

Midge Decter and the "Libbies": Two Views 11/12/72 /ot

I found it hard to recognize the women's liberation movement I know with that described by Kernan and Decter ("Midge Decter: Women Are Women," Nov. 5).

I must disagree with her claim that the main thrust of the women's movement is that women are exploited and persecuted by men. On the contrary, I have most often heard women in the movement, including Steinem and Friedan, say that men are just as exploited as women by a society which demands that they bear the full responsibility for the financial support of the family and that they always be strong, competitive, aggressive and generally inhuman.

I also take exception to her charges that the movement does not speak for the working women out in the "real world" and that equal rights in business is an expression of self-hate. Decter dismisses the discrimination that almost all men are willing to recognize. She herself doesn't do much for these women out in the real world by claiming that those who didn't make it simply lack self-respect, competence and competitiveness, and falls into the same trap that other advocates of the work ethic fall into: I (or my mother, in some instances) cleaned latrines, didn't ask for anything, worked hard, and look! I made it. How many others did make it? Something like .000001% by my calculations. These advocates are not speaking for the poor devil who lives the work ethic, can barely make ends meet and has his child die of rat bites.

Decter reeks of elitism: She arrogantly feels consciousness raising is a litany of complaints. This is true, and it can remain a litany of complaints for some. But for many of us it was a way to identify our problems

and go on from there to solve them. It can be dangerous, but because it is imperfect must we scrap it? And have you noticed the paternalism with which she talks of middle-aged women with problems as *them*. *She*, at 45, is not one of *them*, with or without problems.

I will agree with her that women have gained a lot of freedoms and responsibilities and that many if not most women are frightened by them. I am also glad that Decter was able to make it without women's liberation. But the majority of us are not like her: We are untrained, unorganized, less strong minded, many of us less intelligent, more isolated and very unfamiliar with the real world. The women's movement has given many of us an opportunity to remedy these deficiencies and turn our attention to problems facing all of us: men and women, black and white, poor and rich.

Finally, Decter challenges the analogy with black equal rights. But her whole attitude is a vindication of our claim that an analogy (not an identify) exists. Does "the movement wants women to set no value on themselves, to ask for handouts and special treatment" remind you of anything?

Decter herself is not free of uncertainty: On the one hand women must accept their womanhood (whatever that means) and on the other they must be like men if they wish to enter the "real world" and succeed. And she readily admits that her husband doesn't need her reassurances, but she needs him to keep up her courage and he's really nice and does it if she'll dutifully bring him a cup of coffee.

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Bless Midge Decter! ("Women Are Women," Nov. 5.) Finally, after having nothing but "Libbies" shoved down our throats we get some decent and beautiful insights into womanhood.

Women *are* different, biologically and emotionally, but I too believe we are blessed at being female.

I refuse to be intimidated by these unhappy, frustrated, unfulfilled and insecure so-and-so's. Imagine, they want me to:

1. "Farm out" my beautiful baby daughter who is growing and changing so every day that I can't afford to waste precious time out working—she will never be the same.

2. Make my darling husband who already works six days and three nights a week come home and scrub the bathrooms so we can be "equal."

So, I will:

1. Continue to mow the lawn and take out the garbage. It's excellent exercise and gives my husband more time to spend with us.

2. Continue to support legalized abortion and equal pay for equal work duties, but that is all.

You see, we have this strange affliction, we love each other. I'm sorry for those who can't or are unable to.

Thank you.

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the wife of Mr. Darrell R. Williams.

P.S. Excuse the printing—the typewriter is out in the garage under some very heavy boxes—understand?

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