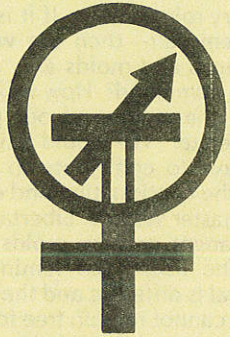


THE CASE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS



By Judi Barnes

Application for Membership

Society for Libertarian Life
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THE LIBERTAS STATEMENT

We, as libertarians, affirm:
That full individual liberty is impossible in any society other than a voluntary one that aggresses upon no one;
That men and women require the full and independent use of their own judgement in order to survive at an optimum level; and therefore have a natural right to do their own thing, providing that they do not physically harm or coercively restrict another individual's life, liberty or property;
That everyone is exclusively sovereign, and is a slave to no one;
That the individual is best served by society when he or she is free from the forcefully imposed controls of others, acting alone or in concert (as a government);
That all forms of coercion, aggression and fraud are always immoral;
That the only system consistent with personal freedoms in the economic arena is one that does not interfere with free trade between consenting individuals;
THEREFORE we, as libertarians, resolve to oppose all forms of aggression by any State. We furthermore shall appoint a judicial, assessorial, and legislative body. We furthermore shall appoint a judicial, assessorial, and legislative domain, laws which create victimless "crimes," and all programs forced onto individuals without their consent. It is time that the chains of authoritarianism in economics and morally be broken. Individual rights and coercion cannot co-exist. Liberty cannot be compromised, and we will settle for no less than freedom in our time.

(adopted on May 5, 1973)

(also referred to as "being raised a girl") is in many ways the most serious. It's the hardest one to change. It's the one which lets a woman know that she's somehow inferior--or in some ways superior--but nevertheless "different" than the decision-makers. It's the one which makes it clear that she's socially unacceptable if she doesn't "keep in her place." It's the area where women most hurt other women--training them to all fit the mold, and shunning a woman who is too "noticeable", etc., fearing that it will threaten her (make her master angry). This also includes men and women who "put down" or laugh at a woman who complains about her position and wants to change the role-structures.

The above reduce the ability of a woman to cope, and to the point where a woman actually does not know what field to excel in. She lives in a world of mixed messages. She may have developed a diversity of needs and goals which seem to be in conflict. She is torn between feelings of helplessness, vindictiveness and the desire for self-esteem. She wants to do and be many things, so she becomes super-woman or "sacrifices" and becomes bitter (or has a mental breakdown).

What can feminists do about interpersonal discriminatory behavior? As individuals, each of us can take the responsibility upon ourselves to take steps in the right direction at every opportunity. We can make an awfully large dent in the system, if everyone of us who wants to live our own lives in our own way as human beings, encourages self-actualization and humanistic interaction by: a) getting the government out of the way; b) finding innovative ways to "do business"; c) raising our children as individuals (exposing them to a wide variety of interests, allowing them to learn the demands of reality by the hand-in-hand action of freedom and responsibility, encouraging them to develop "tentative goals", make commitments--and then to meet them); d) learn assertiveness--and use it; e) try to develop a better understanding of others; imagine what it would be like in their shoes; encourage open communication among family, friends and co-workers; learn the advantages of each "style" of living; develop personal flexibility and the willingness to not push others into a mold; allow yourself freedom to express love, hurt, fear, caring, f) do not give sanction for mistreatment (physically or psychologically) of yourself--or others; and g) try to learn what it really means to live by this statement in the novel *Atlas Shrugged*, "I swear by my life, and my love of it, that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine."

I am a woman. I am a libertarian. I am a human being, and an individual who is not a slave. I take the responsibility to be free--to be me.

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"If a woman said to you, 'I want to be free from the domination of men,' but turned to a tyrannical husband not only for financial support, but for decisions about her own personal and social life, you would undoubtedly consider her inconsistent. Yet that is what many feminists are doing on a political level. They say they want to be free of the domination of men but ask for favors and handouts from a government of men [for example, government day-care centers]."

Sharon Presley
Assn. of Libertarian Feminists

When a woman faces prejudice, bigotry, restrictions and assumptions, she generally responds in one or both of two ways: she gives in or gains control of the situation. When any person has been treated like a slave, the common response is to seek ways to turn the tables--to become the new slavemaster. This doesn't change an injustice, but rather adds another stone to the wall against freedom. Must we make this choice or is there another alternative?

We must decide whether we really want *freedom* or just an ordinary role change. If it is a role change--from slave to slavemaster-- then are we saying that these rules, regulations and molds are "acceptable" because we are now in command? How will we defend ourselves when one of the victims of our power gains enough power for revenge? We would have no moral defense. We would have to contribute to our own demise by encouraging the continuation and extension of the slave turned slavemaster system. Libertarian feminists do not want role changes or new molds, even of their own choosing. The libertarian feminist understands that each individual is different and that without this distinction a society cannot remain free for any length of time.

What are some of the problems women face today? Why is there a need for special attention to *women's rights*? There are three basic groups of problems and these are often lumped together as if all have the same solution. We must differentiate if we are not to be used by those who see our dissatisfactions as an excuse to become controllers and slavemasters. In the following discussion, a breakdown of these problems (*Governmental Discrimination, Institutional Discrimination and Interpersonal Discriminatory Behavior*) will be described, including some specific examples and suggestions for non-aggressive solutions.

GOVERNMENTAL DISCRIMINATION

Governmental discrimination includes such things as:

1. In the past, prohibiting women to vote, and giving a husband virtually complete ownership of his wife (and custody of the children if she left him),
2. More recently, *protective* laws involving work (which provided an excuse for not hiring women for certain jobs or not giving them a chance at overtime),
3. Governmental decisions based on assumptions about "women" as a class: it became the woman who should have custody of children; a woman must receive

child support and alimony because "women" have not developed marketable skills outside the home. This is quite an insult. It says that a woman who *wants* to be working or learning outside the home "cannot," as if she could not or would not have chosen her role. The pros and cons of homemaking may be preferred as one alternative to corporate to business hassles. Also, women are compensated for their loss of financial support from men, but men are not compensated for their loss of the homemaking support. Splitting property that was acquired during marriage recognizes equal value of husband and wife, but alimony does not. It is a put-down of woman as too weak to add income-producing to her homemaking efforts, while the man produces enough income for two households and takes on his own home-making as well,

4. laws "protecting" a woman from sterilization by *requiring* a waiting period that she may not want. What she is *not* protected from is governmental interference. A woman who refuses to give the government access to her personal medical files, will be denied such an operation, whether or not it is "elective" surgery.

What do laws really do? If "the will of the people" is in concert with the law, then social pressure, trade, etc. will insure enforcement as would an enacted law. If the populace is against the law, and there is no or little common sense validity to it, the law will usually be disobeyed en masse. These *unprofitable* and *unworkable* laws create a very profitable underground black market, which exerts power and causes side-effects worse than the so-called crime the law was enacted to prevent. Moreover, laws often provide a moral cop-out: "It isn't against the law, so it must be ok" or "If the law does it for us, we can quit worrying--assume we're protected and do nothing further for ourselves. If anything goes wrong, it's society's fault, not mine."

Proposition 13 is a recent example of the people demanding reform, and legislation following, often badly. Legislation is behind the times--inevitably--and legislators scramble to trade favors and controls. Their very positions depend upon special interest groups which provide money, concerted efforts and publicity. Does this create justice--equality of opportunity? No! It is a stagnation of authoritarian traditionalist "father-figures." They toss feminists and others crumbs while assuring their own power. Libertarian feminists don't want this.

What can feminists do about oppressive governmental discrimination? Do *not* trade oppressions. Get rid of them. Reduce government in all corners, and replace it with individualistic, voluntaristic actions. Let the individual have personal freedom to do, or have, anything which he or she takes the responsibility for, and which entails no aggression. No birth control laws. No government financed and controlled child care centers' nor legislation to control education. The alternative is *choice*. In education, for example, the libertarian feminist would work towards cooperatives which might include parents as teachers, non-govern-

ment (profit oriented) schools, schools supported by subscription/donation and so forth. Without government funding and controls, the education offered will be varied enough to please those who support it and those who attend.

INSTITUTIONAL DISCRIMINATION

There are many cases of institutional discrimination against women in hiring, where sex has no valid application to the work to be done. This includes hiring women on the basis of sex-appeal for jobs (such as a secretary) in which *skills*, not sexiness, are needed to accomplish the stated goals. Women have been paid less for the same job. They have been given a title to meet demands for better positions for women, but without the upgraded responsibilities and privileges. They have been required to do work from a lower level which is not expected of men in the same position (i.e. making coffee).

What can feminists do about institutional discrimination? Start with the answer to governmental discrimination. Big business *behaves* monopolistically in many ways, employment being one of them. They can afford to stagnate, because government discourages competition--if not directly by licensing, regulating, subsidizing and tariffs, then through the costs it creates. Only a large business can afford all the governmentally required paperwork, lawyers to defend them when they stumble across a law (too many to avoid), filing fees for licenses, specialized employees to handle each type of legislative requirement. Many firms are "successful" in spite of themselves. Sure, those firms might take a long time dying, even with a drastic cut in government. Some may even learn something and survive (which we wouldn't complain about). But without governmental stumbling blocks, small businesses with the flexibility to hire and assign jobs on ability and quality, rather than on superficial aspects, would then have the room to compete and grow. Such competition in the labor market would create a demand -- opportunity for more women in more fields. The creative spark in each person would not be assured of success, but at least it would not be legislated out of existence.

What can we as people in business do? Start by hiring the best person for the job, and as employer or employee giving value for value. Encourage each person to act as a "free agent" and contract his or her services out in the marketplace. Consider job-sharing. Try innovations whenever possible (especially when suggested by the employees involved) and see what kind of creativity a human being responds with when not bound by institutional tradition. The outcome will provide new opportunities for women who otherwise may have had little chance.

INTERPERSONAL DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOR

This area of interpersonal discriminatory behavior