

Thursday, April 22, 1976

## Girls Friday Want a New Day Not the Old Roses Routine

It is noon and midtown streets are crowded with people lured outdoors by the lunch hour. People mill about, going for a sandwich, looking for the hot dog man. At the corner of 50th St. and Sixth Ave., the multitude is composed mainly of women.

Standing in the shadow of the Time-Life Building, they've gathered to discuss the hard time, the rough life of women office workers.

"Respect, Rights and Raises — Not Roses," reads a sign on a truck that serves as the rallying point for this crusade. The alliterative allusion is to the custom employed by many bosses of plying their Girl Friday with long-stemmed American beauties during National Secretaries Week, currently being observed.

The roses are a thorny issue, one of many being addressed by speakers recruited by Women Office Workers (WOW) on a day officially designated as Women Office Workers Day by Mayor Beame.

### '58 and Still a Girl'

"Women are treated like office wives and not regarded as professionals," complained Cassandra Wilson, an officer of WOW. "Because you're a woman, you're there to salve someone's bruised ego."

On the truck behind her, another sign read, "58 and They Still Call Me the 'Girl.'" Yet another poster on the vehicle, a mobile community center truck volunteered by New York Telephone, declared, "We Mean Business."

While the Victoria Woodhull Marching Band tootled tunes from the truck bed, three lunch-bound office workers paused to observe the proceedings. Ultimately, they missed their meal altogether.

"I studied typing for three years, took shorthand for three years and I wind up hav-

ing to go and get coffee for my boss," griped an angry secretary who was about to identify herself until prodded into anonymity by friends who feared the consequences she might suffer for her outspokenness.

"They're talking about clericals, but I have a wife who works as an institutional trader and earns \$9,000 less than a man doing the same job," remarked a copper company salesman as he polished off his ice cream pop.

"You might say men rate more money and better jobs because they're better qualified,"

### PETER COUTROS

he continued. "But that's only because women have been denied the opportunities available to men."

Then, he fell to thinking about how his wife had called him a male chauvinist just the other day. "She should only hear me now," he said.

The rally's theme was keyed by Councilman Carol Greitzer, who, after noting the inequities heaped upon women office workers, enunciated WOW's goals. They included written job descriptions, establishment of career ladders that would enable clericals to aspire to executive and supervisory roles and the posting of jobs for promotional opportunities.

In the crowd, a youthful executive type in plaids drew the ire of Susan Paul, a WOW activist, when he referred to some of his female colleagues as "girls." She also rebutted his assertion that women miss more working time because of sickness and that most office women are more in pursuit of husbands than of some meaningful employment.

More than an hour after the meeting got under way, one of many secretaries in the audience nudged her friend and said, "We better get back upstairs, before we don't have any job at all."

# WOMEN OFFICE WORKERS

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# New York Post

NEW YORK POST, THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 1976

## Stenos Give Some Dictation

By LINDSY VAN GELDER

"I had a \$25,000 education, but I made \$85 a week."

"The boss told us to start wearing skirts to work because 'his girls' had such pretty legs."

"We had the same title. But I made the coffee and he made the money."

"I called him Mr. Sterling. But he called me Marge."

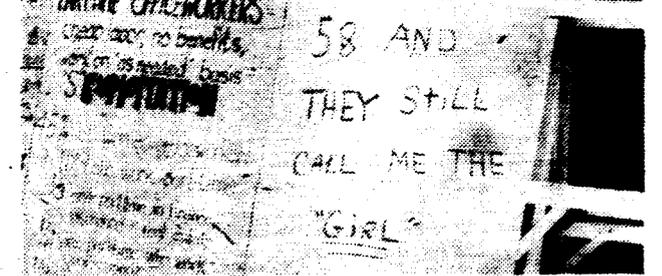
These were some of the complaints voiced yesterday by a small group of women who came from the ranks of the 217,000 secretaries, 90,000 bookkeepers, 85,000 typists, 34,000 cashiers, 35,000 file clerks, 32,000 telephone operators, 32,000 office machine operators, 20,000 receptionists, 14,000 bank tellers and 225,000 clerical workers in New York City.

The occasion was Women Office Workers Day, a time when bosses traditionally take their secretaries to lunch and give them gifts of roses.

"We don't want a day of token recognition like Mother's Day," Pat Fitzgerald of Women Office Workers (WOW) told a lunchtime rally outside the Time-Life Building, Sixth Av. and 50th St. "We want real improvements in our working lives all year around."

The rally — which included balloons, marching music, speeches, songs and skits by the Womanrite Theater Ensemble — drew several hundred onlookers, many of them men.

WOW, which has filed age-discrimination complaints against various city employment agencies, also presented a Women Office Workers Bill of Rights, including the right to organize on the job and the right to choose whether to do the personal work of employers.



Post Photo by Terence McCarten  
The Victoria Woodhull Marching Band (named after the first woman presidential candidate) entertains at Women Office Workers rally.

# DAILY NEWS

NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER ©

New York, N.Y. 10017, Friday, March 12, 1976\*

## Pretty Faces Get Jobs, Say Pickets at Agency

Carrying posters that read "Pretty Legs Can't Type" and "Where Will I Be in 20 Years," about a dozen women picketed one of the city's major employment agencies today to dramatize charges of age discrimination.

Margaret Robinson, spokeswoman for Women Office Workers (WOW), said Snelling & Snelling at 18 E. 41st St. was targeted because it is a "repeated offender."

Norma Shaw, manager of the office, said, "We don't care about age. We are interested in placing people and earning a fee for it."

Miss Robinson, who said she was a "gal Friday," said WOW had several thousand clerical workers as members and was basing its charges on a phone survey among 100 employment agencies in the Metropolitan Area.

She said the survey results indicated that employers are seeking young, attractive women and that the agencies often promise "We won't get you a dog."

Miss Robinson said WOW has filed sex and age discrimination complaints with the state Division of Human Rights against several employment agencies.

## WOW protests beauty-before-age pattern in job market

By PAULA BERNSTEIN

Getting older, not better?

A mature woman with 20 years at the typewriter gets fewer job offers than a "young chick" with only a few years on the job, according to Women Office Workers.

The civil rights group, known as WOW, last week issued a 15-page research report on "widespread and continuing discrimination against older women" and filed complaints of age and sex discrimination against Snelling and Snelling, Cosmopolitan Girl Employment Service, Key Employment, Kellogg Employment Agency, Aavis Personnel Associates and the New York State Employment Service.

The first investigatory conference on the WOW complaints is scheduled for next Monday at the New York State Division of Human Rights, which received 14 age and sex discrimination complaints against employment agencies last year, according to Jeannine Dowling, a spokeswoman.

### Discrimination denied

Two of the six agencies named by WOW, Snelling and Snelling, and Cosmopolitan Girl, refused comment on the charges. The others denied any discrimination.

"I don't know who they spoke to," said Ed Elliot, manager of Key Employment, "It doesn't make sense to discriminate. We don't operate that way."

"Age discrimination is not practiced here," maintained Walter Williams, Kel-

logg Employment president. "It is inhumane and illegal. A good percentage of the people I have employed are over 40. I'm over 50 myself and I'm not likely to have anything against anyone who lived that long."

"If we discriminated," said Lynne Flora, president of Aavis, "I would have to fire the 75% of my staff over 35, including myself. We've placed many mature women. I don't have a discriminatory job offer."

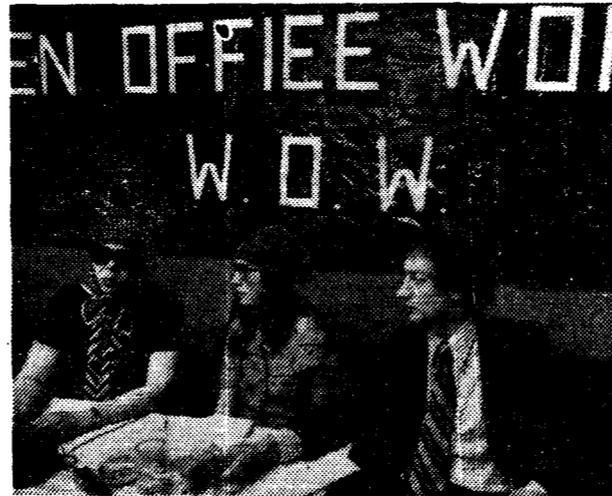
### Explains procedures

David Ford, director of public relations for the state labor department, explained that interviewers try to talk employers out of making discriminatory job offers but could not prevent discriminatory remarks over the phone.

"The caller should have been told his job offer was illegal, but the information on age or sex was not put on a form or in a computer. Based on one telephone call and one interview, is not a way to establish a pattern of discrimination."

The six agencies named in the WOW complaints were chosen "because they make the strongest case, their discrimination was so severe and so obvious," said Noreen Connell of the WOW staff. "We want the really bad agencies not just fined, but taken out of business, with their licenses revoked, because they do so much damage."

The WOW investigator was a young man, "Paul," who called 100 agencies



News photo by Frank Giorandino

Describing their experiences with employment agencies at a press conference at Rosoff's restaurant were, from left to right: "Dorothy" and "Marge" (disguised so agencies could not change their records) and "Paul," who made the phone calls offering jobs for younger women only.

during January and February to place a job offer for "a young chick under 25."

"I thought they would laugh when they heard it," he said. "Unfortunately, no one laughed. Sometimes I was asked if I cared what race the 'girl' was. It was almost as though I could order a white woman, 23 years old, 5'4" with any body measurements I wanted."

A young woman and an older woman, matched in skills and education, but with differing years of experience, then visited 10 agencies.

"Dorothy," 50, got few job offers but

many comments about her age. "Marge," 25, was sent out on jobs with good pay, bonuses and benefits. "I felt anger and shock when 'Dorothy' and I would compare notes," she recalled. I asked myself where I would be in 20 years working as a secretary. The contrast between my experience and Dorothy's was frightening."

Employment agency practices are like "the sexual politics of singles bars," commented Ms. Connell. "In office work, a woman is often considered old at 30."

**Sex  
And Job  
Agencies**

By LINDSY VAN GELDER

What we wanted was "an attractive, young girl . . . a good-looking chick . . . under 25."

The man on the phone placing the order was looking not for a Homecoming Queen or a Miss America contestant, but a secretary. And according to a report just released by a group called Women Office Workers (WOW), most employment agencies here are happy to practice age and sex discrimination if that's what the companies want.

At a press conference yesterday, WOW announced that complaints had been filed with the State Division of Human Rights against the New York State Employment Service, Snelling and Snelling, Key Employment, Kellogg Employment Service, Aavis Personnel Associates and Cosmopolitan Girl.

**Investigating Team**

The agencies, according to Noreen Connell of WOW, were among 10 visited by two WOW investigators posing as job applicants. Although their skills were equal, one investigator was a pretty 25-year-old and the other was a matronly looking 50-year-old.

Invariably, while the young woman received the royal treatment, the 50-year-old was told there were no jobs, was sent to interviews for lower-paying jobs, was kept waiting by agency personnel and was told to change her personal appearance to "look younger."

**Telephone Survey**

Also cited by WOW was a telephone survey of 100 agencies, of which 68 per cent allegedly willingly accepted a request for a pretty, young job applicant.

"I won't send you any dogs," one agency allegedly promised. Another's reported response was: "I understand what you're saying and I can fit the bill—an airline stewardess type."

Five of the seven cited agencies refused to comment on the charges. A spokesman for Kellogg admitted that his firm practiced age discrimination, but not in favor of young women. "If you'll check our newspaper ads, you'll see over and over again that a mature person is preferred. Not only isn't this [the charge] true—it's the opposite that's true."

"I have a splitting headache from this . . . Are you going to write a big article against us?" asked a spokeswoman for Aavis. "Because not only is there nothing to these charges, but I think it's time that somebody gave us a little credit for finding jobs for people in this job market." She also accused the WOW investigators of possible "entrapment."



# The New York Times

FRIDAY, MARCH 5, 1976

## Job Discrimination Charged by Women Workers

By NADINE BROZAN

An organization whose aims are to upgrade the role of women clerical workers announced yesterday that it had filed complaints of age and sex discrimination against five employment agencies and the New York State Employment Service.

The organization, Women Office Workers, said that the complaints had been filed with the State Division of Human Rights and that it also had asked the city's Department of Consumer Affairs and the State Attorney General's civil rights bureau to investigate.

The organization said it would press for the revocation of licenses if satisfactory recourses were not found.

In addition to the state employment division, the agencies named in the complaint are: Snelling and Snelling, Key Employment, Kellogg Employment Service, Aavis Personnel Associates and Cosmopolitan Girl Em-

ployment Services. The six were chosen from among 100 agencies contacted in January directly or by telephone by three investigators for the Women Office Workers, which calls itself WOW.

Spokesmen for all the non-government agencies, except for Key Employment, which could not be reached, said that they could not comment on the charges because they had not received formal notification of the complaint. Lynn Flora, president of Aavis Personnel Associates, said, "Without the information, I can't answer questions. But I know we don't have one discriminatory job order on file; we just don't accept them."

A spokesman for the state employment agency denied the charges and asserted that age and sex specifications were never entered into its computers.

"Despite the fact that women office workers are the bread and butter of most

employment agencies, their civil rights are violated with seeming impunity," Noreen Connell, a WOW staff member and moderator of the news conference at Rosoff's Restaurant, said. She added that previous efforts by other organizations had failed to eradicate agency discrimination.

WOW enlisted three investigators — a man who telephoned 100 employment agencies and two women who visited 10 of them—who used pseudonyms.

When asked why pseudonyms were used, a WOW staff member replied that it was a device used to prevent the agencies from acting to alter their records before the matter reached the hearing stage. Such alterations occurred in similar cases several years ago, she asserted.

The male investigator, whose pseudonym was Paul, recalled his telephone conversations, saying: "I told the agencies my company

[a nonexistent one] was looking for a young, pretty, receptionist-secretary type between 23 and 25 years old."

"At first I didn't think it would work; the job order was so outrageous, so blatantly discriminatory," he said. "I thought they would laugh when they heard it. Unfortunately, no one laughed."

"Sometimes I was asked if I cared what race the 'girl' was. It was almost as though I could order a white woman, 23 years old, 5 foot 4 inches with any body measurements I wanted."

WOW also sent two women with equal skills, training and background — Dorothy, aged 50, and Marge, 25—for interviews at 10 employment agencies. The only difference between them was experience: Dorothy had worked for 20 years, Marge for six.

"Despite my skills and experience, two agencies I

was told there were no jobs," Dorothy said. "Once, as I was leaving, I saw my partner with a referral card in her hand being courted by the counselor who was solicitous and warm, while I had received the bum's rush."

"Though I was complimented on my skills, work background, command of English and dignity, only one agency selected a referral from their job order files. Many counselors confided in me that my only 'problem' was my age."

Marge described what happened to her: "In two of the agencies where my partner was told there were no jobs," she said, "I was sent to interviews for jobs with good pay, bonuses and benefits."

"I felt anger and shock when Dorothy and I would compare notes," she added. "The contrast was really frightening. I asked myself where I would be in 20 years working as a secretary."

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