

The Disillusionment of Women:

January 11, 1937

Met last night/with the A W A group that is agonizing over the woman situation, trying to find by beating the brains of women who are supposed to know something about their sex, a formula which they can present to women for extricating themselves from a situation which seems to them complex, irrational, cruel. It was a terrible example of the muddled mental conditions that one gets when, like myself, you see <sup>one</sup> no/formula and do not believe that one is to be found. If we could have talked on some definite project which we all accepted, or were at least willing to consider, for improving this or that side of woman's life it might have gotten us somewhere.

I was supposed to lead the conversation; I was not sufficiently sure what it was all about. To be definite, "What is the matter with women?" And I enlarged on my old theme that she had somehow lost the vision of her racial, family and community responsibility. She did not feel that necessity <sup>earlier</sup> would create human beings, train them in the family unit and <sup>to bear</sup> keep their surroundings right, that she once seems to have done. It is always done where living is natural, where there is a natural living struggle, I take it. I said that I thought women under the new conditions were trying to escape, to find substitutes to make it easier for themselves, and to justify that by their confusion.

We talked all around and the leaders tried hard to get it down to the formula they wanted.

Mrs. Abbott said something more illuminating to me as I went away than anything that had been said. We had gotten the conversation around to security and I was hammering on the idea that no universal security was possible, it was largely up to you, you had to find a way. Be sure you might be ruined in this finding but at least you were doing the only thing that was possible. She said as we went down and through the hall where there were scores of ~~women~~<sup>women</sup> of A W A/coming and going, "You don't know the terrible problems of these women - how lost they are - how difficult it is?" Don't I know them.

"What we want is not assurance of security but a pattern to in/which they will fit."

Well, now there is something to say. But what she has in mind is a universal pattern. The only universal pattern is the certain <sup>universal</sup> laws and the effort to get away from these laws. I am afraid they do not realize that they cannot escape them. This makes women like Mrs. Abbott, agonizing over these individual problems, feel that we ought to get some one universal scheme. Of course that is behind the communist's idea. It is easy to see their great concern is with the economic side, not with the social responsibility of the woman, and how she is to be taken care of and take care of her child economically, how she is to carry through her job in the present economic condition. There are a variety of ways. <sup>The</sup> /A W A is backing it, but for a universal formula - there is no such thing.

*Point line to center*

*Subject is  
difficult*

It is very like the search all the Nations of the world are making today and as it looks now we will presently go to War to settle - a system which will give to every individual ~~what~~ a secure life of satisfaction and opportunity.

I never knew whether a formula was reached or not for I was too skeptical about the possibility of finding one, sympathetic as I was <sup>with the attempt</sup> to study the problems which call on women for solution or at least the help in solution. <sup>While I could be of no help</sup> ~~what~~ deeply disturbed me was the cry of one of the leaders of the group, a woman whose position <sup>out</sup> required her to meet daily a score or more of down and / women, <sup>young,</sup> women/educated some of them, unable to find positions, middle-aged, <sup>many of them</sup> old, /once prosperous unfitted for jobs in the society which demands efficient trained helpers, grown too old to fill the places that they had once had. All of this mass of unhappy womanhood ~~organized~~ agonized my friend and she had like ~~xxxxxx~~ men and women/feeling deeply human needs had turned to the possibility of finding some universal panacea, some way out, to which if one could rally all women as political leaders attempt to rally men and women to some formula - fascist, communist, democratic - if she could do that then she could help these tormented souls.

<sup>now inadequate to</sup> /argue, as I must, that these situations must be handled separately, ~~that~~ the case must be handled separately, there was an inclination among those in this group, as in all <sup>I find</sup> groups, /where there is this feeling of disillusionment, there

was more or less Mrs. Buck's complaint that men are not giving the help and chance to women that they could. Women charge against men in their indictment important items which really belong to their case against the nature of things.

~~items x x x x x n n f f i r x d i s c r i m i n a t i o n~~

*A* *When* I hear women artists <sup>frequently</sup> complaining of unfair discrimination in the hanging of pictures, and of their neglect of their shows by masculine critics. *that is*, their opinion is that <sup>one</sup> men wilfully tried to push them out of the art world, <sup>I recall the</sup> listen to the men whose pictures are not admitted - there are many of them. <sup>and many of his pictures are</sup> That is, it is hard on men when women enter his field. <sup>they will meet the</sup> inevitable and natural discriminations of competition. *that is* there is much more of human nature than there is of man against women in much of the discrimination that women complain of.

*A* Not a little difficulty comes from the breaking down of the old division of labor. <sup>and most women are unhappy & refuse to work</sup> they can't break up the way things have been done through generations without many unhappy dislocations. <sup>Abandoned?</sup> fifty years ago a woman had a well defined and an important position in the social and economic world. *A* she paid her way. <sup>rather as a help</sup> ~~man intent on~~ <sup>nature under constant stability; = intent on</sup> creating ~~new~~ activities took away some of her most important activities - the change in the ways of doing things, the <sup>the ways of</sup> change in productivity. <sup>new</sup> It also called her into hard positions.

*Something new & different, but hit on machine as an exciting new way of handling work with less labor. He developed the industrial revolution taking*

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

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thus

creating hard  
and perplexing  
situation for  
the limited  
will on the  
to call on for  
to run his  
machine

to upset the whole established order and the adjustment  
has been slow and hard and has brought on her and her  
children many unhappy results. ~~but these things are as~~

~~inevitable in the nature of progress as are the seasons.~~

~~to charge them on to man's wilfulness to  
and ~~to attempt to make life harder for her is~~~~

unfair. ~~as a matter of fact much of his activity in the development  
of industry has been done in the hope of making life easier.~~

*Re-adjustment* An established order has not been worked out.

That is women are caught in the revolving system. ~~such~~

~~xx~~

~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ In this breaking up of the old

traditions of labor there has been a necessary change in the

daily relations of men and women. Under this new system,  
~~that has grown and is still growing up,~~ the woman invades <sup>the</sup> man's

world, she disturbs something which has always been very  
precious to him - his masculinity. And in doing this she

has sacrificed in his judgment something in her which has  
always been <sup>very</sup> precious to him - femininity. ~~over~~

I might say that from my part this intrusion  
of women into men's life, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ is anything

but desirable. I can't think of anything more trying to me,  
as an individual, than to have a man always at my elbow, or

can I heartily think ~~that~~ of a man, when in this new arrangement  
of things it becomes increasingly necessary for him to have

always a woman at his elbow. I believe <sup>that</sup> the preservation of

the natural difference between a man and a woman is a very

He wants to set boundaries ~~to the~~ <sup>to</sup> the sofa  
 and no further but she aims to be re-  
 cursive. She is in his set-up and  
 demanding, substitute for the ~~position~~  
 of upon which? activities ~~and~~  
 she excited sets terms - if I want you into  
 your mind, I must have your total  
 education - freedom - opportunity. I  
 must learn to do what you do in your  
 way. ~~He~~ This is getting more than he  
 can stand for when he called it his ~~and~~  
 child is help him out of the individual  
 pain he had created. ~~6-11~~

This has always been a marvelous  
 work against the ~~ultra~~ <sup>ultra</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup>  
 dream of each. ~~He~~ <sup>He</sup> ~~Phayer~~ <sup>Phayer</sup> ~~carry~~ <sup>carry</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup>