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Foreword

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Foreword

Sherry H. Penney

In July 1848, five women met to plan the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. The women at the convention, most of them housewives and mothers, declared that "all men and women were equal." Unhappy with their lot, they discussed their grievances and passed a series of resolutions. They called for equal rights for women in access to the professions and to institutions of higher education. They called for equal wages, the right to control their own property, and the right to hold office and to vote.

Where are we today? Have the grievances outlined at Seneca Falls been resolved? Do women now have equal rights and status?

This special issue of the *New England Journal of Public Policy* features articles by many women leaders in New England who address these concerns. Their articles deal with issues confronting women today, from equal access in the professional arena to healthcare and pension policy. Women have come a long way since Seneca Falls. Many of the issues that were raised a century and a half ago have been modified through positive legislative action, but we still have a way to go before true equality is the norm. And work/family issues continue to be a source of tension and potential discord rather than fulfillment for too many women today.

In this journal you will find an overview by *Margaret A. McKenna* of women in leadership positions and the continuing "glass ceiling" they face. She cites progress but also raises concerns, especially in the political arena. That note sounds again in the article by *Paige Ransford*, *Carol Hardy-Fanta*, and *Anne Marie Cammisa* who write about "Women in New England Politics." The authors worry that the representation of women in governmental positions has fallen below expected levels based on women's representation in the population.

Toni G. Wolfman provides an excellent review of the status of women in the corporate world in "The Face of Corporate Leadership: Finally Poised

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for Major Change?" Wolfman points out that there are still few women CEOs of major corporations and too few women on boards of directors. But she also offers us hope that we will see positive change as the business world recovers and looks to better utilize the talent of women in the future. It also is encouraging to note that PepsiCo recently appointed a woman, Indra Nooyi, as its CEO.

Phyllis Swersky, Aileen Gorman, and Jessica Reardon also paint a positive picture as they discuss the rise in the number of women entrepreneurs in "We've Got the Power." The authors discuss the challenges that these women face, but they also offer strategies for even greater success in the future.

Susan R. Crandall and Surabhi Jain offer a perspective on low-income women and argue that in order to achieve gender equality in the workplace, we need to pay more attention to workforce development, and we need to find jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency and prepare women for those jobs.

The focus of *Ellen A. Bruce's* "Rethinking Retirement Policy in Massachusetts," is older women and the pension system that puts them at a clear disadvantage. Caregiver roles are not given adequate recognition in our current systems and in our policy decisions. "Why Not a Dollar?" by *Evelyn Murphy* highlights the wage disparity that continues to exist for women. Like Bruce, Murphy worries about the long-term consequences of lower pay as women move to retirement age. Murphy offers positive steps that women can take to reverse the inequalities in the system. One such positive example is that of the MIT women faculty who voiced their demands for equality in wages, and in other areas. *Nancy Hopkins* tells that story and the positive outcome that resulted when the women worked with then MIT President Charles Vest.

Christine Arnett-Kibel, however, in "Future Promise for Women in Science" reviews the many problems that still make it difficult for women to make it to the top and be successful in the hard sciences in academia. In addition to work/life balance issues, she relates how the nature of the work done in the science laboratory presents its own challenges. Looking forward, she believes the ongoing collaborative nature of science will eventually be beneficial to women. After her article was submitted, her observations and conclusions were affirmed in a report on women and science prepared for the National Academy of Science wherein committee members identified the problem as "outmoded institutional practices" and called for widespread reform.

Cardiologist *Paula Johnson* and a team from the Connors Center at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston write about an important medical issue: How women in poverty are disadvantaged due to the cost of maintaining a "heart healthy" diet. Their article shows how one community became aware of the seriousness of the issue and what steps are needed to bring about improvement.

With my co-authors *Jennifer Brown* and *Laura McPhie Oliveira*, I discuss the overall picture in postsecondary education. With the selection of Drew Gilpin Faust as the first woman president of Harvard, there is a renewed feeling of hope. And women, who now outnumber men at the undergraduate level and in many graduate and professional areas, have made substantial progress here. But the picture is not quite so positive for women who wish to be tenured faculty, presidents of institutions, or to serve on boards of trustees. It is gratifying to read the recent report from Johns Hopkins that calls for 50 percent representation of women in senior faculty and leadership positions by 2020. Yet shortly before press time the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) issued a new report, *AAUP Faculty Gender Equity Indicators, 2006*, and concluded that equity is still not the norm. Much more needs to be done, particularly at the individual campus level where policies are set and data can be analyzed. And the problem of work/life balance and the lack of family friendly policies at many institutions remains.

Beth Brykman takes up the conflict in her article, "Life Balance: Can We Have It All?" based on interviews with many women who speak for themselves and relate the challenges they face and the lack of family friendly policies in our culture. *Roxanne A. Donovan* and her colleagues *Andrew L. Pieper* and *Allison N. Ponce*, in their article "Walking the Maternal Tight-rope," once again highlight the issues of economic empowerment for women in a society that has mixed feelings about motherhood and work/life balance issues.

What has happened to feminism is the topic addressed by *Meredith A. Evans* and *Chris Bobel* in "I Am a Contradiction: Feminism and Feminist Identity in the Third Wave." They explore whether there is a new feminist movement and how it might differ from earlier movements, and ask if the term feminism has outlived its usefulness.

Our concluding author is Federal Reserve President *Cathy E. Minehan*, who urges us all to be our best, do what we love, strive for a balance that will allow us full, rich personal and work lives, and give a hand to the women who come after us.

So our sisters at Seneca Falls would be pleased to see that so much has been accomplished, but they would also note that we still have work to do. Some organizations practice family friendly policies and help both genders deal with work/life balance but more need to do so. Or one might say that numbers are not enough. The increase in numbers of women in so many areas is certainly good news, but changes in societal attitudes and constant monitoring of our progress are also needed.

Other changes are needed including greater access to important professional networks, if we are to achieve true equality in areas where legislation for equal wages and equal access to jobs is in place but where the practice lags behind. And, yes, we do need more women in elected office and in the leadership ranks in our businesses and universities. As we go to press, one might make an observation about the recent Big Ten football game between Ohio State and the University of Michigan, ranked one and two in the nation. The game was close and exciting, and received an enormous amount of press. What we note, however, is that both institutions have their first female presidents. Such a thought would have been heretical when I was a student at the University of Michigan, but it truly is something to celebrate!

It is also encouraging to note that the United States now has its first female Speaker of the House of Representatives and that both the Senate and House gained additional female members in the 2006 elections. The numbers are up, but there is more to do.

In 1911, James Oppenheim wrote a poem called "Bread and Roses." This title was intended to suggest that all should enjoy a certain quality of life. The words in this verse continue to have relevance today.

As we come marching, marching, we battle too for men —
For they are women's children, and we mother them again.
As we come marching, marching, we bring the Greater Days —
The rising of the women means the rising of the race.

True equality for women in all areas, while clearly good for families, is also a plus for the economy and the work place, and for all in our society, including the men!