s Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Also in this folder are planning notes for the workshop called Upward Mobility for Secretaries at the Women at Work Exposition.



issues facing career women, “to [see] the possibilities out there for me.”<sup>941</sup> Another twenty-four year old single woman enjoyed the magazine because it motivated her to “better my image” and supported her two life goals: independence and a satisfying, fulfilling career. *Working Woman* provided her with “the kick in the \_ss we all need at times” to move towards a career change.<sup>942</sup>

Yet other clerical women were not inspired by upward-mobility messages of *Working Woman*. The magazine’s slant emanated from the mission of its editor Kate Rand Lloyd, who wanted to focus on “‘women who [were] making news and breaking old patterns as they [moved] into and up through the work force.’”<sup>943</sup> After serving as managing editor of both *Vogue* and *Glamour* magazines, she took over editorship of *Working Woman* in 1978 when it was bankrupt, just two years after the magazine launched.<sup>944</sup> While she strategically shifted the focus of *Working Woman* towards the concerns of higher-earning corporate businesswomen, she claimed that the magazine was for women making anywhere “from \$6000 to \$60,000.” A reader just needed “a point of view that [aimed] upwards.”<sup>945</sup> Lloyd enjoyed great success, quadrupling circulation in two years and making it the fastest growing magazine in 1980. With 2 million readers that year, a variety of wage-earning women were apparently buying the magazine.<sup>946</sup> However, as the magazine tailored its articles towards women who had attained formal degrees, it assumed that all women were attending college and graduate school, which overlooked the opportunities available to women based on differing class statuses. While most women worked in sex-segregated clerical or service jobs, *Working Woman* defined a ‘working woman’ as a professional woman moving into a male-dominated career.

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<sup>941</sup> Letter of January 18, 1983 to Kate Rand Lloyd, *Working Woman* Magazine, Letters to the Editor, 1981-1983, Unprocessed, location 58A, ACC# 83-60, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>942</sup> Letter to Kate Rand Lloyd, *Working Woman* Magazine, Letters to the Editor, 1981-1983, Unprocessed, location 58A, ACC# 83-60, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>943</sup> “Women’s Conference to Hear Kate Lloyd,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 17, 1983.

<sup>944</sup> Barbara Bradley, “As Women Climb, So Does a Magazine,” *Christian Science Monitor*, February 9, 1987.

<sup>945</sup> Kate Rand Lloyd, “To Our Readers,” *Working Woman* 3, no. 6, June 1978, 4.

<sup>946</sup> Kate Rand Lloyd, “To Our Readers,” *Working Woman* 5, no. 11, November 1980, 8.

Numerous unpublished letters to the editor challenged the magazine's definition of a working woman. Some women noted that the magazine's perspectives left out the needs of women remaining in sex-segregated work. One clerical who worked in a small office said that she used to subscribe to *Working Woman* but that the magazine did not help her daughter (a nurse), her daughter-in-law (a teacher) or her with their problems of being overworked, underpaid and trying to "hold our lives and our families together."<sup>947</sup> Another letter complained: "the title of your magazine, WORKING WOMAN, indicated to me that it was addressing the issues of working women everywhere," but in fact, this government worker felt "slighted" and "inadequate" by the articles addressed to corporate women who earned "'big money'" and traveled extensively. She asked the magazine to "address the issues of thousands of women like me who are in hi [sic] pressure jobs with low pay, and low rewards. We are a very dedicated group of women, and I don't think we should go unrecognized."<sup>948</sup> A similar clerical complaint stated:

Your magazine has forgot [sic] about the other side of our working women. I mean the secretaries, Accounting Assistants, hotel carriers, telephone operators, Sales clerks, Bus drivers, Word Processors, oh! Do you get the idea. I consider my self [sic] a professional and a career woman in every respect bringing up my children and being able to deal with people on all levels of society. You make me feel that your magazine is geared to college grads, MBA people only.<sup>949</sup>

This woman demanded recognition for working-class women who were struggling to support their families on meager wages. She thought they deserved the same respect that was granted to "college grads, MBA people." Another secretary, frustrated by the devaluing of secretarial work, asked, "why is it that all the books and magazine articles on job-hunting automatically

<sup>947</sup> Letter of September 24, 1981 to Kate Rand Lloyd, *Working Woman* Magazine, Letters to the Editor, 1981-1983, Unprocessed, location 58A, ACC# 83-60, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>948</sup> Letter of July 8, 1982 to Kate Rand Lloyd, *Working Woman* Magazine, Letters to the Editor, 1981-1983, Unprocessed, location 58A, ACC# 83-60, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>949</sup> Letter of August 24, [1981] to Kate Rand Lloyd, *Working Woman* Magazine, Letters to the Editor, 1981-1983, Unprocessed, location 58A, ACC# 83-60, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

assume we all want executive positions?” She had enjoyed being a secretary and thought she was very good at it. She believed that secretaries were “so important to the world of business” that business would be “paralyzed” without them.<sup>950</sup> While these readers wanted the magazine to address the problems facing sex-segregated workers, *Working Woman* was emphasizing the concerns of credentialed women who were striving for professional mobility in what used to be a man’s world.

Some clericals were reading *Working Woman* because it was one of the only national magazines, along with *Saavy*, that marketed itself as addressing the issues of women in the workforce. But many were finding that the content was not relevant to their problems. One clerical told the magazine that it should address more than “corporate gamesmanship” for the professional, upwardly-mobile woman, referencing the magazine’s similarity to books such as Betty Harragan’s *Games Mother Never Taught You*.<sup>951</sup> Another woman from Georgia, who in 1983 was making less than \$10,000 per year in her office job, criticized a salary negotiation article by Harragan. This worker said that unlike the concerns of women with four-year degrees and better professional contacts, “the name of the game [for her was] income to keep alive versus no job and bare subsistence on welfare.”<sup>952</sup> Many secretarial workers wanted chances for promotions but lacked the necessary resources and qualifications enjoyed by an increasing number of women who were attending college and graduate school.<sup>953</sup>

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<sup>950</sup> Letter of n.d. [1982] to *Working Woman* Magazine, Letters to the Editor, 1981-1983, Unprocessed, location 58A, ACC# 83-60, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>951</sup> Letter of 1982 to Kate Rand Lloyd, *Working Woman* Magazine, Letters to the Editor, 1981-1983, Unprocessed, location 58A, ACC# 83-60, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>952</sup> Letter of 1983 to Kate Rand Lloyd, *Working Woman* Magazine, Letters to the Editor, 1981-1983, Unprocessed, location 58A, ACC# 83-60, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>953</sup> In the 1970s, the number of women earning college and graduate degrees was increasing, with younger women attending college, actively planning for their careers when they graduated. Thomas A. Diprete and Claudia Buchmann, *The Rise of Women: The Growing Gender Gap in Education and What It Means for American Schools* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2013). Furthermore, corporations were recruiting externally for managerial and professional positions, hiring well-educated, young women to fulfill affirmative action guidelines. See third section of Chapter Four.

Certain demographic sectors noticed the limited focus of the advice in *Working Woman*. A single mother who had been a clerical for 15 years “to put food on the table and pay the rent” was trying for “something better” and was planning on enrolling in school to earn an associate degree. She wanted to see *Working Woman* address financial and educational issues for those without an advanced degree and for the women who had not been working in the “great positions we all wish for.”<sup>954</sup> A woman of color complained that *Working Woman* “focuses almost exclusively on white women, seemingly ignoring that minority women are a part of its readership.”<sup>955</sup> Another woman told the magazine to “[please] try to print some articles on what the ‘poor’ class are wearing and how to get that job after one reaches the 30-40 age bracket.”<sup>956</sup> Echoing similar sentiments, another clerical called for the magazine to approach the issues of older women who lacked college educations. This single mother in her 40s had been a secretary for twenty-five years. Working towards an associate degree in management, she was hoping to advance to a more “responsible and rewarding” position. Unsurprisingly, an editor had written a big “NO” in red ink on the top, signaling that the letter would not appear in the magazine. The problems of older women without college degrees apparently did not align with the magazine’s mission of featuring articles for and about professional women who were “movers and shakers,” in the words of Kate Rand Lloyd.<sup>957</sup>

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<sup>954</sup> Letter of February 16, 1983 to Kate Rand Lloyd, *Working Woman* Magazine, Letters to the Editor, 1981-1983, Unprocessed, location 58A, ACC# 83-60, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>955</sup> Letter of n.d. to *Working Woman* Magazine, Letters to the Editor, 1981-1983, Unprocessed, location 58A, ACC# 83-60, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>956</sup> Letter of September 22, 1982 to *Working Woman* Magazine, n.d. Letters to the Editor, 1981-1983, Unprocessed, location 58A, ACC# 83-60, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>957</sup> Letter of February 8, 1983 to Kate Rand Lloyd, *Working Woman* Magazine, Letters to the Editor, 1981-1983, Unprocessed, location 58A, ACC# 83-60, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. For “mover and shaker” language see Letter from Kate Rand Lloyd to reader, July 22, 1982, *Working Woman* Magazine, Letters to the Editor, 1981-1983, Unprocessed, location 58A, ACC# 83-60, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Clericals were becoming more aware that their jobs were devalued, particularly as other women were able to garner esteem and respect through managerial positions. A worker at Boston University was ashamed to say that she was a secretary when someone asked what she did even though she knew that she should not feel embarrassed about how hard she worked.<sup>958</sup> Female professionals were questioning why women would remain in clerical work, given that new options were becoming available. Kate Rand Lloyd mourned that all secretaries were suffering from a “terminal illness” because their jobs depended on pleasing other people. According to Lloyd, they had to prioritize being liked over achieving higher positions in the workforce.<sup>959</sup> Clericals were not being perceived with the same respect and dignity that many office professionals—male and female—enjoyed. Journalist Judy Klemesrud wrote in the *New York Times* that a clerical could represent a number of less-than-complimentary female stereotypes: a “gum-chewing sex kitten; husband hunter; miniskirted ding-a-ling; slow-witted pencil pusher; office ‘go-fer’; reliable old shoe.”<sup>960</sup> In other words, a clerical could be viewed as sexually alluring, maternal, or dull; or she might be all of these at different times. Given these depictions of the occupation, clerical women had trouble feeling confident and proud of their work identities. Ellen Cassedy said that before starting 9to5 with Nussbaum, she had “absorbed what was in the culture—that office work wasn’t really work, office workers were not true workers, women’s work was not that important.”<sup>961</sup>

The hesitation—by clericals themselves—to associate office work with real work hindered clericals from larger-scale organizing. As union leader Andy Stern stated, reflecting on

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<sup>958</sup> Barbara Rahke, interviewed by Stacey Heath, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, May 23, 2006.

<sup>959</sup> Kate Rand Lloyd, Editor of *Working Woman* magazine, Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Box 93, folder 7, Women’s Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

<sup>960</sup> Judy Klemesrud, “Secretary Image: A Tempest in a Typewriter,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1972.

<sup>961</sup> Ellen Cassedy, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 6, 2005.

District 925, “office workers didn’t see themselves as much as I thought or others thought they would, as a craft” relative to carpenters or other skilled craft workers. They had no “craft identity.”<sup>962</sup> One University of Massachusetts clerical believed that until office workers started to see their problems as legitimate and worthy of complaint, others would not recognize the weight of their concerns.<sup>963</sup> Another woman described clerical workers as lacking consciousness of their social position: “I don’t think clericals feel superior to a blue-collar worker as they feel just a nothing themselves.”<sup>964</sup>

Some professional women saw clericals as suffering from false-consciousness because they were not more willing to join the office workers’ movement or the mainstream feminist movement to improve their lot.<sup>965</sup> Feminist activist and author Mary Kathleen Benet suggested that many feminists did not fully understand why many secretaries were inactive. “The secretaries [seemed] to Women’s Liberationists incredibly unaware of their own interests, but they [did] stand to make some gains from their social conservatism.”<sup>966</sup> According to Benet, secretaries did not suffer from false consciousness, but rather they were trying to make the best of an existing situation. Many clerical workers, Benet explained, grew up with different norms from those of the middle-class feminists. They did not have much exposure to intellectual

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<sup>962</sup> Andy Stern, interviewed by Ann Froines, SEIU District 925 Legacy Project, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, November 9, 2005.

<sup>963</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with university secretary from the University of Massachusetts, #48, 1974-1975, MC 366, Box 2, folder 12, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

<sup>964</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with clerical union organizer, #19, 1974-1975, MC 366, Box 1, folder 5, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

<sup>965</sup> Anne Carol Machung, “From Psyche to Technic: The Politics of Office Work (PhD dissertation in Political Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1983). Machung interviewed 50 clerical about their jobs between 1978 and 1980 and she attended meetings of Women Organized for Employment of San Francisco (9to5 affiliate).

<sup>966</sup> Mary Kathleen Benet, *The Secretarial Ghetto* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1972), 94.

questioning and were suspicious of overly-educated or ambitious women.<sup>967</sup> Secretaries saw feminists as somewhat un-American and unconventional.<sup>968</sup>

Many women from working-class backgrounds did not necessarily translate personal workplace struggles into larger political, social, or moral issues for several reasons. They relied on their next paychecks for food and rent, making them extremely dependent on their jobs for basic sustenance. Because many of these clericals made wages that were hovering around the poverty line, they spent their energy trying to make ends meet and run their households.<sup>969</sup> Some had second or third jobs, cared for their children without a partner, or were trying to work their way out of a cycle of poverty that had plagued everyone they had known. Although they might have welcomed changes to unjust office norms, they saw their jobs as necessary for survival and they were not willing to endanger their employment status.<sup>970</sup>

While clericals hesitated to organize, professional women gained influence by establishing networks. Ultimately each woman, and no one else, was responsible for her own success. Yet career women began to recognize the importance of finding mentors and networking with other professional women. As early as 1962, Felice Schwartz founded Catalyst to help women gain managerial and more executive positions in corporate America. By the late

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<sup>967</sup> Benet, *The Secretarial Ghetto*, 93-94.

<sup>968</sup> Benet, *The Secretarial Ghetto*, 125. Another inside account of an office comes from Judith Ann, "The Secretarial Proletariat" in Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Vintage, 1970), 86-100. Radical feminist Judith Ann Duffett wrote about her experience as a clerical worker and emphasized that even the compliant workers were fully aware of their situations. In all of the offices in which she worked, all of the women knew they received low pay, had little chance for promotion, and were viewed as easily replaceable. These women knew they were "exploited by male supremacy and a class system," according to Duffett, suggesting that their lack of a college education and their disinterest in the feminist movement did not blind them to their social reality.

<sup>969</sup> Nine to Five issued many reports on wages and the cost of living to show that Boston clerical workers made substandard wages relative to clericals in other major U.S. cities. For instance, in 1977, using a poverty line of \$6200, over fifty percent of file clerks in the Boston insurance industry made less than poverty-level wages. 9to5, National Association of Working Women (U.S.) Records, 9to5, "Office Work in Boston: A Statistical Study," n.d. [1978]. 79-M16-81-M121, Box 5, folders 127, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

<sup>970</sup> Jean Tepperman Papers, Tepperman interview with Travellers insurance clerical, #12, 1974-1975, MC 366, Box 1, folder 4, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University. Women at an insurance firm told the 9to5 representation that they support her even if they would not join or be active in the organization.

1970s, Catalyst was focusing on moving the most qualified professional women into powerful positions on corporate boards through its Corporate Board Resource program.<sup>971</sup> Most female professionals agreed that networking functioned best if done with women who also were interested in mobility. According to Mary-Scott Welch, feminist, journalist, and author, an aspiring vice president should avoid wasting too much time in a group with women who were content to be secretaries. She also recommended that upwardly-mobile women avoid networking through clerical labor organizations or other groups that tended to “victimize workers.” Networking beyond the office in “horizontal” or business-oriented groups could help ambitious women move above the position of “assistant of the assistant.” The Women’s Forum of New York City was a good example of a horizontal association. Founded in 1974, it was an invitation-only group of women who sought personal and professional advancement.<sup>972</sup> In Washington D.C. the Washington Women’s Network, also known as the Old Girls Network, began as thirty women started meeting for lunch at the National Lawyers Club. The group grew to 200 who were interested not just in lunch but also in federal government employment options.<sup>973</sup> These organizations for ambitious career women deepened the class divide between clerical and professional women. As more institutions arose to empower educated, well-connected female professionals, the women who remained in clerical work struggled for economic justice without laws or unions to protect them.

## Conclusion

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<sup>971</sup> Richard L. Zweigenhaft and G. William Domhoff, “Women in the Power Elite,” in Barbara A. Arrighi, ed., *Understanding Inequality: The Intersection of Race/Ethnicity, Class, and Gender*, (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 182.

<sup>972</sup> Mary Scott Welch, author, Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Box 93, folder 2, Women’s Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Welch wrote *Networking: The Great New Way for Women to Get Ahead* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1980).

<sup>973</sup> Carol Harvey, Federal Women’s Program Office, Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Box 93, folder 2, Women’s Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.



Karen Nussbaum wrote to another female labor leader in 1977 about the triumphs and hurdles of developing Local 925, the Boston-based precursor to SEIU District 925: “Though winning elections and contracts is as painstaking as ever, we are succeeding in our ‘consciousness-raising’ work of bringing the issues of women office workers out into the public and mobilizing support.”<sup>974</sup> In other words, waging successful campaigns was extremely difficult, but the organization’s efforts were increasing awareness of clerical workers’ problems among the general public and the clericals themselves. While the intangible gains of 9to5 and District 925 should not be discounted, certain trends undermined further progress of the office workers’ movement. The battle to unionize private offices was thwarted by changes in management strategy, which promoted improved productivity through union-management cooperation. Promotional opportunities for clericals would be even less likely as a new professional class of educated women with economic and social advantages explained their success in terms of individual ambition.

A new industrial relations paradigm was emerging in the 1970s from the alienation and automation that was plaguing many men and women in the blue- and white-collar workforces. Worker productivity declined, and managers looked to new techniques to remedy employees’ dissatisfaction. As part of the quality of work life experiments, experts suggested that employee relations should become less adversarial, giving managers a reason to hire consultants who prevented unionization. The union-free office environment of the 1980s allowed larger human resources departments to develop, which further promoted cooperation and participation. As HR departments formalized corporate policies and procedures to comply with EEO regulation, they

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<sup>974</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, Letter from Karen Nussbaum to Elinor Glen, March 31, 1978, Box 3, folder 4, Reuther Library.

ignored employees' pay concerns, leaving workers without a substantive grievance process for unfair wages.

While some women were struggling to unionize their offices, others were accepting new professional openings alongside men where they had never worked before. Executive women experienced economic discrimination and faced negative remarks from male colleagues to be sure. But on the whole, professional females, who were educated and well-connected women, increasingly had more options in the 1980s. They shared their success stories by writing instructional books and articles, advising other women on how to reach their goals. Leading female managers maintained that they possessed certain qualities that had helped them to advance: they were assertive, rational, non-emotional, politically savvy, confident and credible.<sup>975</sup> Yet professional women usually explained their achievements by ignoring class analysis, which misrepresented women in sex-segregated work as unmotivated and unambitious. Working-class women in sex-segregated work faced limited opportunities as union efficacy wavered and clerical work remained devalued. The traits that had long been associated with a private secretary—nurturing, obedient, and submissive—were not the same traits that would give the professional woman an edge in a man's world. By the 1980s contrasting images of working women had emerged: some were viewed as content to be in subservient, service jobs while the more visible and celebrated women were striving for sex equality through professional engagements.

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<sup>975</sup> Betsy Jaffe, Catalyst, Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Box 92, folder 37, Women's Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

## Epilogue

As managerial positions became available to women and minorities in the 1970s and 1980s, career advisors suggested that women avoid “dead end” clerical work if looking for promotions. One of the problems was that the job tasks performed by secretaries were not considered to be the types of work experiences that would be relevant to managerial positions. In fact, the better a secretary performed, the less likely it was that she would be promoted. In *Men and Women of the Corporation*, one of the most influential books about organizational structure, management, and gender, sociologist Rosabeth Moss Kanter suggested that as secretaries became better at their jobs, they became more indispensable as assistants to others. Performing well as a clerical meant a lower chance of promotion in the corporation.<sup>976</sup> Feminist author Caroline Bird echoed similar thoughts. Replying in an advice column to a clerical worker she stated, “You’ve obviously done too good a job on that sales office, and it is going to take dynamite to blast you out of it.”<sup>977</sup> According to these voices, secretarial work was not becoming a training ground for management.

In the 1970s and 1980s, not clericals but an increasing number of young women who were attaining formal degrees found opportunities to work alongside professional men.<sup>978</sup> One human resource officer declared that equal employment opportunity legislation was allowing women unprecedented entry to the highest rungs in the corporate hierarchy.<sup>979</sup> Institutional

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<sup>976</sup> Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 98-99. Kanter also suggested that secretaries should wean themselves from their bosses and stop being praise addicted.

<sup>977</sup> Caroline Bird, “Working Your Way Up,” *Working Woman* 1, no. 1, November 1976, 86.

<sup>978</sup> Patricia Mayhew, Assistant Director of Career Planning, Gulf Oil, Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Box 92, folder 37, Women’s Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Mayhew stated that although some had aspirations for professional careers, secretaries were being held back from managerial positions because of their “traditional culture,” and because they did not have college degrees.

<sup>979</sup> Patricia McGreeny, EEO Compliance Officer, Heublein Spirits, Women at Work Exposition, October 1979, Box 92, folder 31, Women’s Action Alliance Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. In the 1970s Heublein controlled brands such as Sminoff Vodka, Guinness Stout, Jose Cuevo, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Grey Poupon.

barriers had fallen, according to many personnel officers and career advisors. Given this access to new positions, individual women became responsible for attaining positions and succeeding in the professional world. Lack of self-confidence, fear of risk, and craving for praise were the shortcomings that could prevent women from gaining the money and power that men were acquiring in the workplace.<sup>980</sup> What a woman could achieve became a reflection of her inner strength and personal ambition.

Women did make progress into the managerial ranks. In 1991 40 percent of women were classified as “executive, administrative, and managerial,” an increase from 19 percent in 1972.<sup>981</sup> Yet professional women began to discuss institutional barriers that were preventing them from reaching even higher corporate levels; they felt they had maximized their emotional intelligence and individual initiative to reach their current positions. Fifteen years after Betty Harragan had proclaimed that she could teach women how to master the “game that their mothers had never taught them to play,” many women were still not where they wanted to be.<sup>982</sup> The Department of Labor’s “glass ceiling report” revisited institutional causes of sex-based discrimination in the workplace. The “glass ceiling” represented a structural obstacle: discriminatory attitudes or behaviors—often subtle—were preventing women from full participation at the executive levels in the business world, government, and academia. In the largest U.S. companies, three of every 100 top executive jobs were held by women. The Labor Department immediately began to discuss how it could remedy the glass ceiling effect.<sup>983</sup>

While the glass ceiling certainly deserved attention, less pressing to lawmakers were the statistics about sex-segregated labor. In 1991, 98 percent of all secretaries, stenographers, and

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<sup>980</sup> Management Women, Inc., “12 Career Mistakes,” *Working Woman* 3, no. 9, September 1978, 37.

<sup>981</sup> Ann M. Morrison, Randall P. White, Ellen Van Velsor, editors, *Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Can Women Research the Top of America’s Largest Corporations?* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 5.

<sup>982</sup> Betty Lehan Harragan, *Games Mother Never Taught You: Corporate Gamesmanship for Women* (New York: Warner Books, 1978).

<sup>983</sup> Amy Saltzman, “Trouble at the Top,” *U.S. News & World Report* 110, issue 23 (June 17, 1991), p. 40.

typists were women; 90 percent of nursing assistants; 75 percent of all waitresses or waiters were women. These aforementioned sex-segregated jobs also represented three of the lowest paid occupational categories.<sup>984</sup> While these statistics had persisted since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, they had never elicited the national concern that the glass ceiling effect was initiating. A federal commission was created and an act was passed within a few years of the term becoming part of the general discourse. The popular media took hold of the glass ceiling idea, featuring cover stories, front-page headlines, and nightly news coverage about the well-educated women who were being kept out of the C-suite.<sup>985</sup>

To be sure, the discrimination occurring at the highest levels of corporate America was unfair to many hard-working women and it merited public attention. However, examining the definition of a “glass ceiling” demonstrated that it was not a new phenomenon to white-collar organizations. For several decades women had been looking up at the male-dominated positions above them, feeling qualified for them but not able to gain access despite stellar performance. Kanter and Bird had warned women against taking secretarial positions precisely because they would not be able to move upwards despite demonstrated excellence. What was new in the 1980s and 1990s that was not true in the 60s and 70s was that some women had made enough progress into managerial circles that they were now looking up at the most elite positions in the company. The discrimination that was occurring drew interest from a number of parties who were intrigued by or had a stake in the executive levels of corporate America.

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<sup>984</sup> Saltzman, “Trouble at the Top,” *U.S. News & World Report*, 47.

<sup>985</sup> U.S. Glass Ceiling Commission, *Good for Business: Making Full Use of the Nation’s Human Capital* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 1995). Accessed July 3, 2013, [http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/key\\_workplace/116/](http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/key_workplace/116/).

In a 1983 interview, Karen Nussbaum disclosed that she would have liked to have seen the *Nine to Five* movie close with the women joining a labor organization.<sup>986</sup> Instead it ended with one woman being promoted into a vice president position—an implausible possibility for a clerical worker in 1980. No such promotional track had been created or was being created to move secretaries into executive roles. And in fact by the 1990s, few women—secretaries or not—were holding vice president titles. The acceptance of the glass ceiling idea was ensuring that more managerial women would be promoted into executive circles. Yet we are left wondering what would have happened if the pay and promotional priorities of sex-segregated clericals would have become part of our standard definition of sex discrimination.

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<sup>986</sup> SEIU District 925 Collection, “Automation May Increase Discrimination’: A Conversation with Karen Nussbaum,” *Office Administration and Automation*, p. 34, April 1983, Box 14, folder 87, Reuther Library.