

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 20, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE PRESIDENT

Predicting the future is never an especially productive enterprise in politics. But when seemingly unmistakable signs of an emergent political force begin to appear on every hand, and yet are somehow ignored, it is worth the slight risk to one's reputation to try to point them out.

I will predict, then, that female equality will be a major cultural/political force of the 1970's.

The signs are everywhere. As is often the case, it is among young people on the left that the inclination has assumed the proportions of a movement. The student left of the moment has been mostly reported in terms of its fondness for Eldridge Cleaver and Chairman Mao. Almost unnoticed, but very prominent in the deliberations and literature of an organization such as SDS, is the subject of "Women's Liberation." It would appear, for example, that the split of the SDS at its Chicago convention in June was in part at least precipitated by the Black Panthers'

insensitivity to the subject. The theretofore dominant faction of SDS, playing up its ties with the militant blacks, gave the floor to the Panthers, who proceeded to address the group in terms of "male chauvinism," and proved a disaster for their backers. (In the thought that your reading need not always be humorless, I attach an account of the event from The Old Mole, the Cambridge underground journal.) The convention ended up pretty much in the hands of the Maoist Progressive Labor faction, for which the exploitation of blacks is regarded as no different from, or worse than, the whole regime of bourgeois exploitation, including most prominently, the exploitation of women.

There is some symbolism here. The blacks are struggling to break out of that lower class matriarchy, and make much of their dominance over women. But their white middle and upper middle class supporters are made up about equally of young males and females, equally well educated, equally well off, and increasingly resentful of the many subtle ways in which women are excluded from the "serious" things of American life. (By all accounts, the women radicals are the most fearsome of all.) But these are not really

leftist issues. Rather they are quintessentially middle class political demands. I have not the least doubt they will spread and make this an increasingly prominent demand across the entire political spectrum.

Recently, as another instance, a Department of Labor hearing was more or less disrupted as one speaker after another predicted violence if women are not granted equality. The representative of the National Catholic Council of Catholic Women, for example, demanded that traditionally "male" jobs be advertised in Vogue and other "women's" magazines.

I do not wish to burden you with details. The essential fact is that we have educated women for equality in America, but have not really given it to them. Not at all. Inequality is so great that the dominant group either doesn't notice it, or assumes the dominated group likes it that way. (An old story!) Did you happen to note, for example, Erik Erikson's comment that there were no women present at our meeting of educators. He might well have commented on the general absence of women from higher education in America. It is considered too important for them. They teach kindergarten.

(Which, I might add, may indeed be too important for them!) I would bet there are proportionately more women in the Marine Corps than on most University faculties. Thus higher education subtly perpetuates the notion that women have equal rights, but not really equal potentialities, etc.

I am no great fancier of India or Ceylon. But consider the apparent ease with which those countries have accepted female heads of state. Consider how odd the idea of a lady President would be to us. I repeat: male dominance is so deeply a part of American life that males don't even notice it.

I would suggest you could take advantage of this. In your appointments (as you have begun to do), but perhaps especially in your pronouncements. This is a subject ripe for creative political leadership and initiative.



Daniel P. Moynihan

Attachment