

Quote, Unquote

We are all housewives, the natural people to turn to when there is something unpleasant, inconvenient, or inconclusive to be done. It will not do for women who have jobs to pretend that society's ills will be cured if all women are gainfully employed. In Russia, 70 percent of the doctors and 20 percent of the construction workers are women, but women still do all the housework. Some revolution. As the Russian women's saying goes, it simply freed us to do twice the work. ... The question of house work is not a trivial matter to be worked out the day before we go on to greater things. Men do not want equality at home. A strong woman is a threat, someone to be jealous of. Most of all, she is an inconvenience, and she can be replaced. They like things as they are. It's pleasanter."

(Ms. Magazine September/October 1997 pp. 16 - 18)

"I sell sandwiches and snacks: chocolate, bread, cigarettes, chewing-gum, biscuits, and soft drinks to the girls working in the factories near the stall. I sell items that do not spoil easily, since this place does not have either piped water or electricity. My daughter fetches water from the nearby factory. Having no electricity does not cause me that many problems since I close the stall before dark. ... I shop every day. I wake up at six in the morning. Around six thirty, I am at the stall, frying potatoes and eggs and preparing sandwiches. The girls who work at the factory stop by to buy sandwiches before starting work at seven o'clock. Between seven and eleven thirty, I don't have that many clients; I take advantage of the quiet and prepare the meals that I serve around twelve, ...around four o'clock my workload lessens; I wash up and clean the counter. I close the stall at five ... because I have to shop. Before going back home, I buy vegetables and other goods ..."

(The Thousand and One Paths to Empowerment: Coping Strategies of Poor Urban Women in Tunisia, pp. 65-66)

"For women with family responsibilities, their upward movement may be hampered as they juggle time to devote to both career and family. An important feature of professional and especially managerial work, are the long working hours that seem to be required to gain recognition and eventual promotion. Part-time managers are a rare breed and yet it seems virtually impossible to reconcile long hours with the demands of running a home and caring for children. As a result, in certain countries there are indications that women, more than men, forgo marriage and children for the sake of their careers."

(World of Work: The Magazine of the ILO, #23 1998 p. 7)

"Among developing regions, Africa has the highest participation rate of girls: approximately 37 per cent of girls work in Africa, versus 20 per cent in Asia and 11 per cent in Latin America. The ILO says that although boys account for roughly three out of every five child labourers, the proportion of girls may well be higher; activities carried out in and around the household are generally under-reported. Household work is reported to be the main reason for about one-third of the youngsters who do not attend school. They were either never enrolled or obliged to drop out of school because of full-time housework. If such full-time housework were taken into account, the number of girls could even exceed that of boys."

(World of Work: The Magazine of the ILO, #23 1998 p. 10)

"I found a job through a friend of mine ... I had a very difficult time during this period, I hardly saw my children ... I would wake up early in the morning to cook and leave the food for them. When they came back from school, I wouldn't be there to see whether they ate or not, or how they were. If the children found the house door open they would enter; otherwise they would have to wait outside. When I came back at night, they would be asleep. I didn't see them at all. I got tired really tired ... I left my job. I started to work at home, selling fruit ... I used to make barely enough money to pay the water and electricity bills."

(The Thousand and One Paths to Empowerment: Coping Strategies of Poor Urban Women in Tunisia, p. 29)

"... the problem for men is not just that women are taking more jobs; it is that a significant proportion of men are dropping out of the job market altogether as women enter it. In the 1960s, almost all men worked and less than half of women. Not so now. The percentage of working-age men in the EU outside the labour force rose from just 8% in 1968 to 22% in 1993. For women, the trend was reversed, falling from 58% to 44% over the same period. In America the pattern is slightly different: while women's labour-force participation has risen from 43% in 1970 to about 60% now, men's has dropped relatively little from 80% to 75% (though there is an important exception: male high-school drop-outs - those completing fewer than 12 years of school; in 1970, 86% were either working or looking for work; by 1993, only 72% were). If its employment trends continue, America will be employing nearly as many women as men by 2005."

(The Economist, September 28th 1996, p. 24)