CHAINS - OR CHANGE?

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Published by the Irish Women's Liberation Movement: Dublin Founding Group.

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THE LEGAL INEQUITIES OF IRISHWOMEN

Article 40 of the Irish Constitution promises equal rights before the law to all citizens of the Republic of Ireland.

One million, four hundred and thirty-four thousand, nine hundred and seventy Irish citizens (at the last count) are not accorded such equal rights. These are the women of Ireland.

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Possibly the most visible inequity before the law which Irishwomen suffer is the fact that they are not called upon for jury service. Ireland is one of the last countries of the Western World where women are considered to be unfit for jury service.

It is, of course, true that a woman (providing she is a householder) may apply to serve on a jury. Lawyers will recall that one woman even succeeded in being accepted some years ago. But not only is this so rare an occurrence that it is regarded as a phenomenon; even when she does apply, there is, in practice, a snag. Judges and lawyers are often suspicious of an ulterior motive in a woman juror — such as a prejudiced interest in particular kinds of cases — and can therefore object to her and have her disqualified.

Women themselves frequently say that they are indifferent to this inequity, since jury service is commonly regarded as tedious; but the fact remains that it is patently unjust to the person being 'tried'. Twelve male householders are not a representative balanced social group. A woman on trial is not being judged by her peers — an elementary principle of Justice pre-dating even Common Law. It may be said that some so-called primitive tribal societies — with their democratic selection of male and female village elders — are actually in advance of Ireland on this principle.

What's more, we in Ireland have actually refused to comply with United Nations recommendations on this point.

The UN Charter of the Political Rights of Women was drawn up and signed by member states in 1950. It was ratified
by Ireland in 1968, with certain reservations. We refused to sign Article 11 (Eleven) of the Charter on the assumption that jury service not being obligatory for women was not a discriminatory practice. Ireland also maintained that our position in regard to equal pay - it not being statutory in this country - was not discriminatory.

How our representative at the U.N. could have stood up and made such an illogical claim is unfathomable to any rational female mind. He did.

Legally, this situation could be declared unconstitutional - clearly contravening Article 40 of the Constitution. It remains yet to be challenged in the courts.

Although there has been some piecemeal reform in the legal status of married women in this country, it can still be said that upon marriage a woman in Ireland enters into a state of civil death.

Since 1957, a married woman is allowed to hold and dispose of property, to sue and be sued, to contract. Subsequent legislation has allowed her certain basic rights of inheritance upon her husband's estate.

Nonetheless, a married woman in Ireland has still no real identity or existence in her own right. She is still regarded as the chattel of her husband. Her domicile is automatically her husband's - that is to say, if he happens to be in America, she is also legally speaking in Americal, no matter where she might 'actually' be. She must have permission from him for all kinds of things - pledging any credit or making almost any kind of private financial arrangements; putting the children on her passport; in certain cases, if she needs to have a gynecological operation.

A man may desert his wife for as long as he chooses - but return whenever he wishes and automatically resume all his marital and parental rights. A woman immediately forfeits all her rights, including access to the marital home or to the children, if she leaves him.

'He' can change their name without consulting her. 'She' may not.

'He' is not obliged to reveal to her what he earns. 'She' is to him.
The Legal Inequities

If 'she' pays tax on her own income, it is her husband who is entitled to any of her rebates.

'He' is entitled to scrutinise her taxation forms.
'She' is not entitled to see his.

'He' is not obliged to support her above and beyond what he considers she needs. She may only pledge his credit for the bare necessities - over and above he can disclaim all responsibility.

If 'she' spends her earnings running their home, she may not give away, sell or raise money on the contents.

If 'he' improves 'her' property, he may be entitled to be paid, especially if he is a skilled craftsman.

If 'she' saves money out of the housekeeping allowance which he has seen fit to give her, it is still legally 'his' money and she may not spend it as she pleases.

'She' is not entitled to any of his savings, even if it is 'her' household economies which have made these savings possible.

If a wife feels that she is not being adequately provided for, (and remember, it is the husband who decides, quite arbitrarily, what constitutes "provision") she must challenge him in the courts. She has no other means of redress. Even then, in contrast to other countries (such as, for example, West Germany) there is no statutory ruling about what percentage of his (their) income she is entitled to.

In regard to the children, the situation of the Irish wife is even more anomalous.

Though the Irish Constitution emphasises the duties of both parents, the law accords rights overwhelmingly to one - the father.

The father is the legal guardian of the children; he has the sole right to decide upon their education, religion and domicile. He can draw from the children's Post Office
The Legal Inequities

savings - she can't. He must give consent to an operation on the children. He can have the children named on his passport without her consent and take them abroad whenever he wishes, without her permission.

Legally, the Children's Allowance money is his. If he should wish to squander every penny of it, he is perfectly within his rights.

The Constitution of this country promises a special place to women in the home. But the law - most of it made by 19th century British legislators - has not fulfilled that promise before the law, Irishwomen in the home have noticeably inferior status.

And then, of course, if the woman wishes, or needs, to go out to work, she runs into unequal pay, the marriage bar, no amenities and penalising taxation.

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THE SAD PROFILE OF IRISHWOMEN AT WORK

Any investigation into the position of women at work in the Republic reveals one clear fact: Irishwomen are cheap labour.

Not only are they not paid equally for equal work - or, as Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome frames it "work of equal value" - but they are also shunted into all the low-grade, ill-organised, low-status and low-skilled jobs.

Women constitute about one-third of all employees in the Republic - 281,000 workers out of a total of 702,000 at the last census (1966). About two-fifths of all women employees are organised in trade unions. Two-thirds of men are unionised.

A woman-hour in the Republic of Ireland is worth on average 26p (5s. 3d.). A man-hour is worth 47½p (9s. 6d.). This is according to the latest statistics published by the Central Statistics Office in March, 1970.

Irishwomen earn 54.9% of men's wages. In 1938, it was fractionally more - 55.6%.

Not only does this degrade, cheapen and exploit a woman's work. It also militates against men - women by their cheap labour undercut the standard of men's wages too. In such a situation, no one will ever hire a man if they can hire a woman - unless a particular skill is required or unless it is for a position of authority. And a group of people bearing the stigma of "cheap labour" will hardly be respected as being persons capable of positions requiring skills or authority.

The following is a table of the principle occupations of women as returned by the last census:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factory operatives (other than packers)</td>
<td>41,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>37,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Work</td>
<td>32,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop Assistants</td>
<td>24,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maids</td>
<td>22,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typists</td>
<td>17,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Women in Employment

Nurses 13,800  
Nuns 13,400  
Teachers 11,800  
Packers 7,500  
Housekeepers 6,100  
Charwomen 2,500  
Laundry workers 2,200  
Cooks 2,100  
Telephone operators 1,800  
Barmaids 1,800  
Kitchen hands 1,200

Only 6% of administrative, executive and managerial workers are women.

Only 12% of women at work are classified amongst the lower professions (teachers, nurses, etc.)

Less than one per cent of women at work in the Republic are classified amongst the higher professions (doctors, lawyers, etc.)

It is significant to examine the areas of employment in which women dominate.

In general domestic service, almost all workers are women.

All typists are women. 83% of telephone operators are women; 77% of waiters/waitresses are women; 65% of cooks (though of course the top ones, called chefs, are men); 58% of shop assistants and 53% of clerks are women.

It is difficult to calculate for agriculture because in agriculture women frequently do not get paid at all.

It is interesting to note that women in Northern Ireland fare considerably better than their southern sisters. There, at the present time (Spring 1971), women's earnings are calculated to be 62% of men's.

By 1975, in line with British legislation, equal pay for equal work will have become statutory in the North.
Women in Employment

The vast majority of working women in the Republic are single - 81% of all women at work. This is presumably not simply by choice; the marriage bar in the Civil Service*, all State bodies and much of private industry actively discourages married women from working - as does the taxation structure, the lack of baby-minding regulations, nurseries, creches or properly-organised playgroups.

Nonetheless, 26,000 married women (9% of working women) do go out to work, mostly from economic necessity. Married women are engaged principally in teaching, factory work, waitressing; they are clerks, shop assistants, typists, nurses and service workers. Of the 26,000, just 900 are classified as having some professional or technical occupation.

10% of women workers - 28,000 - are widows. Once again, they fall into roughly the same job categories.

The following is a table of women's wages and hours (aged 18 and over) in 27 main industries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textiles:</th>
<th>Weekly Earnings</th>
<th>Hourly Earnings</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woollen and worsted</td>
<td>£9.17.0.</td>
<td>24p</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linen and cotton</td>
<td>£9.14.0.</td>
<td>25 ½p</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jute, rayon, nylon</td>
<td>£9.14.0.</td>
<td>25p</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosiery</td>
<td>£9.11.0.</td>
<td>24p</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make-up textile</td>
<td>£9.15.0.</td>
<td>24 ½p</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Industries:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bacon Factories</td>
<td>£9.17.0.</td>
<td>24p</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat Slaughtering</td>
<td>£8.10.0.</td>
<td>21p</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk Products</td>
<td>£9.18.0.</td>
<td>24p</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit, vegetable</td>
<td>£9.12.0.</td>
<td>24p</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread, biscuits</td>
<td>£11.2.0.</td>
<td>31p</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocolate, sugar</td>
<td>£9.16.0.</td>
<td>27 ½p</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous food</td>
<td>£7.10.0.</td>
<td>25p</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A comic anomaly in regard to the marriage bar is the fact that an unmarried woman may have two children in the Civil Service (three in wartime) but if she gets married she loses her job.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clothing &amp; Footwear:</th>
<th>Weekly Earnings</th>
<th>Hourly Earnings</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Footwear</td>
<td>£11.1.0</td>
<td>28 1/2p</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's Clothing</td>
<td>£10.19.0</td>
<td>28p</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirtmaking</td>
<td>£9.14.0</td>
<td>24 1/2p</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's Clothing</td>
<td>£9.17.0</td>
<td>25 1/2p</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous Clothing</td>
<td>£9.1.0</td>
<td>23p</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Paper & Printing:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Weekly Earnings</th>
<th>Hourly Earnings</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper, paper products</td>
<td>£10.8.0</td>
<td>26p</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing, publishing</td>
<td>£11.7.0</td>
<td>28p</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other Manufacturing Industries:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Weekly Earnings</th>
<th>Hourly Earnings</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>£15.18.0</td>
<td>38 1/2p</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture, brushes</td>
<td>£10.16.0</td>
<td>28 1/2p</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemicals, drugs</td>
<td>£9.0.0</td>
<td>24p</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soaps, detergents</td>
<td>£12.6.0</td>
<td>31 1/2p</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal trades</td>
<td>£8.15.0</td>
<td>24p</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical Machinery</td>
<td>£10.15.0</td>
<td>28p</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather manufacturers</td>
<td>£9.1.0</td>
<td>24p</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glassware, pottery</td>
<td>£10.13.0</td>
<td>26p</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all these cases women earn approximately 45% - 61% of men's wages for the same jobs. For example, in the chocolate and sugar and confectionery industry, men earn 52p for women's 27 1/2p. In tobacco, men earn 62 1/2p for women's 38 1/2p. In printing and publishing, men earn 59 1/2p per hour and women 38p.

This is of March, 1970.

In the public service, a large number of posts carry a lower remuneration when they are held by women. Sex differentiation pay rates apply to posts in the House of the Oireachtas, the Department of the Taoiseach, the Office of the Revenue Commissioners, Office of Public Works, the State Laboratory, the Attorney General's Office, the Stationary Office, the Valuation and Ordnance Survey, the Courts, Land Registry, Charitable Donations and Bequests and all Government Departments. The maximum of the women's pay scale is usually 80% of the men's scale.

There are 100,000 women trade unionists in the Republic out of 281,000 women workers.
Below is a table of the numbers of women in the principal trade unions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Union</th>
<th>Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish Transport &amp; General Workers' Union</td>
<td>49,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers' Union of Ireland</td>
<td>11,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Union of Distributive Workers &amp; Clerks</td>
<td>9,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish National Teachers' Organisation</td>
<td>6,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Women Workers' Union</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamated Transport &amp; General Workers' Union</td>
<td>4,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Service Clerical Association</td>
<td>3,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Shoe &amp; Leather Workers' Union</td>
<td>2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Union of Tailors &amp; Garment Workers</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office Workers' Union</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The general pattern of women's participation in trade union activity is poor and this is obviously central to the overall dismal pattern of conditions of women at work.

It is significant that out of 280 trade union officials, there are only seven women.

However, it must be said that the male-dominated Trade Unions themselves have not shown a very distinctive record in negotiating for pay parity for women, though in most advanced countries now equal pay is accepted as a basic human right.

The British TUC first passed the resolution to fight for its general implementation in 1888.
THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS

In Ireland girls receive a different education from boys. The differences mean that a great many well-paid jobs such as engineering, accountancy, and veterinary medicine are virtually closed to women. The early education of the vast majority of girls ensures that they never think of breaking into a "male" enclave, but regard their "real" career as that of a wife and mother. Any outside job is either a stopgap between school, marriage and babies or a financial necessity for a widow, single woman or a deserted wife.

The education that leads to these differences starts at the toddler stage. A little girl is given a toy stove and pastry-making set "just like Mammy's". Her brother will be encouraged to play with toy cars, and to make model aeroplanes - all activities to do with the outside world, while his sister is made to feel it is right for her to keep her sights on the home.

Then children learn to read. The books talk about girls playing with dolls while boys in the stories do carpentry or pitch tents. The Swedish Government is planning to ban school books which teach young children to differentiate between male and female roles.

As she grows up a girl learns to make her bed, clean a room, sew on buttons, wash-up and cook - usually for her brothers, who wait to be served and often have no idea how to do these things. The concept of girls in a service role to men is drummed into her. In a large family the elder girls - not boys - become baby minders.

At school girls will learn needlework and domestic science - a boy taking domestic science was regarded as a sufficient oddity to warrant a radio interview recently.

In most schools, however, a boy couldn't take domestic science even if he wanted to - because he would be in an all-boy school. Single-sex schooling is specifically condemned by the submission of the Irish Congress of Trade
Unions to the Commission on the Status of Women; if women are to "participate on a basis of equality with boys when entering employment". Professor Michael Fogarty, the economist, has pointed out that girls educated separately, exclusively by women (often by cloistered women) are more likely to be educated solely to the role of mothers and wives and to think of boys as their "natural" academic superiors, when this just isn't true.

The ICTU submission also points out that the teaching of many nuns discourages "career-mindedness" in girls and encourages them to follow narrowly traditional approach to women's role in society. There are convents in this country where girls have had to struggle hard for the right to study higher mathematics. In general, the teaching of mathematics and science to girls is still totally inadequate. Qualification in Maths and some science subjects are necessary for entry into many jobs and many fields of higher education. In 1968, only 161 girls took honours Maths at Leaving Certificate. The figure was just under 2,000 for boys. Corresponding numbers for physics were: 91 girls and 1,452 boys.

The Investment in Education report of 1965 pointed out that it is compulsory for boys' schools to provide a full course, but not for girls, in Maths at Intermediate Certificate. Only ten per cent of girls' schools now provide Maths to Honours Leaving Certificate. A situation often arises similar to this one - an up-to-date example: a 14-year-old girl, in her Intermediate year is told to choose her Honours Leaving Certificate subjects. She is at a fairly progressive, mixed school. Even so, she is told she must choose between Honours Chemistry and Honours Mathematics. When she chooses Mathematics the teacher tries to make her change her mind, putting forward the practical argument that there is nobody else who wants to do it, etc. The choice between Maths and Chemistry is invidious anyway - to dissuade an able girl from doing Maths (without, incidentally, any reference to her parents) and probably damaging her future.

There is also a long tradition in education of conditioning women into believing that they are not "naturally" good at Maths subjects. The only real evidence is purely circumstantial and no one knows for sure whether the observed low standard in women's general aptitude for spatial concepts is innate or the product of many generations of such deep
psychological conditioning, which has a powerful and cumulative effect.

It is important to remember that there is no scientific reason to suppose that women are in any way intellectually inferior to men.

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Girls continuously do better at secondary school than boys and to be fair a contributory reason for this high performance is possibly that some of the subjects selected for them are "easier". That notwithstanding, the fact remains that they would seem to deserve a fair representative among university entrances. This they are not awarded.

Although there is some evidence that figures are a little more encouraging now, the Investment in Education report showed that in 1963 of schoolchildren with Honours Leaving Certificate - 43 per cent of the boys went to university, but only 19 per cent of the girls.

Some girls cannot go to university because they are not qualified, in spite of having several Honours Leaving Certificate subjects. If they do not pass Maths, for instance, they cannot do medicine, any science subject, commerce, architecture and several other courses. In 1970 6,867 girls took Maths out of 10,959 sitting for the Leaving Exam.

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The career guidance service in most schools is also totally inadequate - and restricted. This particularly affects girls, who usually receive little encouragement at home or from their teachers to think outside traditional "girls' careers" (mostly service or auxiliary ones - apart from the wife-and-mother role, usually teaching, secretarial work, hospital work. Nobody ever tells a girl that she could be a surgeon, an airline pilot or a Cabinet Minister - they tell her she can be a nurse, an air stewardess or a minor civil servant. Perhaps on reflection it is, sadly, more realistic). An Appointments Officer at U.C.D. says that the service they give is a "fire-brigade service, trying to do the work that should have been started five years back in the schools".
The Education of Girls

The vast majority of girls do Arts subjects at university - with usually very hazy ideas what use this degree might be to their eventual careers. In 1969, for instance, University College Dublin had only four girls doing agriculture; fifteen doing dentistry and sixteen veterinary medicine - out of a total of 3,494 female students.

The UCD appointments officer says that most final year girls feel that the only career open to them is teaching. Business industry are almost completely closed to women graduates, apart from a back door as "graduate secretaries".

The few girls who might be taken in would be for their very specialised degrees rather than their management potential.

But too many talented girls, says the appointments officer, restrict themselves: they think "I'm 21 and have a degree, I'll work for a couple of years, then get married and stop work". Consequently they are reluctant to do further training on top of their first degree. And for instance, they won't go away from home for a management course if they have a boyfriend in the district.

Their early conditioning has, it seems, succeeded in making them put the possibility of gaining a husband before any career.

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"We do not underestimate the revolution in attitudes required if women are to be accorded their rights as citizens and enabled to play a full part in the economic life of the community. A great deal needs to be done in many areas but unfortunately little is effectively being done in any area".

IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS - submission to the Commission on the Status of Women, October, 1970.

The position of working women in Ireland has been consistently one of widespread discrimination and prejudice. Many jobs are intentionally or traditionally barred to women. Women work under a system of unequal pay, low responsibility, an unjust promotion structure and dismissal on marriage.

The disparity in adult male-female employment has its foundations in our educational system, as we have seen. In addition to the restrictive attitudes towards school subjects operating against girls, the vocational and technical education for girls also suffers from serious defects, promoting further the sexual apartheid which has traditionally divided men and women in Ireland. Separate training is the norm in Ireland and apart from the purely educational deprivations which this engenders, there is also the purely human problems to be considered.

Social communications between men and women are obviously impaired too.

As far as jobs are concerned, women in Ireland cannot become engineers or become apprentices in an engineering trade. It is virtually impossible for a woman to become an apprentice in a craft either. Neither may they be airline pilots, bus drivers, police inspectors, bank managers, newspaper editors, newspaper compositors, criminal lawyers; it is difficult for them to become judges, surgeons, any kind of technician, accountants or higher civil servants. It is fair to say that almost

'He' can change their name without consulting her.
'She' may not.

'He' is not obliged to reveal to her what he earns.
'She' is to him.
all jobs carrying responsibility, high status and high pay are pretty well inaccessible to women, and women who achieve notable job-success in Ireland have a long struggle and pay a high price: marriage must usually be ruled out and the slur of "losing one's femininity" is commonly attached, coming from both men and women. Extraordinary social prejudice deems that it is not "unfeminine" for a woman to work in steamy conditions at a factory bench for a pittance of pay but she immediately forfeits the right to be called a woman if she is a high-powered executive earning a "man's" wage. It must be said, of course, that women tend to shy away from jobs which require responsibility, authority and initiative and choose fields where they are, in fact, helping to get something done rather than actually doing it themselves. A psychological factor in this was uncovered recently by a study by two sociologists at the New York Russell Sage Foundation: women, they concluded, tend to see "job success" as a rival to "marriage success" and therefore subconsciously downgrade themselves at work. There is also a fear inherent in women that men dislike successful career women and there exists amongst men a reluctance to work for women - though this may be a product of social conditioning.

Where women and men are employed initially on an equal footing, it is clear that women do not command the proportion of promotional positions that they ought to have. For example, of 350 heads of vocational schools, fewer than half a dozen are women although one-third of vocational teachers are women. In the Civil Service, the lowest grade is comprised entirely of women, while in the highest post, that of Secretary of a Department, none is a woman. This is partly also because of the marriage bar, resulting in the dismissal of women employees on marriage and refusal to employ married women. The Civil Service and all State bodies, most semi-State bodies, all local authorities, banks and many private companies retain this bar. It has been abolished in Britain and Northern Ireland; in the Republic its most vehement opponents are the unmarried women in the Civil Service - a logical, if prejudiced, position of protectionism, and "brainwashing".

With the tendency towards younger marriages, smaller families and higher educational standards, Irish attitudes to women workers are increasingly unrealistic. They are also unjust and inhuman.

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Ireland has traditionally been a paternalistic society. A paternalistic society puts the onus on men to protect and support women; by the same token it accords more rights and real privileges to men, saving for women the merely agreeable but always tenuous appurtenances of "chivalry", "respect".

Unfortunately, "chivalry" and "respect" apply only to manners, not to fact. There isn't much "chivalry" involved in allowing women to work in the conditions that they do. There isn't much "respect" attached to a woman in Ireland who has lost, or never achieved, the all-important protection or support of a male figure.

Many women are indifferent to the legal inequities, untouched by the equal pay issue and quite satisfied by the educational inadequacies. They wish only for the snug security of a husband and a home, and many of them achieve that objective. It is when they become widowed or deserted that they perceive how frail indeed is the basis for that security.

There are 126,000 widows in Ireland (1967 Census) - 43,000 of these are in Dublin. A contributory pension is paid to the widow only if her husband has paid at least 156 employment contributions; if four or more years elapsed since his entry into insurance, he must have had an average of at least 48 contributions a year paid or credited to him.

The State considers that it is a man's responsibility to provide for his widow in this way, ignoring his own possible frequent difficulties in living up to this responsibility.

The contributory pension rate of £4.50 without a dependent child (i.e. under 18, resident with the remaining parent). When the child is dependent upon the mother the rate is increased by 90p in respect of each of the first two children and 65p for each additional child.

Where the man has not provided or not been able to provide, the widow must then go through a humiliating means test - providing she is under 70 years of age (otherwise she qualifies for the pittance of the O.A.P.).
Provided she satisfies the means test that she has no other income, if she has one dependent child she will receive £5 a week; with two children £5.75 and 50p per week for each subsequent child. If she has means of, say £221.75 a year, with two children she gets £2.15. Thus she is expected to live and provide on approximately £6 per week. A widow with five children would have to have less than £403.75 a year to qualify. It seems whatever way a widow turns, the State ensures she will be poor.

The widows of public servants are exempt from a means test, because their pensions are ex gratia from the Government and therefore awarded at the discretion of the Minister for Social Welfare. Apart from this elite most widows in Ireland are badly off. That is why so many (28,000) of them have to work despite the problems which outside work brings especially for widows with young children.

When a widow does work, she automatically loses a non-contributory pension. A widow on a contributory pension does not lose it, but her wages and pension are aggregated together for tax purposes, and after a very small allowance, she pays tax at the normal rate.

A widow at work pays full social insurance, but if she falls sick or becomes unemployed, she receives only half benefits.

Another area of hardship for widows is rent. If she lives in a corporation house, she pays rent according to her income; that is to say, if the income of herself and her children is £7.87\(\frac{1}{2}\) she pays a rent of £1.11. In contrast, a family headed by a man on unemployment benefits whose total income is the same (£7.87\(\frac{1}{2}\)) pays a fixed minimum rent of 47p.

The middle-class widow also suffers from an anomalous indignity and hardship of having estate and death duties levelled on her when her husband dies. (In life, the joint income of husbands and wives are assessed together and taxed together but in death their incomes are separated - to the detriment of the widow and the advantage of the taxman). This is also particularly hard on widows of farmers; they are evaluated on the specially about a Housekeeper allowance. He "wasn't sure" and had to look it up. So how many widows know about the allowance, or can afford a housekeeper?
saleable value of their land, which has often little relevance to the year to year income that the land brings in.

A widow with children whose husband has made no Will is entitled to two-thirds of his estate. The children, at the age of majority are legally entitled to one-third. Because a widow with children to support is very often in a difficult financial position, this ruling can - and has - made rifts between hard-up widowed mothers and their grown-up children whose only asset is the house they live in.

Irish widows have recently got together to form a Widows' Association and there are six regional branches to press for a better deal both from the Government and society in general. Apart from the economic deprivations, there is also an implicit social stigma attached to widowhood because in a man-built society she is plainly a woman without a man.

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There is no divorce legislation in Ireland. The reason for this is that article 44 of the Constitution gives the Catholic Church a special position and divorce is not permissible for Catholics.

There are, however, Irishwomen who are not Catholics. And if the declared aim of this state to re-unify the whole of Ireland were to be fulfilled, in that situation there would be very many more Irishwomen in this State who would not be Catholics.

Irishwomen possibly believe that the lack of such legislation protects marriage and perhaps in principle it should but the facts contradict this belief. Although there is no divorce, marriages do break up and in a society which is becoming more and more industrialised, more and more urbanised, it is inevitable that they will continue to do so. Divorce legislation would, at least, provide the redress of adequate alimony and legal guardianship of children even if Catholics could not marry again. In the Irish legal separation - a costly business where a jury of 12 men judge the situation - the woman may be given care and custody of the children.

The way out of a bad marriage in Ireland is therefore most commonly desertion. No one knows precisely how many deserted wives there are in Ireland: at the last Census (1966) some 11,300 men were absent from home.

The lines blur here because some of these men would be either migratory or permanent workers in England. These men have not technically abandoned their wives although it very often amounts to the same thing: it is up to the man to send his wife money and if he does not, very little can be done, since Irish court orders cannot be implemented in Britain.

Social workers believe that the number of deserted wives in Ireland is higher than the number of women who declare their desertion - women understandably have pride about these things. Of the numbers declared current figures show that 600 men abandoned their wives in this country in the first six months of 1969. The Minister for Finance, George Colley, has said that at least 1,000 women in this country are entitled to benefits under the Social Welfare Bill of 1970, which brought in new measures to give assistance to deserted wives. Until then, there was no
distinct provision. However, the benefits granted are very low and a means test disqualifies any woman whose income is more than £325.75 a year unless she has more than two dependent children - in which case the ceiling rises by £13 a year for each child. So a large number of deserted wives who applied for the forms were discouraged from returning them.

A deserted wife must prove through a public dispensary, that (a) she has made every possible effort to reconcile her husband to herself and her family (although in this case the husband has broken up the marriage, the onus is on her to patch it up); (b) that he has left her of his own volition; (c) that six months have elapsed since she lived with him; and that during that six months he has not sent her any money at all. She must be less than 50 years of age and she must have at least one dependent child resident with her.

If she goes out to work, the benefit is withdrawn. A deserted wife with two children is expected to live on £5.75 a week. If she is already on any other benefits, like the Disability Benefit or Home Assistance benefit, these are taken into account in her total welfare allowance. In some counties of Ireland, deserted wives do better than in others, because some Local Authorities have put women on the Disabled Person's Allowance. The Home Assistance benefit is a type of Poor-Law, obtainable to any person who is unable "by his or her own industry or other lawful means, to provide the necessities of life for himself (herself) or dependents". It is administered by health and public authorities, subject to the general direction and control of the Minister for Social Welfare and the assistance available is at the discretion of the Minister or administrator of a given area.

Any married Irishwomen could become a deserted wife overnight. If the house or the life insurance is in the man's name (as it usually is) the entire rug can be pulled out from under her, since without her knowing her husband can cash the mortgage or the insurance.

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When a child is born out of wedlock, it is the result of the union of two people, a man and a woman.

But the responsibility and the stigma of all this falls upon the woman, firstly for biological reasons but secondly because of the double standard which has traditionally operated against women sexually. A girl has "fallen". A boy "sows his wild oats".

Very often nowadays, the girl who is in this situation is the innocent girl, not the "bad" one. "Bad" girls now know about contraception and abortion. The girl who goes ahead and has her baby is often brave and conscientious. Yet Society continues to punish her and her child.

Radical legislation and social changes are needed to improve the lot of the unmarried mother and her child in Ireland. At present a kind of Poor-Law attitude to the problem helps to sustain an undercover muddle. This propagates the cruel stigma and inflicts great suffering on mother and child.

The problem of the unmarried mother is increasing each year. On a national level the number of illegitimate births have increased at a rate of over 100 per year. There were 1,800 such births registered in Ireland last year, representing close to 3% of all live births in the country. About 400 mothers entered Dublin's National Maternity Hospital, Holles Street, Dublin. These were the girls who shied away from entering Mother and Baby Homes and who kept the fact of their pregnancies secret until the last moment. The most serious factor of this statistic was that 20% did not get medical care until labour pains had begun. Half of them received no ante-natal care before the last four weeks of pregnancy. These figures are for one hospital - the number of unmarried mothers in the Coombe and Rotunda hospitals are taken into consideration as well. Our system of care for the unmarried mother is obviously painfully inadequate. Numbers of girls entering mother and baby homes are also increasing. There is an increase in the number who go to Great Britain, due to lack of facilities in Ireland. The number of girls going to Britain for abortions is increasing too, (there are, of course, no official figures).

Recent figures show that there were 250 Irish girls arriving pregnant in England from Ireland in one year. The number of Irish prostitutes in London was given as one Irish to two U.K. It seems unmarried pregnancies lead to prostitution there, and girls try to keep their babies and support
them as best they can.

The unmarried mother who keeps her child does not officially exist as a class as far as this State is concerned. It is time that she was recognised. The unmarried mother does exist. We need a system for dealing with her problems which is less punishing and more aware of her and her child as a fatherless family. At present this system is a muddle.

We need a central organisation which will help and rehabilitate the unmarried mother. Ideally this organisation should be able to advise her as to practical and monetary help available, encourage her to keep her child if she so wishes, help her find housing and employment and organise creches and nurseries.

Some legislation must be brought into being to ensure that the person named as the father will accept the responsibility involved. This would mean that the legal stigma of illegitimacy would be removed and the child would have a right to his father's name and inheritance.

Such a central organisation should be responsible, at least in part, for a programme of public education which would improve the attitude towards the unmarried mother and her child, and accept them to their rightful place in Society.
Women in Distress

(iv) The Single Woman

On the face of it, the single woman in Ireland is perhaps legally and economically the best off of all Irishwomen.

She enjoys most of the legal rights accorded to men now, in principle, excluding jury service, and in the higher professions she will often achieve parity with men in pay—though not invariably. (Women Solicitors' clerks, for example, have been known to be paid less than their male colleagues, though their qualifications are precisely the same). However, since less than one per cent of people in the higher professions in Ireland are women, this is a marginal issue.

And many areas of custom and regulation still operate against the single woman. It has already been pointed out that many jobs and professions are still closed to her; the educational system de facto discriminates against her; the chances of equal pay are low; the taxation system penalises her and her promotional opportunities are not good. In many professions she can gain entry at the basic level easily enough, but when it comes to promotion to higher or executive position, there is much prejudice.

There are a few minor anomalies in favour of the single woman which would be comic if they were not also a sad reflection of discrimination against other women; for example, a single woman in the Civil Service may give birth to two children out of wedlock—but if she gets married she is sacked.

The customs and regulations which work against single women include the fact that a woman cannot usually get a mortgage on a house without a male guarantor; cannot usually purchase goods on HP without a male guarantor; frequently cannot open credit accounts without a male guarantor. If she dies, her pension benefits may not pass on to her dependents whilst a man's may.

Ireland has the highest rate of dependency in Europe and there are few single women in this country without some family responsibilities. The stay-at-home daughter who gives up work to look after elderly parents or other dependents is seriously neglected in Ireland. These women save the country millions of pounds a year by caring for people who would otherwise be in hospitals or homes. But loss of pension rights, reductions in pensions, loss of bonuses, promotions and little possibility of returning to
work are the rewards - for what is virtually unpaid domestic service on behalf of the State, even though they may do it out of love or duty.

Yet single women in this country are a mainstay of the economy; they number 81% of women at work and once again they tend to be in the lower-paid and low-skilled jobs. Day-release training courses for single girls are rarely available in employment and vocational training for girls and women lags badly behind that for men - again weakening the possibility for women to widen their job opportunities or increase their skills and pay.

The young, single women in the larger cities would seem to be the best-off, economically, of all Irishwomen, but the jobs at which they work have few long-term prospects and logically enough most girls look on their work as a stopgap between school and marriage. It is often levelled at girls that they are frivolous and irresponsible about their work, but as Professor Michael Fogarty has clearly shown in his recent study women in Top Jobs this is a direct product of woman's work being regarded as a frivolous thing; where women have responsible positions they tend to be, if anything, more conscientious than men.

Girls in the bigger cities of Ireland earn relatively good money at office work in comparison, say, with the male farm worker - but this is a very small amount of gilt on the gingerbread which in fact socially backfires on women. They crowd into the cities (there are estimated to be around 30,000 "surplus" women in Dublin alone) only to find a sad lack of male company and therefore a sad lack of social life and amenities. But even this seems a better life for most single girls than remaining in rural Ireland where quite often they would be expected to work on farms for next to nothing. A farmer is not expected to pay a daughter for working at a rate commensurate with that which he would pay a son, which is often in itself by economic necessity, very little.

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Incidental Facts

- Although at the time of writing the situation is under review, artificial birth control and all printed material giving knowledge thereof, is against the law of the Republic of Ireland. By a nice trick of public hypocrisy, the contraceptive pill is permitted, since it is imported into Ireland merely as a "cycle regulator". Some 25,000 Irishwomen use it, ostensibly under the guise of a medicine to regularise the menstrual cycle. To employ any other device is to break the law of this country. The moral question is not here under discussion; the fact remains that Irishwomen who do not adhere to orthodox Roman Catholic dogma are technically criminals, and when caught, are punished by deprivation of their right to plan their families as they wish.

- Ireland is one of the last seven countries in the world where there is no divorce legislation and though many women in Ireland, being Catholic, would hold no brief for divorce, the lack of any legislation backfires on women. Because we admit of no divorce, we refuse to co-operate with the British on enforcing British alimony payments and therefore they refuse to co-operate with us in chasing up deserting husbands. It must again be stated too that there are Irishwomen who are not Catholics, whose antecedants were promised by Wolfe Tone and the leaders of the 1916 Rising an Ireland where Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter would enjoy equal rights as citizens of this country.

- There are no regulations regarding baby-minding in Ireland; and privately-made arrangements, for a woman who must go out to work, are hazardous and unprotected by the law. There are no state or local authority run nursery schools or creches; private establishments are costly and the odd philanthropic ones obviously already stretched to the limit. Playground amenities are also often remarkably bad, notably in the big housing estates.

- Retraining facilities for women whose children have grown up are amongst the worst in Europe. While teachers, doctors, nurses, typists and factory hands can become re-employed (though usually at the bottom of the scale again, since skills rust) no adult education courses exist at Vocational and Technical Schools to accommodate the older married women who has had no specific training earlier. The College of Industrial Relations have no courses to qualify mature women. If they are educated to a certain standard, the Institute of Personnel Management will accept women of any age for a two-year training course, but this costs money. No tax rebates are available for such exercises and there are no grants.
Incidental Facts

The Montessori Training College at Sion Hill, Co. Dublin will also train older women on their two and three-year training courses, - but again there is a catch; the Montessori teaching method is not recognised in National Schools and it isn't easy for such a teacher to subsequently find a job.

Many married women whose children are growing up (and with the marriage age consistently falling, there are more and more women in the full bloom of their best years in this bracket) therefore work in such pointless jobs as stacking shelves in supermarkets where, cold-shouldered by Trade Unions, they fall back into the old ghetto of no work protection and get pay and employment at the whim of the management and the free market.

- One other interesting point concerning the general social attitude to women as inferiors is that in the Catholic Church women may not read the Epistle, in line with the Judeo-Christian tradition that females are somehow "impure". They may usually only go inside the altar rails for the marriage ceremony - or to char.
TAXATION AND WOMEN

What doth it profit a wife when she goes out to work? Less than it should. When combined husband-and-wife incomes are over £2,000 annually, a working wife is allowed earn only £7 ½ a year tax free, and is taxed at 35p in the £ for the balance. She can claim no other allowances, other than those "wholly, necessarily and exclusively" incurred by the job. For instance, a travelling demonstrator would get an allowance for her car, but she couldn't claim an allowance for help, or nanny to mind her children.

A wife's income becomes her husband's income, for "the purposes of tax"; here's what happens to a married couple with no children:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WIFE</th>
<th>HUSBAND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INCOME</td>
<td>£1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Allowance</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned Income Relief</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Allowances</td>
<td>7 ½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Free Allowance</td>
<td>£7 ½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxable Income</td>
<td>£1,426</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tax Paid:

- On first £100 of husband's earnings @ £0.23% in the £ - £23.33
- Balance @ £0.35 in £ £499.10 £516.60

Total Tax £499.10 £539.93

A wife can apply for a Separate Assessment, though very few do. (Application for a separate Tax Return Form must be made to the Revenue Commissioner nine months in advance) If the wife were assessed separately, the combined allowances are apportioned as follows:-
### Taxation and Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INCOME</th>
<th>WIFE</th>
<th>HUSBAND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£1,500</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
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</table>

Less:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allowance</th>
<th>WIFE</th>
<th>HUSBAND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Allowance</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned Income Relief</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Allowance</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Tax Free Allowance £402  £596

Taxable Income £1,098  £1,904

**Tax Paid:**

- £36 @ £0.23 in the £ £8.40
- £64 @ £0.23 in the £ - £14.93
- Balance @ £0.35 in the £ £371.70 £644.00

Total Tax £380.10  £658.93

So the total tax paid by the family in each case is the same, £1,039.03, but when the wife is assessed separately, she gains £119.00 on a £1,500 a year salary.

Many wives in the lower income group go out to work because they have to, and frequently the combined incomes of husband and wife are under £2,000 a year. In that situation, the wife is treated as follows:

### ANNUAL INCOME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>£468</th>
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</table>

Less:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allowance</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earned Income Relief</td>
<td>£117</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Allowance</td>
<td>£74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Welfare Allowance</td>
<td>£13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Tax Free Allowance £204

Taxable Income £264

Tax Paid:

- @ £0.26\(\frac{2}{3}\) in the £ £69.30

*(lower rate)*
So even when a wife earns only £9 a week, she still has to shell out a precious £69.30 a year in income tax.

Widows are treated specially by the Revenue people, but not specially enough. A widow does not get the married persons basic allowance of £424, even though she has to maintain a home, frequently children, and a normal married person's commitments. Instead she gets a basic tax allowance of £274 a year. In fact, a widow is not liable for income tax unless she's earning over £399 a year, and where there are children, this ceiling is raised. For instance, in the case of a widow with three children earning £400 - £700 a year, her combined Earned Income Relief Allowance, Widow Allowance, and Children's Allowances, are either greater than, or equal to, her income, so she doesn't pay any tax. But there's no cause for celebration. £399 a year is £7.75 a week, £700 is only £13.46 - we're not talking yet about a living wage. A fairly well-paid widow with three children is taxed to the hilt:

| WIDOW |
|---|---|
| **ANNUAL INCOME** | £1,500 |
| **Less:** | |
| Earned Income Relief | £324 |
| Widow Allowance | £274 |
| Combined Children's Allowance | £371 |
| Housekeeper Allowance | £100 |
| **Total Tax Free Allowance** | £1,120 |

**Taxable Income**: £380

**Tax Paid:**

@ 35p in the £ (Standard rate) £121.33

It was interesting that we had to ask a tax expert specially about a Housekeeper allowance. He "wasn't sure" and had to look it up. So how many widows know about the allowance, or can afford a housekeeper?
A PERSONAL SUMMING-UP BY A WORKING MOTHER:

FIVE GOOD REASONS WHY IT IS BETTER TO LIVE IN SIN

Number One:

You can keep your job. If you're in the Civil Service or in semi-State body employment, working for the trade unions or the banks, you'll go without further debate. This is not to say you won't necessarily be re-hired. In some places, you will be on a temporary week-to-week or day-to-day basis as the company needs you. This is true in many semi-State bodies. You'll also probably be re-hired for less pay and in a lower grade than what you enjoy - if that's the word, - now. If you're in the Civil Service, you and the man you decided not to marry can have two children and you'll still be able to keep your job; you will have a maternity leave of several months. We make the point no to criticise the Civil Service for its responsible treatment of unmarried mothers, only to ask why they feel less responsible toward married women even before they have children? To marry is to accept compulsory retirement until an age when your children are old enough so that you can try to find part-time work. So that 15 years from now, you'll find yourself back in the labour force, probably not in a Trade Union, and therefore unable to fight dismissal, low pay, poor conditions. Many of the skills you may have acquired by this time will be lost by then and you'll probably have to take unskilled work or less pay. Unless the Unions are more organised at part-time level than they now are, you'll be without any strength in negotiations. If your husband has died or deserted you or become an invalid, you'll have to work in these conditions.

Number two:

If you decide not to marry, you won't have to pay more income tax on your earnings than you pay now. As a single woman, you are allowed only £7.10 of what you earn tax free; the rest is taxed at 26p in the £. A married woman is allowed only £2.20 tax free. So if your wage is now £15.10 a week, you pay £2.10 in tax; once you've gone through the official ceremony, you'll pay £3.35 in tax. It is true that your husband will gain something in tax-free allowance - usually moving from £7.10 to £25 or thereabouts. Once your combined earnings go over £2,000 however - which they will if he's earning £26 a week - you'll pay 35p in the £ on tax.
There are various considerations that change taxation for individual couples. But essentially, the situation is that two single people with a combined income of £41 a week pay roughly £7.22\(\frac{1}{2}\) in tax. As soon as they're married they'll pay about £9.72\(\frac{1}{2}\)p.

**Number Three:**

The reason is that by staying single you'll keep whatever business identity you now have. Once your marry, you will be unable to open a charge account without your husband's signature, even if you have a job or a checking account. Most hire-purchase arrangements will be closed to you without your husband's approval.

Many motor insurance companies insist on your husband's signature, even if the car is yours. You will have difficulty transacting any business arrangement which is one reason why a good number of housewives have to resort to illegal money-lenders. A married woman cannot even apply for the children's allowance, which is legally her husband's. And her husband's signature is also required in certain hospitals for gynaecological operations. If her friends or children get in trouble with the law, a married woman will be denied the right to stand bail unless her home is owned in her own name. Even then, she has to go through detailed scrutinisation.

Just to make sure your status as a married woman is that of a total dependent the law sees to it that the wife has no statutory right to force her husband to give her any money at all, no matter how much he earns or how many he feeds.

The first three reasons for living in sin are sound practical ones. Anyone on the brink of marriage isn't likely to consider reasons Four and Five too closely, because she doesn't think too deeply about the possibility of the relationship going sour. Marriages have turned out badly for many people, though. A woman who is only living in sin can remember reason Number Four: you can leave when things have finally become unbearable, merely by walking out the door. A married woman who leaves her husband is presumed to have deserted him, and has no right to his house, furniture or income.

Which brings us to Number Five: if you live in sin you don't submit to the insult that society offers women who marry - the status of property. An adult and equal relationship is something two people forge together. The institution of marriage is something invented to preserve male superiority and a system of female chattels.