

CHAPTER 4

WOMEN'S WORK

Most Australian women's experience of work is twofold, the paid and the unpaid — the work done for love and the work done for money, as the wonderful documentary film *For Love or Money* (1983) put it. But in many people's eyes, women as well as men, the unpaid work done in the family — child care, housework, shopping, cooking — does not count as work, because women do it as an expression of their femininity. At the very least it is regarded as part of the package of womanhood, a necessary gender role. Even when these tasks are recognised as work, and as work done on behalf of others in the family, it has proved difficult to change the old cultural pattern that designates them as *women's work*. Women who have paid jobs as well still spend far more time on household tasks than their men, as recent research shows.¹ The association between women and housework in this culture is still strong. Thirty years ago, that association was so strong that the prospect of married women having a work identity outside the home seemed to spell the end of the family and civilisation as we then knew it. In the pages of the *Weekly* in 1971, the debate that raged over women and work was not about sharing the housework (that was still considered to be women's responsibility). The contentious point was the very legitimacy of women's taking paid work outside the home.

LABOUR OF LOVE OR
LABOUR PROCESS?

It was not that work was a foreign concept for the women addressed in the *Weekly*, which was full of

representations of women's work in the home. Childcare, housework, shopping, cooking, sewing and gardening occupy a prominent place in its pages. Indeed, it is because of this prominence that women's magazines are such a crucial source of information about the ideas and practices of women's work in the home. In a sense, that is what this entire book is about — the apparently 'private' and domestic dimensions of social life, so rarely recognised in other cultural representations. The *Weekly* takes women's domestic labours seriously as work, whether presenting them in the discourse of scientific household management that became influential earlier in the twentieth century, or in more romantic discourses that construct work in the home as a labour of love for one's family, or sewing and cooking as creative self-expression. Yet these representations have their limits. Women's magazines might recognise the drudgery involved, but only as something to be overcome by new labour-saving devices and products [figure 25]. They might recognise the anxiety and weariness such work can bring with it as 'the housewife blues', but this was only as a transient phase, to be alleviated by buying a new hat or taking up a hobby. They cannot, ultimately, ask why it is that this is considered to be women's work, and women's alone.

When feminists began to ask this question in the 1970s, it was in the context of married women having already voted with their feet and rejoined the workforce in large numbers. Some said it was to overcome those housewife blues, while for others it was to supplement the family income. Choice and

necessity and opportunity all played a part in married women taking on the double burden of paid work as well as their work in the home. Yet the uproar of debate about how this would affect the family in its conventional form of male breadwinner and female homemaker, how it would affect relations between men and women, how it would affect women's femininity, signalled that something very culturally significant was happening. Feminists introduced into the debate concepts of the sexual division of labour, patriarchal power, relations of domination and subordination. They questioned the relationship between the domestic division of labour and rigid distinctions between 'male' and 'female' jobs in the workforce. They gave thought to the role of 'women's work' in cultural definitions of femininity and the formation of female subjectivity. They explored historical changes in the nature and meanings of this work.

Many of these feminist questions and concepts have passed into common knowledge since the 1970s. Certainly they inform my reading of the *Weekly's* representations of women's work in this chapter. A less familiar idea, that of consumption as work, is important to the interpretations offered in this book because it helps to unpack the social meanings of housework, and to explain the persistence of women's double burden of paid and unpaid work. In their influential book *Gender at Work*, Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle explore this idea, arguing that consumption, as well as production, is a 'labour process'. They begin by observing that technological changes, though they might improve the conditions of work in the home, do not necessarily reduce housework — washing machines, soap powders and improved fabrics, for example, may have been 'labour-saving' but their advent meant higher standards of cleanliness, daily instead of weekly washing; labour time was increased, if anything.

In fact, these authors argue, 'the indications are that new technology and new products do not reduce work but impose new consumption activities'.² Whereas housework used to involve a greater proportion of productive activities, where 'raw' ingredients (not only foodstuffs but dress materials, say) were turned into goods, by the late twentieth century it involved a greater proportion of time spent purchasing the means of life. This point can be illustrated in the *Weekly*, where Do It Yourself remains a theme throughout the 1960s in stories ranging from couples building their dream-home to women sewing their own wardrobe. Yet the appearance in 1966 and 1971 of a regular feature called 'Fashions from the shops' indicates that buying ready-made clothes was more and more the norm for housewives as well as for 'working girls'.

Household shopping underwent major changes

during the 1950s and 1960s. The introduction of, first, self-service stores and then supermarkets meant that eventually the shopper did all the work that was previously done by grocers. She searched the shelves for goods, selecting the brands she wanted, and took them to the checkout (first in wire baskets, then in trolleys that would hold much more). She unpacked her load, paid for it (by cash, cheque or charge card, but not yet by credit card). She conveyed it home and then unpacked it all again and put it away.

Instead of buying meat, fish, bread and vegetables at her own door from daily home service deliveries, the housewife bought these things at the supermarket too, or else at other locations in the vast suburban shopping centres that had grown up around car parks. This change did not happen uniformly — a *Weekly* article asking 'mothers' and 'fathers' whether in an emergency they could take over their spouse's household roles suggests that as late as 1966 many households still had access to daily milk and bread rounds, and grocers and greengrocers who would deliver orders (16/11/66: 73). At least with supermarkets, the housewife was more likely to have her husband help her on Saturdays, when they would bring the car to the shops. A second family car for her to drive was a rarity in the 1960s.³

It is intriguing to see how supermarkets, over time, became a way of life. In the *Weekly*, Margaret Sydney wrote in her 'At Home' column that despite hating the piped music, she rather liked supermarket shopping: 'Trundling a wire trolley round at your own pace, galloping if you want to gallop, or standing stock still doing elaborate mathematical calculations ... is fun, until you come to the home straight. Do you know a supermarket that has enough cash desks to deal with the customers?' (21/7/71: 45). In part her point is the often-made (but questionable) one that the supermarket extends the housewife's capacity to be her own boss and work at her own pace, but she glosses over the point that this kind of shopping meant more work for her.

Shopping is never simply economic: it is work — and pleasure — that also has symbolic dimensions. Advertising offers the shopper (usually assumed to be female, as we saw in Chapter 1) opportunities to enhance her identity, whether through self-adornment with clothes and cosmetics or through being a good wife and mother, taking care of her home and family by purchasing commodities. Advertising played a major role, too, in 'emotionalising' housework; that is, in representing it as a labour of love and nurturing, as innately fulfilling. While no woman will admit to being convinced that she too could achieve ecstasy at the sight of a whiter wash or a brighter polish, like the images in advertisements, there is strong evidence of this entanglement of housework with love. 'To complain about household

drudgery is ... tantamount to saying that they don't love their husbands and children.'⁴

This point is well illustrated in 'A mother's story', which appeared in the *Weekly* in 1961. In 'The Housewife Blues' a reader, mother of a 2-year-old and a 4-year-old, confessed that she believed her own 'low mental state' had brought on the difficulties she was experiencing with the children. She described vividly her attempts to count her blessings when she felt 'tired to my very marrow', and her list of silent complaints, when she would dissolve into tears (also silent). Most of her woes concerned her need to look better — she needed a hairdo, a new corset and some new clothes. She saw herself as having been spoiled by her parents (with a university education and a working holiday in Europe) and by the early years of her marriage when they lived in the tropics and had servants. She described gritting her teeth and setting out to manage, adding, 'I did not stop to think how unpleasant those gritted teeth must have been for my family'. So she blamed herself for not doing her job with a smile and concluded that, really, when her mood was right she could see that she had 'everything that any woman could want' — a loved husband and children and her own home (albeit without floor coverings, telephone or transport). Although she ended up by listing some of the things she did that made her feel better (going for walks and listening to school broadcasts on the radio), her isolation was palpable (15/11/61: 41).

It is her guilt about complaining, above all, that is striking. Several weeks later the *Weekly* published a selection of the many replies received, which 'shows how very common these blues are'. The replies all focused on remedies, ranging from painting the bathroom to letting yourself have a good cry. Only one published letter raised the possibility of a paid job as a solution, and that came from a mother of three who had been working full-time as a secretary for the past three years. The *Weekly* singled this letter out for comment: 'As a cheer-up to wives who sometimes long for a job, we note also the working mother who gets 'Secretary Blues' and longs for housework again'. What this woman actually wrote was that she longed to be able to go home on slow days and 'wash the curtains and bedspreads or clean the windows or silver — hard jobs to fit in at the weekends' (6/12/61: 51). Out of the frying pan into the fire — from housewife blues to the double burden.

PAID WORK: AN UNDERCURRENT

The spate of articles in 1966 and 1971 about women's right to choose between full-time homemaking and a place in the workforce was especially noticeable because paid work for women had never

been a prominent concern of the *Weekly* during the 25 years since the war. Indeed, it seemed that the myth of married women's disappearance from the workforce after the war was indeed the truth. Women's magazines during the 1950s and 1960s were strong proponents of the ideology that 'woman's place is in the home', and there was very little acknowledgment of women in paid work at all, despite the fact that the proportion of married women in the workforce rose from 6.5 per cent in 1947 to 17.3 per cent in 1961 and 32.8 per cent in 1971, as Australian census data show.⁵ Even in 1966, a special supplement, 'Easy Does It', explained 'how to use tested methods to save you housework fatigue, help you relax while you work, gain more time for leisure' — all without admitting that many readers needed this kind of help in order to fit in two jobs, housework and paid work (6/4/66).

On this issue the *Weekly's* middle-class assumptions showed. Ignoring the women working in factories and shops and offices, throughout the 1950s and 1960s it would publish an occasional article on women with unusual jobs, such as young women working at the Long-Range Weapons Establishment in Salisbury, South Australia (21/11/51) or a woman pilot who took her small children on some flights and worried about getting home before a storm so that she could bring in the dry washing (29/11/61). Exceptionalism of this kind probably stemmed from the fact that women in non-traditional occupations made good news stories — and the assignments were fun for the journalists, like Helen Frizell's assignment to accompany the 'Girl Truckie' who was training as a driver, following the Ampol car trials in 1956 (1/8/56); Frizell had earlier led the *Weekly's* team in an all-female Redex car trial (4/1/56). Yet because they could be seen as exceptional, such images of women did not threaten the status quo. The low pay and difficult working conditions of immigrant women and their Australian-born working-class sisters were not good news. Significantly, the only references to trade unions in this book's 'slice-of-history' years occur in 1946, when women's paid work was an issue for postwar readjustment, and again in 1971, when there was finally an acknowledgment that masses of married women were in the workforce and were demanding equal pay.

POSTWAR TENSIONS

The fear that women's competence in the public world of work would prove to be a barrier to heterosexual relations was always present in the women's world of the *Weekly*. Back in 1946, according to a news item from New York, 'women have been earning more money than ever before. They taste independence and are unable to cope with the

returned veteran and his readjustments to civilian life' (22/6/46: 27). An editorial on the problems women from the armed services were likely to face in readjusting to civilian life (12/1/46) concluded optimistically that they would be better wives (because better understanding their husbands' experience of war service) and better citizens (because of the 'discipline and wider knowledge of their fellows').

But the unease was pervasive. In fiction as well as features there were frequent allusions to women's paid work, which was almost always a source of tension between men and women in these stories of returning soldiers, as the Prologue to this book suggests. In one comic story, 'You Can't Win', the male narrator is hoodwinked by his non-working, big-spending wife into employing her friend as the sole female pilot in his company. But the complications of sexual attraction mean that his male pilots cannot work with her, and the situation is only saved when one of them falls in love with her and masterfully carries her away to a life of marriage and domesticity (11/5/46). In only one of the postwar readjustment stories, 'The Malingerer', does the wife stay in her job and the tension is resolved by the husband changing his attitude (23/3/46). In others, where there are children as well, the wife realises that she must give up her wartime independence for his sake ('T-Day for the Townsends', 22/6/46; 'Going Home', 6/7/46). The only story by a known Australian writer, Velia Ercole, is set in England and concerns the wife's desire to leave a leisured and sheltered life with her in-laws and return to the workaday world. For her, this would mean running her own home and having children: it is more a story of modernised class relations than modernised gender relations.

Despite these fictional stories where conflict is resolved by women giving up their financial and social independence, feature articles and editorials in 1946 paid a lot of attention to women's postwar prospects of continuing in paid work. An editorial pointed out that 'the services of women were never in greater demand than now, and employers are offering every possible amenity to attract girls to their idle factory benches' (4/5/46). This editorial concluded with a warning that girls would turn away from more important work like teaching and nursing because of the inferior pay and conditions they offered. Next month, however, an article on nursing quoted many young women vehemently defending their profession for its excitement, travel opportunities, companionship — though no one claimed that nursing was well paid (15/6/46: 21). A later article returned to the question of factory work, blaming 'white collar snobbery' for girls' preference for office and shop work over factory jobs,

which had improved pay and conditions (7/9/46).

It emerges, then, that 'girls' are the object of interest, not women (by implication, married women). A double-page spread on 'Business Girls of the World's Cities' covered London, Paris, New York, Tokyo and Berlin (13/7/46). Interviews with young working girls in each city compared their wages, living conditions and access to fashion, their strategies for coping with postwar privations and their hopes for the future. The war seemed to have established the practice that all young women would work outside the home before marriage, even those from wealthy homes.

Questions of class and gender difference were more prominent in 1946 than they would be in future years. A 1946 Government Savings Bonds advertisement, 'We're all in this together', represented Australia as a society without class prejudice. It featured a middle-class married couple in the foreground, flanked by the smaller figures of four other pairs of citizens representing particular occupations: 'butchers and bankers', 'farmers and fishermen' (all male, of course), 'housewives and hairdressers' (the hairdresser here is male), 'tailors and typistes' (the tailor is male) [figure 26]. There are only two female occupations, housewife and typiste. Yet there are some signs of unease about the terms on which women could be included in this national image. The text addresses 'the man in the street, the man on the land' (both commonplace universalising expressions), and then it runs on to include 'the women in the homes, factories and offices of Australia'. The women are not in those 'universal' spaces occupied by Australian citizens but in particular locations, all associated with work (homes, offices, factories) — are they second-class citizens? They are 'women' in the plural, not 'woman', perhaps because this text uncharacteristically allows for several 'places of woman', in the workforce as well as in the home. Universal 'woman' would have to be depicted in the home.

DISSATISFIED HOUSEWIVES

The specific issue of the 'working wife' — and even more, the 'working-wife-and-mother' — was rarely confronted directly in the 1950s. In 1951, an editorial headed 'Mothers of today' conceded that the care of husband and family was no longer considered a lifetime job. Now that young women did their share of earning the household income, the arrival of the first baby presented them with a problem. Noting that some returned to paid work when the children were at school, the editor did not welcome this prospect: 'That in the majority of cases this course is forced upon them, not of their own choice but of

necessity, is a grave defect of our present social system' (12/5/51).

The postwar trend in Australia for young women to stay at work after marriage to save for a home, but to leave the workforce when the first child arrived, was recognised from time to time in the *Weekly*. A cartoon shows an office girl inundated with presents from co-workers, one of whom comments sarcastically, 'Poor Mary, George won't let her keep her job after they're married' (23/5/56). A 1956 editorial, 'Working wives here to stay', noted that from 1947 to 1954 the number of married women in employment had doubled, explaining this now 'acceptable social pattern' as a phenomenon of early marriage, where the couple shared financial responsibility for setting up a home. But it warned that women must nurture men's 'protective instincts' so that their husbands would be ready to be sole provider when she became a mother (10/10/56).

Nineteen fifties fiction, mostly imported from the United States, is concerned with a young woman meeting Mr Right, and sometimes she meets him at work. Alternatively, when short stories feature consumer-oriented, stay-at-home wives, marital discord and adjustment is usually the theme. One exception is a story where the wife, humorously echoing current anthropological jargon, seeks a job in order to be a 'producer', to help with the 'hunting and fishing'. She declares she will not be a parasite, or dismissed as 'a scrubwoman, a short-order cook', and though she fails to find a glamour job in the city, her husband finds her happily working in the local library. He concludes gloomily, 'I'll be left with the cooking and washing' ('A Hunting she will go', 11/7/51). A story in comic mode can air the view that housework is drudgery — and that men should share it — a view which, as we have seen, later caused an outcry when it was offered as serious criticism of women's standing in society.

But surely he need not have worried about being left with the cooking and washing, now that so many homes had washing machines, electric irons, and all manner of electrical kitchen appliances? Advertisements for washing machines and washing powders in 1956 stressed the time and labour that would be saved, sometimes for working wives, but more often for full-time housewives, so that they could go out and enjoy themselves, usually with the children.

Columnist Dorothy Drain commented on 'changing domestic habits, brought about by packaged foods and careers for wives'; she was astonished to see a married friend baking biscuits on a Saturday afternoon (15/2/56). This astonished me — why was it relevant that this friend was married? — until I realised that Dorothy Drain was making a crucial point about what happened to married women's

'leisure' time when they had paid jobs. In a well-run home there had to be home-made biscuits in the biscuit tin, so she would make them in her 'free' time. Maybe she would use packet cake mix, but she would do the baking herself. Drain, who never married, was a keen observer of her friends. She also noted that 'careers for wives' and the advent of portable radios had changed Australian habits of following Test cricket matches. Now the husband listened in bed all night, disturbing the sleep of the wife who must 'drink frequent cups of coffee to keep awake during the day' at work (27/6/56). Drain's role as social anthropologist took on a more actively interventionist tone when she announced that the *Weekly* would sponsor a revival of 'kitchen art' led by the famous American cook, Mrs Dione Lucas, to counteract 'these days of working wives and "one minute" meals' (6/6/56).

TALENT TIED TO THE KITCHEN SINK?

By 1961, 'Meals made in minutes' (25/10/61) suggested that there were more 'working wives' than were visible in most issues of the *Weekly*. These recipes, from the British book *Time is of the Essence* by Elizabeth Ayrton, incorporated many French and Italian dishes, and made unprecedented use of delicatessen prepared foods, like paté. It was directed at 'working girls, wives with careers, or women with many outside interests that send them home to get meals in a hurry'. Each meal would take no more than 30 minutes of 'uninterrupted time' — which may suggest they were not intended for young mothers, who never get 'uninterrupted time'.

The 'wives with careers' may have been older women returning to the workforce after their children had grown up and left home. There were several stories about this group in 1961. 'The Matron Models', older women between 40 and 60 working as fashion and television models, emphasised the morale boost they got from work. 'Getting out of the house' and being taken 'out of yourself' were important, but most important was the money: 'that means independence' (18/1/61). In the series 'A Mother's Story' later that year, a woman told of 'Making a New Life at 40'. The mother of three almost grown daughters, she went to a course on 'the status of women' which made her take stock of herself and realise that she could easily become 'introverted' and 'house proud'. She also realised that 'my career as a mother had been such a satisfying role that it would be hard to fill the vacuum created by the hand of time', but she had no qualifications for an alternative career. As a girl she had wanted to be a teacher but her father had opposed the idea, so she had done office work until her marriage. She

returned to office work and it brought 'real satisfaction' and more self-respect in relation to her husband and daughters (27/12/61: 37). It is a sad story, nevertheless, of talent untrained and unused.

In 1966 this issue was named and confronted in a hard-hitting article by Shirley Smith, 'There's too much talent tied to the kitchen sink (and it's time working wives had a better deal)' (17/8/66). This raised a storm of protests and a few cheers. Smith named the decade of 1956 to 1966 as the 'revolution' of the educated woman's return to the workforce after marriage, and strongly criticised the forces that worked against her: the expectation that the wife would do all the domestic labour; the scandalous lack of childcare provision; and the need for girls to be educated to think of career first and marriage afterwards [figure 28]. But readers were mightily offended by her labelling housework as 'unskilled labour', like street-sweeping, and rushed to the defence of homemaking as a career, and of men's dignity (which should not be compromised by having to help with housework). 'Leave the Stay-at-homes alone' was the title given to their responses, with a boxed quote: 'If you want an uninterrupted career, don't have children'. Of eight readers' responses, the one supporting letter argued that children would be better adjusted when their mothers worked in professions that they enjoyed (14/9/66).

This furore was followed by a milder debate about an article entitled 'Women and Inequality' by Merle Thornton, soon to be one of the founders of the new women's movement (23/11/66). She argued that the issue was not so much about formal inequalities between the sexes but more about differing social expectations. Women were expected to be less well educated and less motivated to choose a satisfying 'adult endeavour'. This situation resulted in women's inferiority in 'education, employment, promotion, income, status and standing in politics'. In conclusion, Thornton welcomed the future 'person-centred society' where 'men would not be ashamed to cook or to be kindergarteners; woman would not be ashamed to be aggressive, or unmarried, or childless, or undomesticated, or intellectual'. Here she spelt out the early themes of women's liberation — not only the right to jobs, but freedom from socially defined sex roles, even if it meant women becoming more like men.

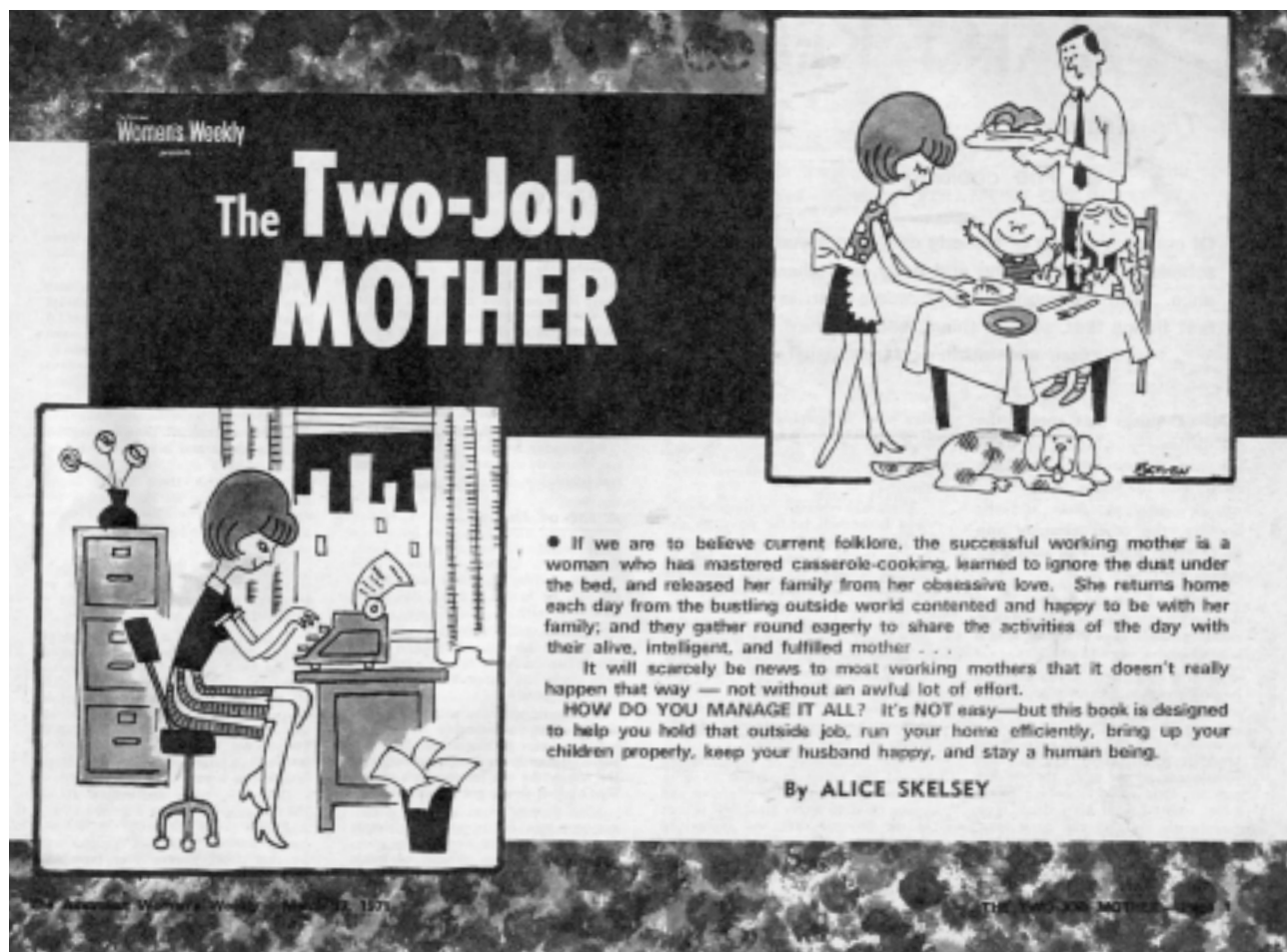
Readers' responses conceded some of Merle Thornton's points, and two of them called for women to 'protest', but the majority view, as summarised by the *Weekly*, was that 'most women want children, a man to look up to, and the role of adding sweetness and gentleness to the everyday lives of others'. Still, if not among readers, then among the *Weekly*'s journalists, there were clear signs that the winds of change were blowing. In her regular column, Margaret Sydney (23/3/66) was sarcastic about

a male expert's claim that women's capacity to earn made them a threat to the family stability men need so badly. Perhaps, she wrote, he would prefer that women exercise those 'revoltingly underhand' forms of female power to snare men like flies in a spider-web, as advocated by that notorious anti-feminist romance writer Marie Corelli. Clearly the ideological stakes in this question of women's economic independence were already high.

WOMEN'S DUAL WORK ROLES

By 1971 the *Weekly* was no longer debating the pros and cons of returning to the workforce, but dealing with the consequences: women managing the double burden of housework and job. A special supplement, 'The Two-Job Mother' (17/3/71), taken from an American bestseller, *The Working Mother's Guide to her Home, her Family and Herself* by Alice Skelsey, signalled this change [figure 29]. The very title underlined the distinctly contradictory discourses of self-discovery and service to others out of which the new femininity was being constructed. As current folklore had it, the successful working mother had 'mastered casserole cooking, learned to ignore the dust under the bed, and released her family from her obsessive love'. The author, mother of four and long-time paid worker, declared that this happy scene could not happen without effort, and her book was designed to help women to 'manage it all'. Accompanying images show a woman typing in an office, and serving dinner, helped by her husband. There is no question but that it is her responsibility to manage it all, and hers alone.

More 'how-to' advice, this time about social etiquette in both home and workplace, appeared in 'The Social Know-how Book' (15/12/71), taken from another American publication, *Personal Improvement for Career Women*. In this and another list of dos and don'ts for women managers (29/9/71), only a few tips were female-specific, such as 'if you're a working wife don't telephone your grocery order from the office'. But on the whole, the advice given reads as gender-neutral (you must be able to 'assume responsibility, make decisions, abide by others' decisions, accept frustration and criticism along with praise') despite being prefaced by a reference to 'today's career woman'. This perhaps derived from an assumption that what might be commonsense for a man in business would be strange and unfamiliar territory to a woman; but it might just as easily have indicated a lack of awareness of the specific problems women face in entering male-dominated workplaces and cultures. It would be several decades before concepts like sexual harassment and the 'glass ceiling' would enter everyday speech.



More signs of the normality of married women in the workforce in 1971 include repeated advertisements for 'fashion uniforms' as well as for prepared foods. Yet there was still a strong counter-current. A series of readers' stories about paid jobs were mostly humorous accounts of failure, like the woman who took on an egg delivery round in the belief that she could make it a 'time and motion study' while earning some pocket money, but found that it was just not worth the time and effort.

Neither was it worth the effort for professionally trained women to re-enter the workforce, given the expense of childcare and housekeepers, not to mention their husbands' loss of the tax deduction for dependent wives. This was the argument put forward by the Women Lawyers' Association of New South Wales. They made a strong case for tax concessions for working mothers, as well as a plea for government provision of childcare (16/6/71). In this article the spokeswomen for the association were both mothers of young children, one in the workforce, the other choosing to spend time at home. They stressed women's right to choose and their common cause with all working mothers.

References to 'childcare' began to appear at this time, but rarely mentioned its absolute necessity for working mothers. The success story of a 'kindy' organised by the mothers in an inner-city block of

Figure 29 At last, the Two-Job Mother is acknowledged: a special supplement signals change, 1971.

Housing Commission flats merely noted that it was not available for all-day care, though many mothers wanted that (28/4/71). In implicit contrast, the Australian Pre-School Association, which had been set up in 1940 in response to the needs of women in war work, stressed the need for childcare to be 'education not childminding'. 'Children not parcels', warned a story about the association's work. Now 'thousands of mothers in Australia are forced to work', so if they must separate from their children it should be under the best possible conditions (26/5/71). The association, clearly unhappy about mothers of young children being in the workforce, appears to have been influential in the *Weekly*, where extracts from its book, *Understanding Young Children*, were published as a special supplement in June of the same year. This supplement included a rare reference to 'New Australian mothers' and how at the preschool centre they should 'share the old traditions of their homeland with the teacher and other mothers — but try to understand the new ways too' (23/6/71).

At the same time, however, there are signs that the far-reaching cultural implications of women's growing independence were sinking in and causing different anxieties from those about the quality of mothering. It seemed inevitable that this change would be seen as a rejection of the image of woman as homemaker and sex object. A fiercely anti-feminist article along these lines was entitled 'The Feminine Mistake', echoing Betty Friedan's germinal 1962 title, *The Feminine Mystique*. The female author waxed indignant about the denigration of housework, and claimed that 'libbers' were women who 'can't wait to be liberated so they can rush out to work all day in factory, shop or office'. What sort of liberation was this? she implied. But she was most angry about the denigration of traditional femininity (10/2/71). The article was reprinted from *Esquire* magazine, a bastion of male chauvinism.

JOBS AND EDUCATION: INTO THE FUTURE

By 1971 it was evident that the territory of fiction had also changed significantly when a story dealing with the husband's request for divorce so that he can marry his young secretary is resolved by the wife's calling his bluff. She threatens to accede to his request, move back to her city career in advertising and leave the new couple to look after the children in suburbia. The girlfriend promptly drops him and the wife takes him back, safe now from the prospect of being a 'dull little housewife' (as she puts it) without the compensation of a husband ('What about the children?' 17/3/71). There is a kind of liberation, perhaps, in her being able to threaten him with the children and get what she wants. What the story brings out most strikingly is the way the possession of a (financially secure) husband is seen as the only worthwhile compensation for housewifedom.

The prospect of an exciting and well-paid job is a key element in the plot of this story, yet that prospect would not have been a realistic one for most Australian women at the time. Trained teachers were being called back into the workforce, but they were still not eligible for permanent appointment if they were married women. Nurses' work was still ill paid. Office work, sales and factory work were the

destinations of most married women, where, despite a long campaign for equal pay, the average female wage was less than two-thirds of the average male wage.⁶ The gender segmentation of the workforce meant that their job opportunities were limited to these few 'female' areas.⁷

Many women, like the author of 'Making a New Life at 40', had worked as secretaries before marriage, dissuaded by their parents from pursuing further education, and it was often these women who flooded into the universities from 1973 onwards, when fees were abolished by the Whitlam Labor Government. As we saw in the First Interlude, in 1961 women's education was widely regarded by *Weekly* readers as a waste of time and money, since they were headed for life in the home. In 1966 the *Weekly* carried stories by two older readers who went out cleaning houses, one to save for a 'sentimental journey to England', the other to 'help with her children's higher education'. The editorial comment described them in this way: 'After years of being full-time mother and housewife, two energetic, cheerful women without specialised training faced up to the need to get out and earn' (15/6/66).

While most older women had to make do without further education, increasing affluence and an expanding economy brought an appreciation of the need for education, for girls leaving school if not for adult women. In 1966 the special supplement 'A Guide to Careers' (7/12/66) covered many areas, open to girls as well as boys, where further education or training was required. Gender segregation is noted, but not discussed as a problem, in relation to office work, jobs in television, nursing (male nurses were still a rarity) and journalism (where it was noted that women journalists were normally confined to women's magazines or the women's pages of newspapers).

The pages of the *Weekly* show the tensions generated when the ideology of 'woman's place is in the home' came under pressure from married women's re-entry into the paid workforce. By 1971 these tensions were far from resolved. But they would not go away. Women were in the workforce to stay, and over the coming years would score some significant improvements in their status there. Yet the link between women and work in the home would remain strong for years to come, contributing to their double burden.