

ABSTRACT

DUNSTON, JAMIE LYNN. "Women are People -- and Citizens Too!" Changes in the Women's Bureau, 1944 - 1959. (Under the direction of David Zonderman.)

In 1945, Rosie the Riveter was a revered icon of womanpower and feminine patriotism. By the time *Leave it to Beaver* made its television debut in 1957, however, June Cleaver had supplanted Rosie as the new face of the American housewife. Many historians have studied this shift, but few have taken an institutional approach to the topic. This thesis explores the changing status of women in the labor force during the postwar decade through the lens of the Women's Bureau, a branch of the Department of Labor, and the two women charged with its directorship between 1944 and 1961.

This thesis examines the differences between Frieda Miller, Women's Bureau Director from 1944 - 1953, and Alice K. Leopold, Director from 1953 - 1961. Mid-level bureaucratic appointments are often overlooked, but time and again, national events remind us that these organizational managers not only reflect the political philosophies of the Presidents they serve, but are often in a position to influence their fields even more than the Presidents who appointed them.

By studying personal papers, press articles, interviews, and labor statistics the researcher paints a complex picture of working women during the tumultuous demobilization following World War II and the women chosen to lead and represent them. This thesis describes the origins of the Women's Bureau, gives statistical snapshots of women's labor patterns, and examines the human factors (like long hours, wage discrimination, and availability of child care) that affect labor policy. The researcher then presents comparative biographies of Miller and Leopold and illustrates the broad changes that accompanied the Leopold's succeeding Miller in 1953.

Two more different historical characters would be difficult to imagine. Frieda Miller was a longtime labor activist and advocate, a single mother living with a female companion, and an outspoken proponent of a woman's right to training, employment, and protection from exploitation. Alice Leopold was a meteoric success as a businesswoman who left the workforce to be a homemaker for 18 years before entering public life and catapulting to a federal position. Her conviction that a woman's primary role was wife and mother combined with her firm belief that the same woman could contribute much more to society led her to champion women's education, involvement in community organizations, and opportunities for women to work once their children were self-sufficient. By studying these two women, the author hopes to gain a new understanding of the nature of women in America's labor force, past and present, and to examine the role of federal appointees in shaping public policy.

“*Women Are People, And Citizens Too!*”
Changes in the Women’s Bureau 1944-1959

by
Jamie Lynn Dunston

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APPROVED BY:

Dr. Frank Fee

Dr. Nancy Mitchell

Dr. David Zonderman
Chair of Advisory Committee

BIOGRAPHY

Jamie Lynn Dunston graduated from Meredith College with a Bachelor of Arts in History in 2000. She is particularly interested in women's labor history, but enjoys studying any topic in twentieth century history. She will receive her Master of Arts in History with a minor in journalism in December 2008.

Mrs. Dunston is married with two children and currently works part-time as a freelance writer in Cary, NC. She would like to thank her husband, Adrian, for supporting and encouraging her to pursue her education and for reading endless drafts of this paper in progress. She would also like to thank her parents, Gene and Bobbie, for teaching her the value of learning, for having confidence in her as she faced adversity, for believing that she would succeed, and for being proud of her efforts regardless of the outcome.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: Miller and Leopold	2
A Textual Road Map.....	4
Historiography	5
The Women’s Bureau: An Overview	7
Mary Anderson Sets the Stage.....	10
Wartime, Women, and Work.....	12
Demobilization and Women Workers	15
Frieda Miller Steps Up.....	19
Alice Leopold Takes Over.....	20
Different Lives, Different Times	23
Frieda Miller: A Life of Labor.....	24
Alice Leopold: Businesswoman and Bureaucrat	29
Expectations and Assumptions	31
The Role of Education	36
Contrasting leadership styles	38
Nuclear Family in a Nuclear Age	42
Separate Employment: Inherently Unequal?	45
Two Approaches to Career Development.....	47
The ERA Sparks Debate	50
Discrimination: Pride or Prejudice?.....	52
Leopold and Miller: A Recap	58
Conclusions.....	59
References.....	65

“Our system of free, compulsory education...no longer differentiates between the sexes...it is not surprising, therefore, to find that the same aspiration has been engendered in both men and women -- the desire to choose a field of endeavor suited to one’s psychological needs.”

- Frieda Miller, 1947

“I don’t happen to be one of those who believe women want equality. Equity seems to me...a much more important point of view.”

- Alice K. Leopold, 1954

In May of 1946, a feature article appeared in *The New York Times Magazine* entitled "What's Become of Rosie the Riveter?" Above the article are two photographs. In the first, a woman with her back to us is wearing a leather apron, slacks, and a work shirt. Her hair is swept into a bandanna and she is working at a machine in a factory. In the second, another woman – or perhaps the same woman – wears a polka-dotted dress and frilly apron while she cooks at a gas range, her hair likewise swept into a kerchief. The caption reads, "Sisters under the apron – Yesterday's war worker becomes today's housewife.¹" The article that accompanied this striking juxtaposition was penned by the newly appointed chief of the Department of Labor’s Women’s Bureau, Frieda S. Miller. In 1946, Miller wrote that “The need to work of an overwhelmingly large proportion of the women [war workers] and their expressed intentions to remain in gainful employment after the war pose a variety of postwar readjustment problems.²” The article both addressed the economic necessities of continued job opportunities for women and defended

women's right to continue working after the end of World War II. Eight years later, Alice Leopold, Miller's successor as Director of the Women's Bureau, stressed, in a speech to Girl's Nation (an annual, national citizenship and leadership conference for high school girls) that "The most important thing that a woman can do is to establish a home and raise a family. That will always be her first interest and her chief contribution to society."³ How did an economy that thirsted for the productive powerhouse of full employment among women during World War II give way to a society that valued the mother-homemaker above all else? In other words, how would Rosie the Riveter find her place in a world of June Cleavers?

Introduction: Miller and Leopold

The stark change in attitudes towards women workers was driven in part by two women, Frieda Miller and Alice Leopold. While Miller oversaw the turbulent demobilization process after World War II, Leopold presided over a relatively quiet, prosperous economic period. Therefore, the issues these two women faced during their tenures were inherently different and required unique solutions and approaches. Miller and Leopold reacted differently to the unique challenges each faced, which allows us to compare their values, goals, and accomplishments. After examining the issues Miller and Leopold faced individually and the ways in which these issues were addressed, I will explore how each woman's personality, experiences, and political values changed the way the Women's Bureau operated.

With Miller taking office before the end of World War II and Leopold serving into the early 1960s, the issues they faced, while sometimes similar, were often quite unique. For instance, Miller was confronted with the problem of integrating into the post-war economy the

large percentage of women war workers who wished to remain employed after the war. With women's right to work under attack and the reconversion process volatile and uncertain, Miller's greatest challenge was also her most immediate: the growing prejudice against women who worked in "men's jobs" in defense industry plants. She therefore had to immediately decide the best course to help women who had been employed in the defense industry keep their jobs or find new ones, which was no small task given that many returning World War II veterans expected to resume the jobs they had left behind.

By the time Leopold took office in 1953, the post-war reshuffling of jobs was complete, and working women had new difficulties to overcome. Many former war workers had been shunted into predominately female, service-industry jobs which left their pay envelopes considerably lighter. Leopold's task, then, was to encourage women to seek higher education in the pursuit of better-paid, professional jobs that would increase their standard of living. Leopold had to take care not to upset the social norms of the day, which often relegated even college-educated women to exclusive roles as homemaker-mothers. Leopold, employing a savvy political strategy, implemented programs to help women who were "retired" from parenting -- those whose children were in high school or older -- obtain college degrees and vocational training. These programs encouraged women to enter professions that made use of their presumed natural abilities as nurturers and caregivers for children, making more money and contributing to the economy without shirking their maternal duties. Teaching, nursing, and social work were obvious avenues for former homemakers to excel on the job, and Leopold

emphasized these fields when advocating for “mature” women workers seeking to enter or re-enter the workforce when their children no longer needed full-time mothers.

Because of their different backgrounds and experiences, Miller and Leopold held very different political ideas. These different ideas influenced the ways in which they approached the problems and challenges that the Women’s Bureau faced while they held office. For example, Miller had a long history of liberalism and advocacy for the working classes, and her tenure was characterized by advocacy and particular attention to the issues of wage discrimination and access to vocational training. Leopold, on the other hand, was a lifelong Republican, and her appointment brought party politics to the Women’s Bureau for the first time since its inception. As a result, the Women’s Bureau under Leopold was transformed primarily into a data-gathering agency with limited power and a charismatic but largely symbolic leader who focused on helping older, middle-class women achieve professional careers once their children were grown.

A Textual Road Map

In order to study more closely the ways in which Miller and Leopold impacted women’s labor history between 1944 and 1959, one must first understand the origins of the Women’s Bureau and how it has interacted with the labor movement as a whole since its inception in 1917. To this end, I will first explore the origins of the Bureau in the context of World War I labor shortages. I will use a statistical snapshots of women’s labor patterns to discuss the demographic shifts that took place between the end of World War I and the beginning of Miller’s tenure in 1944. I will then examine the human factors that affected labor policy, particularly abuses

commonly faced by women workers, such as poor working conditions, long hours, and wage discrimination.

Once the historical context of the Women's Bureau's creation has been established, I will examine the close relationship between Anderson and Miller, and the changes -- institutional and political -- that accompanied the transfer of power from Miller to Leopold in 1953. I will then provide biographical background on Miller and Leopold in order to examine how their life experiences and choices shaped their expectations for women workers and their assumptions about who the Women's Bureau was intended to serve and why. Finally, I will use comparative analysis to discuss Miller and Leopold's different approaches to a variety of problems each faced during her tenure, such as higher education and job training, manipulation of the media, the impact of the Cold War on job opportunities for women, and their diverging paths towards equal pay.

Historiography

While many historians have tackled the question of women's changing roles during the Cold War, few have approached the topic from an institutional standpoint. Little has been written about the women who shaped Department of Labor policies from within its ranks. Perhaps the most comprehensive text on American women's labor history, Alice Kessler-Harris' *Out to Work*⁴, simply covers too much material to be very useful in deconstructing the Women's Bureau's mid-century policies. Kathleen Laughlin comes closer with *Women's Work and Public Policy*⁵, a narrative history of the Bureau, but her attempts to cover two decades and four administrations simply does not allow a thorough analysis of the Bureau's impact during the

early Cold War. Maureen Honey and Susan Hartmann have used official Women's Bureau publications to varying degrees in their analyses of women's labor patterns during and immediately following World War II, but neither gives much thought to the agency -- or the women -- behind these documents⁶.

Miller and Leopold's papers have been mined by these few recent writers as primary sources to document the history of women's labor in general or, in the case of Kathleen Laughlin's work, the Women's Bureau in particular. Miller also appears in several studies of lesbian and bisexual women, but she is described mainly in relation to Pauline Newman, her lifetime partner, and her professional achievements are merely summarized or alluded to. Lillian Faderman discussed their relationship, which spanned six decades, in *To Believe in Women: What Lesbians Have Done for America*⁷, but devoted just half a page to Miller's tenure at the Women's Bureau. Similarly, Trisha Franzen discusses Miller and Newman's relationship in *Spinsters and Lesbians: Independent Womanhood in the United States*⁸, but merely refers to Miller's appointment to her post as it related to her friendship with Mary Anderson.

In any case, the impact of Miller and Leopold's backgrounds and personal histories on policy issues during their directorships has been largely ignored. As will become clear, their policies, approaches, and personalities were radically different, and these differences profoundly impacted the Women's Bureau's approach to labor policy during each woman's tenure. By studying Miller and Leopold, historians can better understand the reasons for changes in Bureau policy, the political climate of the postwar world, the labor issues caused by the changing post-

war economy, and how two bright, educated, successful career women could come to hold such vastly different beliefs about women's labor in such a short time.

The Women's Bureau: An Overview

Before studying Miller and Leopold's impact on the Women's Bureau policy and its implications for postwar women workers, it is necessary to place the Bureau into the context of the needs and challenges of its constituency -- women who were working outside the home, or wanted to be doing so. The Women's Bureau did not operate in a vacuum, and in fact grew out of the economic realities of World War I and the Depression, both of which deeply impacted women workers. The story of the Women's Bureau is closely intertwined with the story of women's slow emergence from the home and into the workplace and political arena during the early decades of the twentieth century, beginning in 1917.

Protective legislation for women workers has a long tradition in the United States. Maximum-hour laws for women and children were commonplace by the mid-1800s, the first having been passed in Wisconsin in 1867. These laws were based on the acknowledgement that long work hours had a negative impact on workers' health. A young Louis Brandeis -- who would later be appointed to the Supreme Court by Woodrow Wilson -- articulated this position in the 1908 landmark court case *Muller v. Oregon*. In his brief, Brandeis argued that "long hours of labor are dangerous for women primarily because of their special physical organization." He went on to cite several medical studies that describe the unique health consequences of long periods of standing on women's knees, hips, and feet, their increased susceptibility to environmental toxins such as lead, and the dangers of performing physical labor during the

“semi-pathological state of health” otherwise known as menstruation⁹. Protective legislation for women also had roots in the assumption that women had a greater need for protection from the health consequences of labor because of their role as bearers of children. In fact, the Women’s Bureau’s Bulletin #18, “Health Problems of Women in Industry,” published in 1921, features an illustration of a woman holding an infant. The illustration caption reads, “America will be as strong as her women.”¹⁰

This illustration and its caption were consistent with the ideals that, according to Kathryn Laughlin, guided Mary Anderson’s tenure as Women’s Bureau chief. Laughlin described the early policies of the Bureau as a natural outgrowth of the social welfare concerns of “maternalists.” Maternalists, she argued, focused on protecting women and children from the harsh realities of capitalism and industrialization -- fighting for protective legislation for working women while keeping a keen eye towards women’s responsibilities to their families. Maternalist groups like the National Women’s Trade Union League -- with which Anderson had been affiliated prior to joining the Women in Industry Service¹¹ -- supported protective legislation and opposed the Equal Rights Amendment, citing “female difference” (the unique ability of women to bear and raise children) as grounds to place additional limits on women’s hours and working conditions¹². Tragedies like the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, which killed 146 women in 1911 due to insufficient ventilation, a collapsed fire escape, and blocked emergency exits, further fanned the flame of reform and provided justification for government intervention.

After the start of World War I, this government intervention took shape in the Women-in-Industry Service (WIS), a temporary agency created by the War Department at the dawn of

World War I. Although most wartime labor agencies were disbanded after the armistice, the WIS was transferred to the Department of Labor in 1918, and women's lobbying groups eventually convinced Congress to give the organization permanent peacetime status. With this change in status and the allocation of permanent funding, the WIS changed its name to the Women's Bureau¹³, and much of the WIS leadership and hierarchy carried over into the new Bureau.

The Women's Bureau took shape through an act of Congress on June 5, 1920. Its original mandate was to "formulate standards and policies which shall promote the welfare of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment."¹⁴ At the time, occupations like teaching, nursing, light industry, and service-sector jobs -- those in women-dominated sectors -- paid considerably less than comparable, male-dominated positions. Employers assumed that working women chose to do so for "pin money," and therefore women could be paid less than a living wage because their income was only supplementary¹⁵. Men, on the other hand, expected and were often given wages that reflected the assumption that they were the heads of their households, regardless of marital or family status.¹⁶ Therefore, the Women's Bureau was concerned with advocating for the right of women to a living wage from the very beginning of its existence. As early as 1919, Mary Anderson -- then Assistant Director of the Women in Industry Service -- argued that "Women are doing their share of our country's work under many new conditions and it therefore becomes a national responsibility to see that they are not sacrificed or exploited."¹⁷ When the WIS became the Women's Bureau, Anderson was chosen to head up the new agency.

Thus she began her twenty-four year tenure as Women's Bureau chief under the administration of Woodrow Wilson in 1920, just two months before the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, which secured for women the right to vote.

Mary Anderson Sets the Stage

Mary Anderson played an important role in the Women's Bureau's early history as well as the selection of Frieda Miller as her successor. It is important to understand Anderson's politics and policies because much of Miller's early career was marked by continuity with Anderson's administration. Miller had been a colleague of Anderson's when both were involved with the Women's Trade Union League in the 1920s, and Anderson hand-picked Miller as her successor when she retired.

Anderson served under five presidents of both major parties -- Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, and Roosevelt. She established the tradition of non-partisanship in the Bureau, choosing to focus on the Bureau's role as an investigative body and sending regular reports to the Department of Labor and the President. However, she also advocated for the rights of working women, particularly their inclusion in minimum wage and maximum hour laws, and fought for increased job skills training and opportunities for women¹⁸. During most of Anderson's tenure, working women suffered under terrible working conditions, social prejudice, and economic discrimination. Although women workers had been important for war production during World War I, when the war ended, so did their jobs. During the interwar period, newspapers and some legislators blamed working women for high levels of unemployment

among men during the Depression. Some writers and politicians even advocated laws that would bar married women entirely from working¹⁹.

Cultural assumptions about women's economic responsibilities led to increased criticism of working women during the Depression, when women who worked – particularly those who were married – were accused of taking jobs away from men with families to support. Working women were viewed as greedy and selfish, as a 1936 Gallup poll reveals²⁰. Over 80 percent of the aggregate – 75 percent of women – agreed that women with working husbands should not accept employment. Further, although middle-class women seldom worked, public discourse on the "problem" of working women ignored racial and ethnic minorities and the working poor. Instead, media outlets consistently published articles based on the assumption that working women were unique to two-income households, and that their husbands' incomes were sufficient to support their families.²¹ Yet Anderson continued to remind America that “women always worked. We have worked in the home; and when the work was taken from the home into the factory, we followed the work into the factory.”²² Women working for pay might have seemed like a new phenomenon, but in fact, it directly followed production's movement from homes to factories.

In fact, many American women worked for wages before Pearl Harbor. Most women with jobs, however, were either unmarried or unable to sustain their homes on their husbands' incomes. Married black women in particular often had to take jobs because of the economic discrimination suffered by their husbands. Women who worked outside the home faced both economic and social discrimination. They generally worked in "female" industries which

mirrored their duties within the home – working with children (teaching, child care) or the sick (nursing), light manufacturing (textiles, food service), or the service sector (clerical work, food service, domestic help). The light manufacturing jobs, especially textiles, were particularly dangerous, and many early laws designed to protect workers were designed specifically to protect women working in these industries.

Wartime, Women, and Work

Women's increased presence in the workforce is often attributed to World War II labor shortages, and indeed, many women did enter the workforce for the first time between 1941 and 1944. On the eve of Pearl Harbor, 27 percent of all women were employed; 16 percent of married women and nearly half of all single women worked outside the home. By 1944, the proportion of married women in the workplace jumped to 25 percent, and 58 percent of all single women had taken jobs. The total number of working women peaked that year at 19,170,000, when 35 percent of all women worked outside the home²³. But just three years later, in 1947, the numbers had dropped to a postwar low of about thirty percent²⁴, but the numbers would never again fall to pre-war levels. The majority of women during and after the war did not work outside the home, but the increase was sharp enough to be significant. Six million women took jobs for the first time between 1941 and 1944.

Still, looking at media images during this time might lead one to believe that every housewife had left the dirty dishes in the sink in favor of a rivet gun and a leather apron. In truth, the biggest demographic shift during World War II was the movement of women who already worked into better-paid, traditionally male-dominated types of factory work, such as

shipbuilding and airplane production, rather than “light” industries like textile and garment work²⁵. When the war ended, the Women’s Bureau would fight to keep these benefits for women, even in the absence of the labor shortages that made them attainable.

Of the eighteen million women who worked during World War II, approximately one-third had never before held jobs. About three million of these previously unemployed women worked in defense industries, but most of the women who took "war jobs" did not work in factories. Instead, they took typically female jobs in areas like nursing and teaching, or jobs in retail stores or farming that released men to serve in the military or in heavy industry.²⁶ War production plants generally hired working-class wives or single women (including many single mothers) who relied on the increased wages to support themselves and their families. Most of these had some kind of pre-war work experience, though usually they had worked in light industry or domestic work.²⁷

Though the women who went in search of war work may sometimes have been influenced purely by patriotism, one cannot deny the economic incentives. The Women's Bureau understood that many women viewed the war economy as an opportunity to improve their economic status, and often pointed out this fact in its reports to the Labor Department and the office of the President. In general, however, the public discourse de-emphasized economic considerations, stressing instead "female competence and women's vital part in achieving victory." In a document distributed to advertisers by the War Manpower Commission, recruiters were advised that “Good wages are second only to the *primary appeal of patriotism* in getting women to accept war jobs.²⁸” Why? Because the need for women workers would only last as

long as the war, with women expected to give better-paid manufacturing jobs back to returning veterans. Furthermore, one of the populations in highest demand in areas of critical labor shortage were women who were not already working. These women were usually economically well-off and thus did not feel an economic incentive to work. For this reason, recruiting advertisements focused on patriotism in order to woo white middle class women.

As part of the appeal to women who did not have financial responsibilities that required their employment, the recruiting advertisers emphasized the transitive nature of this work. Impermanence became an important theme inherent in war work: it reinforced the idea that women who took war jobs were making a *temporary* sacrifice and would remain employed only "for the duration" of the war. Some writers believed that women would naturally and happily give up their jobs and return to homemaking²⁹. These writers assumed, of course, that these women had previously been full-time housewives, and also that these former housewives would have homes to keep. However, many married women who had previously relied on their spouses for economic support now found themselves widowed by the war, often with young children. Some of the men who served in the military inevitably failed to return and claim the jobs (and support the women) they had left behind.³⁰

Another consequence of wartime recruiting drives was the media effort to rework the image of the ideal American woman. While housewives kept the home fires burning with their unending devotion to home and family, most Americans found it difficult to see how they would aid the war effort in ways beyond conservation and volunteer efforts.³¹ Government agencies and other advertisers appealed to women's maternal instincts, urging them to seek war jobs and

establishing war work as the most important contribution a woman could make to the war effort. Historians such as Susan Hartmann and Leila Rupp have studied these ads, and their findings are consistent with the themes present in other forms of media, like magazine articles. Patriotism was a major theme; but women were also presented alternately with the carrot – "The more women at work, the sooner we'll win" – and the stick – "A soldier may die unless you man this idle machine."³² With so many women personally invested in the war through the service of the men they loved, the threat of a soldier's death placed immense responsibility on those who would otherwise have shunned employment. Furthermore, placing the responsibility for providing soldiers with safe, effective equipment on the broad shoulders of Rosie the Riveter provided an image that dovetailed nicely with the pre-war ideal of the woman as the helpmate, the "home-keeper," the nurse, caretaker, and nurturer. War work provided an additional way women could provide material and moral support for their fighting boys, a logical extension of their traditional, domestic roles.³³ As women entered the workforce, these traditional roles became more important than ever, reassuring women that they could join the ranks of the employed without sacrificing their femininity. However, these images also gave the mistaken impression that war work would not alter permanently social and gender relations.

Demobilization and Women Workers

"Sixteen million women and girls are now employed and more are on their way," Mary Anderson wrote in 1944. "Yet almost before they have had a chance to get their faces smudged and their overalls grease-stained, some among us are worrying for fear they will not be willing to call it a good day's work and go home, when the war is over and Johnny comes back for his

job.³⁴” Anderson argued that full war production could be achieved if employers would abandon the prejudice against women workers and the fear that they would take jobs from men who needed them. Additionally, she argued that demobilization could be achieved without taking post-war jobs from the women who wanted to continue working. Some women, certainly, would leave the workforce on their own, but many millions of others could not afford to quit. In 1944, Anderson wrote that “We [The Women’s Bureau] know from our twenty-five years of study of women wage earners’ problems that the vast majority of women workers seek employment from economic need,³⁵” she wrote in an economics journal in 1944. Later that year, she addressed these same concerns for a general audience in *The New York Times Magazine*. “Only by accepting [that women as well as men are entitled to jobs] are we on solid ground in planning for the future, and only then are we ready to take the next step which is to recognize that there is only one solution: full employment.³⁶”

The Women’s Bureau expended much effort during and after World War II fighting against the notion that men had some presumed right to factory jobs. *Women's Home Companion* published an article in late 1943 titled "Give Back Their Jobs," which clearly implied that women had merely borrowed the jobs in which they were employed. This article reflected just how common this opinion was among women – and how fervently the media tried to impress upon women the importance of letting men have their jobs at war's end. Three-quarters of the "reader-reporters" replied affirmatively when asked, "Should women relinquish their jobs after the war?" The article noted that "the minority who voted no could almost be classed in the yes vote after their comments were read. A large number of them added the

comment : ‘But I would say yes if it means giving the job back to a man who has been in the service.’”³⁷ Another woman who responded negatively to the same question modified her answer with the comment, “I think women should continue their jobs only if their families are being well taken care of and there are sufficient jobs for the men to come back to.”³⁸ Another respondent, presumably in the “give back their jobs” camp, wrote that “With all the juvenile delinquency there is today I can think of no better job for a mother than rearing her own children in the way they should be. No school or state can do it.”³⁹ But women whose wages were necessary for the financial support of their families were given a special dispensation for keeping their jobs -- single women as well as widows. “But married women and homemakers,” the article stated, “should quit.”⁴⁰

However, most women who were employed in war work during this same period expressed an decisive interest in working after the war's end, according to a number of surveys. The United Auto Workers surveyed their female membership in 1944 and found that 85 percent of the aggregate would continue to work if a job were available. While 99 percent of single women and a shocking 100 percent of widows responded affirmatively, even 69 percent of married women expressed an interest in working post-war.⁴¹ However, we cannot determine from these statistics whether most of these women were former housewives or working-class wives. Still, the contrast between the UAW survey and the *Women's Home Companion* article brings the controversial nature of post-WWII women's work into sharp relief.

Meanwhile, Mary Anderson felt there would be space in the post-war economy for women who wanted or needed to work. As the war seemed to be nearing its end, she began

advocating an inclusive plan for postwar reconversion in speeches, radio addresses, and articles in scholarly journals, popular magazines, and newspapers. Through these media outlets, Anderson proposed a plan for full employment to address the need for stable work at a living wage which, for many women, would persist well beyond the availability of employment for many women war workers.

“Full employment seems a real possibility when we hear economists stress the essential and rapid expansion of all kinds of consumer goods manufacture on a scale never before conceived to replenish depleted stocks the world over--especially in view of the international programs of relief, rehabilitation, and nutrition already launched. By way of illustration are the U. S. Chamber of Commerce forecasts on postwar demands for almost 3 ½ billion dollars' worth of automobiles for 3,675,000 families, over 1 ½ million new homes valued at nearly 7 ¼ billion dollars, over a billion dollars' worth of such appliances as refrigerators, kitchen mixers, and so on. It takes no stretch of the imagination to foresee extensive employment of women in this industrial expansion.⁴²”

In short, the women who would be taking jobs to help their families pay for cars, new homes, and household appliances would work to purchase the fruits of their own labor.

Anderson's solution was to endorse consumerism, which in turn would expand the economy and create jobs for the women for whom these new consumer goods were intended.

As the war drew to a close and victory seemed imminent, Mary Anderson decided that her work with the Women's Bureau was done. When she left office in August 1944, she was the only director the Women's Bureau had ever known. She had served for 24 years, under five presidents, through both World Wars, and survived the tumultuous interwar period. She was reluctant to step down from her post. However, she felt reassured that Frieda Miller, her hand-picked successor and old friend from the Women's Trade Union League, had accepted President Roosevelt's appointment. The New York Times reported that Anderson was “ready to hand her

leadership along to a younger woman who has long been a co-worker with her in international labor relations.⁴³” She also said that she would not have been willing to retire “without the assurance that ‘the right kind of woman’ would succeed her.” Miller, Anderson announced, was “ideal for the job.⁴⁴”

Frieda Miller Steps Up

Because of the timing of her appointment, Miller’s first tasks dealt primarily with the demobilization of women war workers. Following in Anderson’s footsteps, Miller was concerned not only about unemployment, but also about the shift of women workers out of the industrial plants and into lower-paying, non-unionized service sector jobs. “In locality after locality, the bulk of openings for women are in the consumer-goods, trade, or service industries,” Miller wrote in January 1946. “Because these old-line fields have a reputation for low wages and undesirable working conditions, some displaced war workers have been reluctant to enter or re-enter them.⁴⁵” In short, women who before the war had had no choice but to accept substandard pay and working conditions became increasingly reluctant to return to these jobs after experiencing the relative advantages that came with “men’s work.”

Miller, like Anderson, believed that there would be room enough in the postwar labor market for returning veterans and displaced war workers alike, although she acknowledged the fact that many women would be forced out of defense industry jobs as defense production slowed and many war production plants closed. However, she believed that many women would “undoubtedly be willing to return to jobs that furnish society with the things it needs and wants if the employment is put on a higher level -- in other words, if fair wages and right conditions are

offered.⁴⁶” The main benefit of war work -- and the main problem with postwar readjustment -- was that most industries and services dominated by women workers paid these workers considerably less across the board than jobs requiring similar skills and abilities which had been traditionally done by men. Textile and garment industry workers, for instance, made far less money, on average, than transportation industry workers, even though both types of work were blue-collar, assembly-line factory jobs⁴⁷.

Many women who first entered the work force during the war years did continue to work during the post-war period, but rarely in heavy industry. Most times they left – or more often were forced from – their high-wage defense-industry jobs. Instead, they reclaimed the old familiar "female" jobs in light industry, took on new "pink-collar" jobs, or found work in new industries that had not yet been sex-typed, particularly in the booming retail sector. But the wages from these jobs were far lower than those paid to women doing men's work during the war, partially because service-sector jobs tend also to be non-unionized⁴⁸. Additionally, half a million former "Riveter Rosies" would never again seek employment. In these instances, "Rosie simply stepped out of her overalls, still wearing her apron underneath."⁴⁹

Alice Leopold Takes Over

By 1953, when Alice Leopold took the reins of the Women's Bureau, the circumstances for women workers had changed dramatically. Because of the precipitous drop in the number of women workers during demobilization, the percentage of women participating in the workforce was actually lower in 1953 than it had been when Miller was sworn in at the peak of wartime production. When Leopold took office, 32.1 percent of women of all ages and marital status

were working, the highest proportion of which were, of course, single women. In 1953, single women participated in the labor force at a rate of 47.7 percent, while only 25.8 percent of married women worked outside the home⁵⁰. In the relatively stable post-war economy, those who were holding jobs in 1953 were not in immediate danger of losing them.

When Miller handed in her resignation in 1953, the transition was less like the smooth transfer that had taken place in 1944, and more like a bloodless coup. Although Miller had submitted her resignation in January 1953 when Eisenhower took office, her curt note implied that she did not expect to be replaced at that time. The entire letter consisted of one sentence: “In accord with what I believe is the custom, I submit herewith my resignation from the post of Director of the Women’s Bureau for your consideration.⁵¹” The letter was dated 19 January 1953, but no move was made to replace Miller until the following October. Charles F. Willis, White House Personnel Director, sent a memo to Chief of Staff Sherman Adams on October 5 stating that “[Republican National Committee Chair] Len Hall called me on Friday and asked that we request Mrs. Miller’s resignation.⁵²” He noted that Hall had “received numerous objections to her and her New Deal policies.” While acknowledging that the post of Women’s Bureau Director was traditionally non-partisan and “a career job,” Willis carefully pointed out that “the incumbent serves at the pleasure of the President.⁵³” He also reported that Miller was calling a meeting of the Wage and Hour Administrators scheduled for October 30, and that she planned to criticize Eisenhower administration labor policies at that meeting. No major newspaper ever covered the meeting and it is unclear whether or not it actually took place.

Miller received dozens of letters from friends and colleagues in response to the news of her resignation. Typical of the responses was Margaret Plunkett's November 29 lament. "Quite by accident the other day I was leaving through the N.Y. Times...and read, to my great regret, that you have 'resigned.' I had hoped so much that this wouldn't happen, but I suppose there is a limit to what one can expect."⁵⁴ Still, the New York Times referred to the change as a "routine resignation on change of Administration." Leopold's appointment was announced in the same article, although she was mistakenly referred to as "Mrs. Alex K. Leopold" in the story⁵⁵. The article also announced that Miller was expected to take a post in Iran as a consultant to help set up a system of labor standards for women there. The following day, however, the Foreign Operations Administration denied having her under consideration for the post⁵⁶.

It had been clear for some time that Miller would resign and a Republican woman would replace her, but Leopold was not the obvious front runner. On October 17, the New York Times reported that Mary Rice Morrow, Pennsylvania's State Director of Women and Children, Hours, and Minimum Wages, was the likeliest candidate for the job⁵⁷. However, Morrow apparently declined to leave her post in the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, and Morrow herself was only invited to the post after it was declined by Mary Donlon of the New York State Workmen's Compensation Board⁵⁸. Leopold was the third choice, apparently following a bit of a scramble to fill the post and remove Miller as quickly as possible. A memo from Willis to Adams on the day of James Mitchell's installation as Secretary of Labor, October 9, requested expediency in the matter in an effort to remove Miller from office before the planned Hours and Wages Administration meeting⁵⁹. Apparently they missed the mark -- the New York Times

announced that Leopold was under consideration on November 13th and the announcement was made official on November 20, 1953⁶⁰. But Miller's resignation was not accepted by Eisenhower until December 3 with an effective date of December 11. In this letter, Eisenhower thanked Miller for "your willingness to continue to serve until the appointment of your successor."⁶¹

Different Lives, Different Times

Miller and Leopold's striking differences in personality as well as policy can be best understood by examining their upbringings and early careers. Miller, a never-married mother who raised her adopted daughter with a woman partner who had been active in the Socialist Party, rose from a turbulent and uncertain childhood in Wisconsin into the loving arms of academia, but left graduate school without completing her degree in order to pursue a career in labor activism. Leopold, on the other hand, grew up in a stable, financially secure home in Connecticut, attended college, and excelled in the business world, but left work when she married and took on the role of stay-at-home mother to her two children.

Miller and Leopold's personal histories, described in greater detail below, influenced their worldviews, their perspectives, their interests, and their "life scripts" -- the typical path they expected other women to follow -- and all these things influenced the way they managed the Women's Bureau. Miller's liberalism, tempered by a heavy maternalist influence, led her to take a much more active role in the Department of Labor. Leopold, being a much more conservative, much more political creature, tended towards the safe, politically savvy positions that would uphold the so-called traditional values of home and family and did not upset the status quo.

Frieda Miller: A Life of Labor

Few details are available about Miller's early childhood, but what evidence exists indicates that it was rocky. Born in LaCrosse, Wisconsin on April 16, 1889⁶², her mother, Ernestina, died in October 1894⁶³. Miller and her younger sister, Elsa, then went to live with her maternal grandparents, Charles and Augusta Segelke, sometime before 1900⁶⁴. Charles Segelke was part-owner of the Segelke-Kohlhaus Manufacturing company in LaCrosse, which produced most of the woodworking and architectural elements for LaCrosse area homes by the 1890s. The factory was destroyed by a fire in 1897, but it was quickly rebuilt and production resumed within the year. Charles Segelke died in 1902, but the company continued to stay in business until 1960, when decreased demand for custom architectural elements led Segelke-Kohlhaus Manufacturing to finally close its doors⁶⁵. Miller would later recall that her grandfather's manufacturing company -- which she described in her official Women's Bureau biographical sketch as a "lumber mill" -- provided her with "a good place to develop experience in labor relations."⁶⁶

Meanwhile, Miller's father, James, lived in a nearby boarding house⁶⁷ until he died in December 1902⁶⁸, just two months after Charles Segelke passed away⁶⁹, leaving Miller in the sole custody of her grandmother by the age of thirteen. It is unclear what happened to the family when Charles Segelke died; while his company flourished in the care of his two remaining business partners, there are no records of how Augusta Segelke provided for her granddaughters after Charles' death.

Turbulent as it was, the early period of Miller's life shaped the woman she would become. As a child, she learned the importance of labor relations by observing practices in her grandfather's business. Wisconsin was one of the earliest states to develop a progressive attitude towards social reform, and growing up in a more progressive environment no doubt influenced her desire for political involvement as a young adult. So, too, must have her relationship with Newman, a self-educated Lithuanian immigrant who quit her job at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory just a few weeks before the devastating 1911 fire⁷⁰. Newman had been active in the Socialist Party and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union before joining the Women's Trade Union League in the late teens.

While Newman was narrowly escaping death in New York City, Miller was completing her bachelor's degree from Milwaukee-Downer College. She graduated in 1911 and continued to study economics, sociology, political science, and law at the University of Chicago, although she never completed a graduate degree. In 1916 she joined the faculty at Bryn Mawr as a research assistant, and later became a lecturer there. During her time in Philadelphia, she became involved with the Women's Trade Union League and began her long and distinguished career as a labor activist as well as an academic⁷¹. During this time, she also became acquainted with Mary Anderson, whose position she would later assume at the Women's Bureau; and, of course, Pauline Newman.

There has been some scholarship on Miller's relationship with Newman in the field not of labor history but rather in lesbian studies. Miller and Newman shared a home for over fifty years and raised a daughter together. They corresponded frequently while Miller was traveling, which

she did often. Many of their letters have been lost to the sands of time, but those that remain capture the affectionate, caring partnership they shared throughout their adult lives. Miller addressed her letters to Newman and their daughter, Elisabeth, with the salutation, “My Darlings;” when Newman wrote back, Miller was “Dear Girl.” Sometimes they discussed the news of the day; however, most of the correspondence that Newman donated to the Schlesinger Library details the more mundane aspects of family life -- please see that this bill gets paid, how is Elisabeth doing in school -- or the details of Miller’s travel. As Newman had power of attorney over Miller’s affairs, it appears that she was primarily responsible for keeping the home while Miller was away on business. Although Miller was her sole legal guardian, Elisabeth rarely traveled with her mother. As Elisabeth grew up and married, it became clear that her children thought of both women as their grandmothers, as they often wrote letters and drew pictures for “Granny and Pauline.” And when Miller died in 1971, letters of sympathy for Newman poured in from friends and former associates, all of whom acknowledged Newman’s loss as one would the death of a spouse. In fact, many of the letters Miller had received from close friends and associates throughout the 1940s and 50s, including those in the New York Department of Labor referenced Newman’s presence in Miller’s life. These letters indicate that their relationship was well understood and accepted⁷².

Some historians have held Miller and Newman up as a shining example of an inter-class lesbian partnership, but this assertion cannot be made lightly. While it is true that Miller and Newman had very different upbringings, Miller was probably not the well-to-do, pampered child that Lillian Faderman makes her out to be⁷³. The early loss of her mother, her father’s inability

to support her and her sister financially, the untimely death of her grandfather -- all these things point to a childhood that, while not defined by poverty, would not have been completely stable financially or emotionally.

While Newman did grow up in poverty, working under terrible conditions in New York factories from the age of eleven in order to help support herself and her family, the fact that Miller did not have to do the same was more likely a function of geography than any particular economic privilege on Miller's part. Employment conditions for teenaged girls in rural Wisconsin in the early 1900s were simply different from those in New York City. Even in the factories that would hire women, active labor unions and a progressive state government afforded all employees greater protection than was granted to the residents of New York tenement houses. And while she was among the very privileged few who attended college, Miller did not attend a particularly prestigious university; nor can an academic scholarship be ruled out, given her later successes and apparent proclivity for academia. It is clear that Miller and Newman had very different life experiences from birth until they met in their twenties, but it is inaccurate and unfair to imply that Miller led a life of privilege and ease. Regardless, Miller's own childhood experiences led her into the field of labor relations prior to (and resulting in) meeting Newman. Her interest in labor relations, combined with what she doubtless heard Newman recount about New York factory conditions, would have certainly given her strong opinions about protective legislation and the welfare of working women and children.

In 1923, as part of her work with the Women's Trade Union League, Miller went to Vienna to attend the International Congress of Working Women. She remained in Europe at the

conference's conclusion and spent a year studying labor conditions in Europe. Newman joined her at some point, and the two returned to the United States with the month-old baby Miller had adopted during her stay in England, whom she christened Elisabeth⁷⁴. When Miller returned to the United States she moved to New York and began inspecting factories for the Joint Board of Sanitary Control in the garment industry⁷⁵. The Joint Board had been established in 1910 in response to a strike in the cloak industry and consisted of representatives of the garment worker's unions as well as the manufacturers. The committee also included several neutral members of the general public.⁷⁶ By the time Miller was working with the Joint Board in 1924, inspections were regular annual events, and the Joint Board had expanded its services to include monthly fire drills and continuous health and sanitation education campaigns.

Miller's big break occurred when she was appointed as Director of the Division of Women in Industry and Minimum Wage of the New York Department of Labor. She worked there for ten years and became well known in New York State during this time, largely due to her involvement in passing the 1933 state minimum wage law for women and minors. She was appointed in 1938 as Industrial Commissioner, but resigned in 1942 to accept her first federal position as a special assistant studying labor issues for the Ambassador to England, George Winant⁷⁷.

Miller's long climb to the position of Women's Bureau director spanned three turbulent decades in American labor relations. Clearly, her experiences with the WTUL, her status as a (technically) single parent and woman head of household, her lesbian relationship with a former Socialist Party member -- all of these things would be expected to imbue her with a degree of

liberalism and allow her to become one of Roosevelt's New Deal policymakers. Let's now turn to Alice Leopold's life story and discover how conservative women were made in early twentieth century America.

Alice Leopold: Businesswoman and Bureaucrat

Leopold was born Alice Koller, the only child of E. Leonard and Leonora Edwards Koller, on 9 May 1906 in Scranton, Pennsylvania⁷⁸. Her father had a Master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and worked as an "artist, designer, and author of books on art."⁷⁹ Leopold's parents were still married and still living in Scranton when he died in 1953 at the age of 76. Leonard Koller lived long enough to see his only child achieve the post of Connecticut Secretary of State, but passed away before she was named Women's Bureau director in late 1953. Her mother lived for some time thereafter.

Leopold attended Goucher College in Baltimore, MD, double-majoring in English and economics and graduating in 1927. After college, Leopold worked in the merchandising world for several years. She started as a salesperson at Hutzler's, a Baltimore department store. While working at the store, she organized a group at the local YWCA for the other sales girls to give them a way to spend time and enjoy themselves after work. "I get all steamed up about extra-curricular activities -- it was a carryover from college," she would later recall⁸⁰. This experience led the management to promote her to personnel director for women at the store, where "she did such an outstanding job that the store merged its personnel departments and put the 22-year-old Koller girl in charge of both men and women."⁸¹

After marrying her husband, New York ad exec Joseph Leopold, in 1931, Leopold dropped out of public life for a time. Apparently content to stay at home with their two sons, Robert and John, it seems nonetheless that Mrs. Leopold could not keep her hands out of the retail cookie jar. While her sons were small she designed toys “on the side” from her home. “Little girls,” journalist Margaret Parkinson wrote in 1955, “had doll houses to play with, but there seemed to be no toy housing available for a boy’s fire truck or car or train or airplane.” Beating Fisher-Price to the punch, Leopold “designed a garage, a fire house (complete with brass pole and pool table,) a railroad station and a hangar, took the designs to a manufacturer and found herself an overnight success in the toy business. They were so swamped with orders one Christmas that the designer herself helped out on the assembly line.⁸²”

As her children grew, Leopold found herself in a position to take on a larger role in her Weston, Conn. community. And as a woman of amazing initiative and leadership, Leopold was asked to take on more and more responsibility as she gained notoriety among the neighborhood’s women and, later, the Connecticut Republican Party⁸³. Her participation in community politics began when Leopold’s oldest son, Robert, entered school. On discovering that there was no hot lunch program, Leopold was outraged and contacted the PTA, which in turn appointed her “hot-lunch chairman.” She organized a group of mothers to cook large amounts of food every morning and carry it to the school in kettles every day at noon. The project gained widespread approval and Leopold was a shoo-in for the next president of the PTA⁸⁴.

Leopold also worked with the League of Women Voters, writing pamphlets to inspire women like herself to become more involved in politics. “I fell for my own propaganda about

participation,” she later recalled⁸⁵. Her convictions about political participation led her to accept an invitation to join the Weston Town Committee of the Republican Party. From there, it was a short leap to the Republican nomination to the Connecticut General Assembly, an election she won in 1949. She served, predictably enough, on the education and labor committees. As a state assemblyperson, Leopold authored two important bills -- a minimum-wage bill and an equal-pay bill -- both of which were passed in 1949. She served one term before being elected Connecticut’s Secretary of State and then, in a whirlwind of political fortune, got the nod from Eisenhower for Women’s Bureau chief in November 1953⁸⁶.

When Leopold accepted the position with the Women’s Bureau, she took on the role only as her *second* job. In keeping with her philosophy that a woman’s primary responsibility should be to her family, she agreed to her husband’s request that she fly back to their Weston, Conn. home each weekend. “Shortly after starting her back-and-forth regime,” Margaret Parkinson notes in a 1955 *Charm* article, Leopold “sometimes felt a little guilty, knowing that other members of the Labor Department often work late on Friday nights and even on Saturdays, ‘But then I remembered that I was under contract to my husband,’ she says. ‘And no one would expect a labor woman to break a contract.’”⁸⁷

Expectations and Assumptions

Drawing on her experiences as a middle-class woman who could afford to abstain from working while her children were young, Leopold had a distinct impression of the typical path of a young woman high school graduate in the 1950s. The idealized path she envisioned, based on her own life, meshed well with images being shown on television and in magazines at the time --

June Cleaver and her ilk. She outlined this proscribed life plan in a 1958 article in *Marriage and Family Living*. “After leaving school, the typical girl will work a year or two, marry at age twenty, and at the birth of her first child withdraw from the labor force. She will likely devote ten to fifteen years exclusively to the important functions of childbearing and child care. When the youngest of three children reaches school age, she will return to paid employment because home no longer requires her full-time attention. She will also begin to take a more active part in community life including school and church activities and public affairs.”⁸⁸

Leopold did not invent this script. She drew it from statistical averages and exhaustive research. More importantly, however, she drew it from direct observation of the women she knew. In fact, with the exception of having married slightly later due to having completed a college education, this path is very similar to what Leopold herself did, and indeed what many upper- and middle-class American women were doing in the 1950s. But because statistics -- especially Department of Labor statistics from the mid-twentieth century -- can tell us only about the aggregate, this script as a whole was applicable only to a small minority of women. Most women lived only bits and pieces of this script. Certainly a significant number of women married at age twenty and had three children, but certainly a significant number of these were not able to “devote ten to fifteen years exclusively to the important functions of childbearing and child care.” Some divorced, some were widowed, and some found their husbands’ incomes insufficient to their household needs.

Leopold’s experience as a housewife with a passion for community involvement also led her to spend considerable energy as Women’s Bureau director encouraging women with young

children to spend their free time participating in community improvement projects and civic organizations. She firmly believed that a woman could keep a home and raise a family while pursuing other interests -- as long as her children took priority. She exemplified this model by taking part in local affairs while her children were young -- like designing toys from home and working with the PTA -- and rose to positions of greater responsibility as her children grew and her "leisure time" increased. Miller, on the other hand, concerned herself less with the problem of boredom among housewives and more with the plight of those women whose wages were necessary to put roofs over their children's heads and bread on their tables.

Because of their vastly different life experiences, Miller and Leopold differed in their approaches to and assumptions about family life. Leopold stressed civic involvement, the importance of education, and the need for "mature" women workers to enter professional, traditionally female jobs like teaching and nursing. Miller, on the other hand, stressed women's need for economic stability in a world where men could not always be relied upon for sustenance. "It is widely conceded that single, widowed, and divorced women must generally be self-supporting," Miller said in a 1948 speech. "Not equally well recognized are the needs of married women."⁸⁹ She went on to reveal the results of a Women's Bureau survey that showed that three-fourths of women living with their families contributed half or more of their pay to their family's economic support and that these contributions were vital to the family's survival. As such, she asserted, it was even more important that women be compensated fairly for their work, since their families depended on their wages.

Miller constantly reminded her audiences that women were no longer able to rely on their husbands to satisfy their families' financial needs. In a statistical analysis published in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Miller revealed that "In sharp contrast to the popularly envisioned picture of the "average" family, consisting of the father, mother, and children, stands the fact that in 1940 almost 5.5 million families had a woman head.⁹⁰" She went on to argue that this number increased steadily during the war -- jumping from 15.3 percent in 1940 to 21.9 percent by May 1945. This theme recurs throughout Miller's addresses and articles in the immediate postwar period, when discrimination against women workers was at its peak.

Further, Miller stressed the importance of job opportunities for women of every age, social class, and marital status. She often emphasized the plight of women who were not married or whose husbands were unable to support their families. Of particular interest, given her status as an unmarried (albeit partnered) parent, were single mothers of varying descriptions -- widows, divorcees, and women who, like her, had never been married. This large, inclusive group of unmarried women grew as a direct consequence of the very circumstance which had drawn many of these women into the workplace to begin with -- the war. "Today many thousands of women who are working now and who expected to return to their homes cannot afford to when the war is won," Miller noted in September 1944. "Many husbands will not return from the battlefields - their wives must have the right to work without being discriminated against, other women will have invalid husbands when the war is won -- those women must work. Other wives must work

to help the family through a period of financial crisis -- those women should have the right to a job.⁹¹”

Only in the cloistered enclave of academia did Miller dare to argue for the right of a woman to work simply because she wanted to -- something most modern women take for granted. In the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Miller wrote that “The academic training offered under our system of free, compulsory education, often coeducational, no longer differentiates between the sexes...It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the same aspiration has been engendered in both men and women -- the desire to choose a field of endeavor suited to one’s psychological needs.⁹²” Here, Miller emphasizes self-expression and personal satisfaction as important reasons for women to seek employment outside the home. “One can understand,” she wrote with the conviction of personal experience, “why some women look with greater satisfaction to working in an office, store, factory, school or hospital than in the home. Undoubtedly many women prefer homemaking duties to other jobs, but others, not necessarily confined to the specially talented or the higher income groups, find a more satisfying outlet for their abilities in outside employment.⁹³”

In this same article, published in 1947, Miller closes with a particularly prescient statement about the general direction in which she viewed society to be heading. “Increasingly large segments of our population hold the opinion that a woman should work, certainly when she has no other means of support, and even when the factor of support is removed, if that is her choice.” Her emphasis on choice in this context echoes her earlier words, reminding us that women are entitled to the same degree of satisfaction and achievement as men. Finally, while

she acknowledges that many women -- like herself -- chose to have careers despite societal attitudes to the contrary, she goes on to state that “it may very well be that we are approaching a period when for women to work is an act of conformism.”⁹⁴

Leopold, like Miller, did believe that most women would seek paid work at some point in their lives, and argued for their right to work for personal satisfaction as well. However, Leopold held the wife-mother role in such high esteem that she would not suggest that women take paid work while their children were young unless it were absolutely economically necessary. She did, however, encourage women to educate themselves before having children, so that when those children were grown, these educated women would be prepared to participate in the work force -- particularly in women’s professions like teaching and nursing, where pay is comparably lower than similar male-dominated professions, and where there continue to be chronic shortages even today.

The Role of Education

In a speech to the National Vocational Guidance Association’s annual convention in 1956, Leopold stressed the idea that women should seek higher education, but divorced education from its logical partner, employment. “The foremost purpose of our colleges must continue to be the development of mature, well-educated, and complete human beings. Our nation is founded on family life. While the wife-mother roles is of major significance to women, there are times and conditions which make it important for women to work.”⁹⁵ And in a speech before high school students participating in Girl’s Nation in 1954, she told these young, bright, politically-motivated girls that “the most important thing that a woman can do is to establish a

home and raise a family.” However, she did go on to say that “because of the advancement of modern science and the development of scores of labor-saving devices, a woman is now free to widen the scope of her activities. It is no longer necessary for her to choose between establishing a home and having a career, because it is now possible for her to do both.⁹⁶”

Although Leopold felt that all women with the capacity to do so should seek vocational training, she discouraged mothers of young children from seeking paid work until their children were of school age. After all, she herself had dropped out of the workforce and remained unemployed for seventeen years after her marriage, and her younger son was eleven when she began her rapid ascension to the Women’s Bureau by winning election to the Connecticut General Assembly in 1949. True, she had been involved with civic organizations and local politics well before 1949, and had even founded her own business, but she had not been employed outside the home and certainly did not carry the burden of having to provide for her family financially.

Certainly many upper- and middle-class women in the 1950s followed Leopold’s script. But how many working-class women were able to “devote ten or fifteen years exclusively to the important functions of childbearing and child care?” The 1959 US Census data tells us that of the women who worked during 1958 -- the year Leopold articulated her assumptions about the path of a “typical woman” -- 35 percent of all women held jobs. Of these, 24.4 percent were single, 59.2 percent were married, and 16.4 percent were widowed or divorced⁹⁷. This study does not tell us how many of the married women had young children, but clearly the facts did not fit Leopold’s prescription for a “typical” woman’s life. Additionally, married women were the

fastest-growing group of women workers: the number of married women who worked outside the home increased by 20 percentage points between 1944 and 1958⁹⁸. Yet two-income families were not part of Leopold's equation any more than were woman-headed households. Failure to acknowledge women in these situations meant that many of the Bureau's constituents were ignored, and therefore the Bureau failed to use its influence to help the women whose lives sometimes veered off-script.

Contrasting leadership styles

As a result of her limited view of women workers, Leopold declined to lobby on behalf of the women who implored her to intervene in discriminatory practices, like discrimination in hiring or promoting, and instead made use of the media to appeal to employers as a group to voluntarily stop discrimination. Miller, too, used the media in this way, but Miller had supplemented her "bully pulpit" with direct action, contacting state and local agencies directly to plead on behalf of disparaged workers. She frequently testified before Congress, successfully lobbied to have the Bureau of Labor Statistics survey wages in women-dominated industries, and even convinced them to track data on the contributions of women to family incomes beginning in 1946⁹⁹. (Miller would use this data in later years to prove that even women whose husbands were employed often relied on their incomes to provide for their families.) She even used the Bureau's influence to stack the advisory board of the United States Employment Service with members who would seek to rectify the Service's long record of shunting women into "suitable gender-typed work" -- women to clerical jobs and men to manufacturing¹⁰⁰. However, although Leopold generally refused to dirty her hands by mucking around with other labor agencies, both

Miller and Leopold made extensive use of the media to promote their philosophies on working women and suggest solutions for the problems they saw women workers encounter in their day-to-day lives.

Miller and Leopold applied media pressure in vastly different ways. Miller gave radio addresses, delivered speeches, and wrote many articles that were intended to reach a large audience. The particular audiences she chose for her speeches are in themselves telling. She often spoke to labor unions, academic conferences, on talk radio, and of course at Women's Bureau events. Leopold, on the other hand, spoke mainly to women's professional organizations, Republican Party events, and civic and social groups. Miller authored and published articles in magazines geared towards a general readership, like *The New York Times Magazine*, as well as scholarly journals like the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*.

Leopold was usually the subject of articles rather than the author, and these articles tended to be profile pieces highlighting her personal achievements rather than her philosophies, goals, or concerns. Of note, Leopold (or her secretary) clipped and filed each and every such article, but left very little personal correspondence in her donation to the Schlesinger Library. Miller, on the other hand, kept copies of articles she had written and letters written by others to her, but very few articles written by others *about* her. Miller's file also contained relatively few photographs, while Leopold kept plenty of surplus glossy eight-by-ten photos on hand in her Women's Bureau files.

Leopold's rapid ascension to federal office and her outstanding charisma made her a media darling. In almost every article about her -- and there were many -- she is described as "handsome," "well-dressed," and "poised." She was the subject of profile pieces in national magazines like *Charm* and made frequent appearances in District gossip columns. One such mention gives a detailed description of the ornately decorated office for which Leopold was notorious. According to the New York Daily News column, Leopold agreed to loan her office temporarily to Gen. Lauris Norstad, NATO military chief, for a meeting with chiefs of the 15 NATO nations in 1959. As writer Gwen Gibson recounted,

"[Norstad] will be sitting prettier during the NATO confab than at any time in his military career. This is because Mrs. Leopold has redecorated her office in ultra-feminine style with pink walls, pink venetian blinds, pink drapes, a light green rug and brown leather furniture. Among the knickknacks which Mrs. Leopold will leave behind for Norstad's enjoyment are the fancy pink elephants which grace her desk; her collection of plants and a brightly colored Sicilian cart recently given to her by Mrs. Clare Boothe Luce, nominee for the post of U.S. ambassador to Brazil.¹⁰¹"

Miller's approach to the media was markedly different. In the few articles profiling her, most of which were written near the beginning of her administration, little is mentioned of her physical appearance. Reporters chose instead to focus on her career as a labor bureaucrat at the state and federal levels. Perhaps this was because Leopold's record of public service had been so short, in contrast with Miller's comparatively lengthy résumé. Perhaps, however, Miller's characteristically tight-lipped approach to her personal life simply failed to provide journalists with sufficient fodder for lighter pieces. Even Miller's official biographical sketch reads more like a *curriculum vitae* than a personal history¹⁰². Leopold's official bio, in contrast, went

through several drafts while she was in office, and each subsequent draft grew longer and more detailed the longer she remained in office¹⁰³.

Miller was much more likely than Leopold to use news and media outlets to appeal directly to businesses and the public for support in defending women workers. Often she couched her pleas in language that reflected the values of the time while still advocating for change. For example, in a speech before the 21st Women's Patriotic Conference on National Defense in January 1947, Miller articulated her position on various barriers to women's economic equality in postwar America. She identified four "lines of action" required to help women during the demobilization process and ensure economic security for women and men alike. First, she argued for a federal minimum wage standard to support the 26 states that had minimum wage laws at that time. However, she also argued that some of these state wage floors had been set before World War II and needed updating. Additionally, some employees were exempt from minimum wage laws because they were in service industries rather than manufacturing. Miller argued that all workers should receive wage protections regardless of job title or status, and workers in the 22 states that had no minimum wage laws should also be entitled to this kind of protection¹⁰⁴.

Miller also advocated for the rights of women to compete with men for jobs by putting her arguments in economic terms rather than social ones. In 1948 she explained to the audience of the annual Women's Bureau Conference the economic principle that a rising tide lifts all boats. Low wages paid to a certain group of workers -- in this case, women -- would cause employers to favor that less expensive group when costs needed cutting. As a result, workers

willing to work for lower wages would be brought into competition with their higher-paid counterparts -- in this case, men -- with the net effect of lowering wages across the board¹⁰⁵.

Here, she echoed Anderson's arguments from 1944 as well as many arguments that had been offered on working women's behalf since the Great Depression.

"Women," Miller asserted, "have a deep, natural interest in the welfare of families and they know that every time a working man's income is reduced, his family's standard of living is inevitably lowered."¹⁰⁶ In this speech, Miller cleverly associated women's demands for equal pay with their culturally condoned role as the nurturer and defender of the home. The prescription, then, was clear. "In consideration of our national objective of high living standards and full employment, I submit that we cannot afford to risk the threat to general wage levels that unequal pay to women involves."¹⁰⁷

Nuclear Family in a Nuclear Age

Another way in which Miller worked through the media to garner support for the Women's Bureau was to take advantage of the early Cold War fear that another World War was imminent. By 1950, Miller was expanding on Anderson's argument for including women in the nation's goals for full employment and better training by citing a compelling reason why women's work might soon be paramount once again: the threat of war with the Soviet Union. A new arms race and the paranoia that fed it made the threat of another war emergency seem all too real. As explained in a press release summarizing Miller's annual Labor Day message in September 1951, the defense program would require 3.5 million more civilian workers within the year, and nearly half of these jobs must come from people "not normally in the labor market"¹⁰⁸ -

- that is, married women, especially housewives. Miller argued that women should obtain the necessary job training to perform defense-industry jobs sooner rather than later in order to promote “orderly recruitment.”¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, Miller noted that the most severe shortages in the defense industry were in fields like engineering, drafting, skilled aircraft assembly, and other work that required specialized or professional training. Untrained women would need time to come up to speed on these jobs skills, and the sooner employers accepted that fact and offered them training, Miller emphasized, the better prepared the American military would be¹¹⁰.

Leopold, on the other hand, responded to the threat of war with the Soviet Union by emphasizing the renewed importance of women’s roles at home and in their communities. While women could contribute to the American Cold War effort by engaging in needed professions, staffing the nation’s retail stores, offices, hospitals and classrooms, Leopold campaigned to motivate women to seek community involvement without necessarily taking paid jobs, which might distract them from their responsibilities in the home.

One result of Leopold’s emphasis on the dual priorities of home and community was her re-definition of the term “Womanpower.” Whereas during WWII this term was restricted to the paid labor of women in war production factories; during the Cold War, Leopold expanded the term to include women’s volunteer activities, political involvement, and other roles that expanded the scope of a woman’s world outside her home and immediate family. In a speech titled “Womanpower,” delivered to the Altrusa International Biennial convention in 1955, Leopold addressed a service club for executive and professional women. In this speech, she declared women “the traditional guardians of culture,” and said one of her responsibilities should

be to “have constructive ways and means of survival from nuclear weapons for her family and neighbors, [and] be able to say what is good or bad about foreign policy.¹¹¹” For a speech delivered to employed women, Leopold spends remarkably little time discussing women’s employment and a great deal of time outlining her patriotic responsibilities, holding women up as the cornerstone of good citizenship for the nation.

Another example of Leopold’s updated definition of “womanpower” is present in her speech on Women’s Organizations Day of the New York State Fair. “I’d like to pay tribute to these organizations here -- and particularly to the winners of your Community Service Awards and the groups which they represent. The projects you have undertaken have provided a wonderful service to your communities, they have served to broaden your own experience and understanding and they point up and emphasize the potential achievements and contributions of women everywhere. I quite frequently refer to this vast and limitless reservoir of women’s abilities as “womanpower.¹¹²”

Here we see that Leopold’s definition of “womanpower” had expanded to volunteerism and civic virtue, exemplified by these “extracurricular activities” Leopold had confessed to getting “all steamed up” about. By divorcing women’s abilities and strengths from their economic value, Leopold ingeniously walked the fine line between feminism and traditionalism. In this way, she could claim to be fighting for equity without seeming “too liberal” on issues of equality. This view was consistent with Leopold’s argument that women should be given equal pay for equal work, but allowed her to hedge on issues like equal employment opportunity.

Separate Employment: Inherently Unequal?

Equal pay was one of the most important policy issues for the Women's Bureau from its inception. Regardless of the political climate, the Women's Bureau has always been in favor of federal equal pay legislation. Miller approached the equal pay issue by working to get women into nontraditional, professional, unionized jobs, where wages were higher and benefits and working conditions were better. Leopold's tactics were less progressive, but perhaps more realistic. She worked to raise pay standards in jobs that had traditionally been associated with women workers without concerning herself with the increasingly gender-segregated workforce.

As early as 1946, Miller pleaded with employers on the behalf of educated women to open doors to the professions heretofore closed to most women. Some women, she reported, "will be in a position to add new contributions [to the postwar workforce]. They are the women who found wartime success in their new or relatively new occupations: the dental hygienist, the medical laboratory technician, the physical therapist, and the test analyst, computer, and aide of the engineering field. So far, reports indicate the women in these unusual lines have held their own." In contrast to Alice Leopold's response to nationwide teacher shortages -- establishing a program encouraging only "mature" women workers to obtain degrees -- Miller urged all women high school graduates to seek higher education to prepare them for traditionally male-dominated professions such as engineering, architecture, and the hard sciences¹¹³.

Miller also argued that women workers were often denied jobs on the basis of inadequate training, and then were denied training on the basis of sex. "Without adequate training, women cannot hope to compete with men for jobs that heretofore have been described as 'men's

work.’¹¹⁴” Boldly stating that women could and, in fact, should compete with men for such jobs, Miller emphasized again that women had proven their value during wartime, and therefore should not be restricted in the types of jobs they could pursue in times of peace.

Miller’s argument for equal employment opportunities hinged on the availability of training for women to perform skilled jobs in heavy industry, but drawing women into academic and technical professions would also prove pivotal. Many women were already employed as clerical workers and secretaries, but well into the 1950s the only professional opportunities for most college-educated women were in the fields of teaching and nursing. Leopold did little to remove these limitations on professional women, and in fact, did much to reinforce them.

Leopold’s attitude towards women in the workforce was markedly more conservative than Miller’s, but her policies were not entirely incompatible. Though she chose to focus on increased wages rather than an integrated work force, Leopold still advocated for better job training and opportunities. This was especially true for the large group of “mature” women -- those over 35 with children over 14 -- who sought re-entry into the workforce after a long absence. Leopold’s life script indicated that a woman should be educated in order to raise educated children; it followed, then, that this education could be put to use once her children were grown. But many employers were understandably hesitant to hire a woman whose education was fifteen years out of date and who had little to no work experience outside of childrearing. Leopold instituted several training programs to help housewives overcome these hurdles, paving the way for many empty-nesters to find gainful employment.

Two Approaches to Career Development

As part of this philosophy, Leopold emphasized repeatedly that a woman's first priority should be to marry and raise a family. In her speeches to young women about their futures -- particularly college graduates -- she usually discussed shortages in traditionally female jobs like teaching and nursing. When she discussed traditionally male fields, like chemistry and physics, she approached them either in general terms or in terms of needing more women to *teach* in these fields. In one speech at her alma mater, under a heading of "non-traditional professions for women," she even referred to the "great demand for trained men" in engineering¹¹⁵ *without* adding that a trained woman would do in a pinch. She did note that "women also are finding outlets for their skills in other professions in which their employment has not been traditional."¹¹⁶ In discussing these traditionally male professions, however, Leopold spoke only to the severe shortages in several industries, particularly those related to aerospace and defense. By framing women's employment in engineering in terms of shortages, Leopold implied that the only way women would be accepted into these highly technical positions was if, as in World War II defense plants, there were no men available to do these jobs.

Leopold's emphasis on education in early life for employment later also helped fill vacancies predominately female fields where there had been persistent shortages. In 1954, Leopold developed a program called "Teachers for the Nation's Children," which sought to "recruit and train these mature liberal arts graduates" to become certified teachers, particularly in "needy communities."¹¹⁷ Leopold wrote in 1958 about the program's ongoing success in recruiting former housewives into the field of education. Through "Teachers for the Nation's

Children,” the Women’s Bureau asked colleges and universities across the nation to create teacher-training programs geared towards older women, particularly those who had non-certificate degrees. In some cases, academic institutions simply began admitting older women into existing certification programs that previously had been open only to recent graduates. By 1958, 130 schools offered programs in teacher certification specifically tailored to the needs of women over 35.¹¹⁸”

Indeed, in a 1958 article entitled “Teacher Certification, Supply, and Demand,” Henry Curtis Herge noted that “the assumption endures that professional workers, trained in one field, may be effectively employed in teaching if conversion programs and classroom work are made sufficiently attractive.¹¹⁹” Further, of the schools that offered specialized teacher-certification programs, “some institutions scheduled their classes between 10 and 2 o’clock to accommodate housewives attracted to teaching.¹²⁰” The campaign worked. In 1956, Leopold reported to the conference of the National Vocational Guidance Association that, “among every 10 of our employed women [college] graduates, 6 are teachers.¹²¹”

The Women’s Bureau under Leopold also took a special interest in that other bastion of professional opportunity for women, nursing. Again, nationwide shortages, combined with the natural association between women and the gentlest of medical professions, led to a recruiting drive to train older women with grown children to contribute to the national health care system. Although there was no official program in place to recruit mature women into training programs, nursing and social work were both emphasized in the Women’s Bureau’s annual publications on

job opportunities for high school graduates, which were distributed by high school guidance counselors to young women nationwide.

Ending gender segregation in the workforce was one important component to achieving equal pay for women, and to this end Miller sought improved training for skilled jobs. Leopold tried to recruit educated women into professional and “pink-collar” jobs, but did very little to create job opportunities for women in blue-collar jobs that involved long hours and manual labor. Miller realized that many working-class women did not have the means to graduate from high school, let alone achieve professional degrees, so she worked to increase access for women to these types of jobs.

Miller’s focus on increased access began as early as 1942, when she worked at the New York State Department of Labor. During the war, Miller discovered that there was a bottleneck in training women for skilled industrial jobs. “It became clear,” recounted Miller in 1948, “that the Department [of Education] was resisting the admission of women to the courses on the ground that to train women thus was an ‘unjustified use of the taxpayers’ money because employers wouldn’t take them...’ The Governor decided that women who wanted the training were also taxpayers and fully entitled to whatever facilities the State had to offer. They did get their training.¹²²” When Miller became head of the Women’s Bureau, she used this anecdote to argue for better training for women who sought skilled work even in the postwar period.

Leopold, on the other hand, took a much more conservative role in championing women’s rights to better pay. She preferred to work within the established system and was an accomplished bureaucrat. Even during her days in the Connecticut State Senate she was working towards state

level equal-pay legislation. In fact, she authored the equal pay bill that ultimately passed in the Connecticut legislature in 1949. Her commitment to the establishment and to working within the system was no doubt a major component of her success in the conservative postwar period.

The ERA Sparks Debate

Although Leopold firmly believed in equal pay legislation, her official position on the Equal Rights Amendment was not to have an official position at all. Whereas Mary Anderson and Frieda Miller had staunchly opposed the ERA and even came out with numerous statements against it on behalf of the Bureau, Leopold simply withdrew the Bureau's official opposition to the amendment without further comment¹²³. Her silence on this matter was deafening. Not wanting to seem too progressive, yet unable to ignore the increasing popularity of the amendment with women's groups like the National Women's Party¹²⁴, Leopold's "no-comment" attitude towards the ERA was a deft political maneuver. The closest she ever came to commenting on the amendment was when she announced that she did not believe that women wanted equality.

Leopold made headlines when she made this declaration in a speech given to the District of Columbia League of Republican Women at the Burlington Hotel. In this speech, Leopold argued for equity over equality. "Equity seems to me, as a worker for legislation which protects and frees women, a much more important point of view." She went on to say that she hoped that some form of equal pay for equal work bill "can pass this Congress as Federal law." But amending the constitution to ensure it? Leopold would not go so far as to recommend that particular course of action. Note, too, the audience to whom Leopold spoke on this occasion --

her fellow Republican women. As a conservative bureaucrat in a conservative administration, Leopold's ability to walk the tightrope of equality versus equity is a testament to her political skill. She managed to consistently promote the rights of women who worked outside the home without upsetting the traditional view that women's primary duties were inside the home.

Miller, on the other hand, dealt with the Equal Rights Amendment head-on from day one. After her swearing-in ceremony, she responded to reporters inquiring whether she would change Anderson's long-standing policy of opposition to the ERA by saying, "I am against that amendment...I think there is a completely erroneous notion prevailing as to what that amendment will do."¹²⁵ Miller then elaborated, in a rare burst of eloquence, on what injustices the ERA would *not* address. "No amendment can give women consideration at the hands of the employers who hold the jobs in this country. Nor will anyone hire, say, a woman lawyer because of the Equal Rights Amendment. It is a matter of prejudice and I have fought that prejudice. Come down sometime and see the record of twenty-five years. It proves, I think, that it is effective to go at a specific situation that needs changing, what I call specific pills for specific ills."¹²⁶

Some of these specific ills that had already been addressed were minimum wage and maximum hour laws at the state level, many of which were sex-specific. Women were generally limited in the number of hours per week they could work and the conditions under which they could labor. Mandatory rest breaks, lunch periods, and other such workday regulation that exists today had its roots in state laws geared towards protecting women from the kinds of poor conditions that led to such tragedies as the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. An Equal

Rights Amendment would have nullified many state-level laws that protected women against these kinds of abuses at the hands of their employers. To Miller, protecting women workers was more important than establishing legal equality. She believed that legal equality would not necessarily result in improved opportunities for women, therefore an Equal Rights Amendment would only serve to eliminate protective legislation and leave men and women in the same sinking boat.

When Miller declared that she did not believe that any law or amendment would be able to compel private businesses to hire women to do jobs traditionally held by men, she acknowledged that legislation could not overcome ingrained gender stereotypes. Leopold, being less concerned with helping women break out of sex-typed occupations, was interested in education and job placement within the confines of traditional gender roles. Miller often defied these traditional roles in her personal and professional life, and therefore took the issue of sex discrimination much more seriously, especially when it kept women from crossing the lines drawn in the shifting sand of gender relations.

Discrimination: Pride or Prejudice?

In 1946, Miller pointed out that even when women had received adequate training for traditionally male jobs like those in defense plants, many employers still clung to “those age-old, blind prejudices that long have impeded [women’s] march of progress into certain occupations and professions.¹²⁷” In other words, capable women were not getting good defense jobs unless there were no men (qualified or otherwise) available to do them. Miller condemned this attitude

and asked employers to consider women for jobs under the same criteria they would use in considering men.

Miller did not always blame male prejudice for women's inability to find jobs, however. When writing for a general audience, she often minimized the role of gender discrimination in keeping demobilized war workers out of jobs. In May 1946, for instance, she wrote that "the inference...that prejudice alone accounts for the trek of women from the war plants is both unfair and unsound."¹²⁸ In this instance, blaming gender discrimination for the mass exodus of women from war industries would neither garner sympathy nor help her constituents. Instead, she focused on the somewhat whitewashed idea that women were leaving the factories by choice, but finding their other options somewhat lacking. In this way, she could argue for providing better options for displaced war workers without being forced to confront the unpleasant reality that many of these women were being displaced solely on the basis of sex.

Miller went on to argue that many of the displaced women workers from the war plants were having trouble finding new jobs commensurate with their experience and previous wages not because of discrimination, but simply because other types of employment were generally not as well-paid as defense industry jobs. With war plants either cutting back production (and therefore cutting staff) or closing altogether, there just was not enough high-wage defense industry work to go around. Instead, Miller advocated an across-the-board wage increase in women-dominated industries, including service sector jobs, to help these demobilized women workers meet their financial responsibilities in the new, post-war economy¹²⁹.

While Miller believed in vocational education for job training, Leopold believed in higher education to encourage personal satisfaction and good citizenship. In keeping with her life script, she expected that a young woman's education would be immediately useful in raising educated children and conscientious citizens; and could be put to additional use, when the children were grown, in one of the typically female professions, like teaching, nursing, or social work. The presence of a husband and children were assumed; widows, spinsters, and lesbians were not part of Leopold's world. And Leopold believed that women should educate themselves simply because education is an end in itself. As a means of self-improvement, a college degree could not be beat.

Leopold encouraged young women to seek higher education partly because of the Cold War mentality that stressed an educated citizenry. A well-educated woman would be politically active in her community, and she would breed intelligence into the good little patriots of tomorrow. Leopold stressed a college degree as an important step to good citizenship, even if a woman was not expecting to take paid work after marriage. As Leopold told a group of women's organization members in 1954,

“We all know that the very backbone of our democracy is the family and home in which it lives. So long as the structure of our homes is firm and sound, our democracy will be strong and safe. That makes woman as the homemaker the key individual in our democracy. But it doesn't exclude interest and participation in public affairs and the government. For if we are indifferent to our government and our full citizenship, this indifference will be reflected in our children.¹³⁰”

In other words, Leopold believed that mothers owed it to their nation to be politically involved, to be educated, and to be good examples for their children. Again, the assumption that

all little girls would grow up to be little mothers was a foregone conclusion. And with the Cold War and the space race gaining momentum, American chemists, physicists, and engineers -- overwhelmingly male professions -- were in high demand. Clearly, educated mothers would produce educated sons, who would in turn ensure America's technological superiority. Education was America's hope for the future. It is not surprising, then, that Leopold viewed education as a patriotic duty. This stands in stark opposition to Miller's World War II mentality of education as a practical means toward economic gain.

Since Miller had come from the ranks of labor activism, under her leadership the Women's Bureau played an active role in seeking improved status for women workers. The annual report of the Bureau, "Handbook of Facts on Women Workers," was an established publication by the time Miller took office, and its statistics were cited often by Bureau representatives in speeches, articles, and interviews. The handbook was not an end in and of itself, but rather a means of studying the women who worked and why they did so in order to better serve the Bureau's constituency.

Leopold, however, did see the handbook as an end in itself. Under her direction, the Bureau became primarily a data collection and warehousing agency. In fact, gathering information for such publications as the handbook and a guide to careers for women high school graduates became a major priority of the Women's Bureau under Leopold's direction. The bureau also took pride in disseminating this information to government agencies and local schools. While some might blame Leopold's conservatism for this change, it should be noted that the Department of Labor as a whole saw a similar shift in focus at this time. Alice Kessler-

Harris blames the lack of support from women's groups and the labor movement for the Women's Bureau's loss of political clout. Some of these women's groups, like the Women's Trade Union League, had died out after World War II. Others, like the League of Women Voters, shifted focus to electoral politics, and trade unions had gained enough strength that they no longer needed assistance from a relatively weak agency like the Women's Bureau.¹³¹ "Like the Labor Department itself," Kessler-Harris noted, "the Bureau became a data collection agency whose major task was to organize the available labor force in the service of national economic well-being."¹³² Furthermore, the Women's Bureau became even more closely linked to the Department of Labor when Leopold was given the title of "Special Adviser to the Secretary of Labor" on November 20, 1953 in addition to her role as Women's Bureau director¹³³.

Leopold explained the Women's Bureau's shift in focus in a 1955 speech. "Young women need to know what different jobs are like. They need expert advice about job prospects. Where are the jobs they are best fitted for? Should they have additional special training? Maybe an additional skill is indicated. It is so important for all of us who counsel, to emphasize finishing high school and the importance of getting a higher education, if this can possibly be arranged for those who have the capacity."¹³⁴

The Women's Bureau's new focus on gathering and disseminating information shifted Leopold's attention away from injustices in the labor market. As a result, the Bureau no longer fought for justice on the behalf of women who found themselves the victims of discrimination. According to Kessler-Harris, "the Bureau, tied to the Labor Department bureaucracy, no longer had the political capacity to act on their behalf."¹³⁵ As a result, letters from women complaining

of discrimination in the workplace often received noncommittal, form-letter replies rubber-stamped by Leopold. Typical of these kinds of exchanges was a letter to a woman who supported her husband, a disabled veteran, at a Kentucky naval ordnance plant. Despite the fact that she had documented evidence of consistent discrimination, “the Women’s Bureau declared itself powerless to intervene even though the plant decision on the woman’s complaint stated flatly that ‘the *appointing officer has the authority to specify sex in making selections for positions.*’¹³⁶”

On the other hand, Miller’s experiences with the WTUL and the JBSC, combined with the political support of labor unions and other organizations, allowed her to take a more active, liberal stance on issues like equal pay, protective legislation for women, and improved job training for women. Her personal politics may have influenced what she chose to do during her tenure, but the political climate of the Roosevelt administration, who had even appointed the first woman Secretary of Labor, Francis Perkins¹³⁷, gave Miller the freedom to tackle directly any discrimination against working women. And when discrimination against women workers did rear its ugly head, Miller staunchly and publicly opposed it. In a September 1944 speech at the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems, Miller brought the idea of gender discrimination under direct attack. “I have recently heard it rumored that some postwar philosophers of the armchair variety are urging that we solve postwar employment problems by passing laws to bar the married women from working -- such ideas of discrimination are as undemocratic as the Nazi philosophies and discriminations against which our boys are fighting.”¹³⁸

Leopold often gave speeches to women's groups on behalf of the Women's Bureau, but these speeches were intended to promote Bureau policies and programs already in place. Additionally, Leopold often spoke to groups of young women, encouraging them to pursue higher education not necessarily to prepare them for the workforce, but rather to help them achieve personal satisfaction and to raise educated children. She also led the Bureau in its publication of career guides for high school girls, which encouraged them to consider professional and woman-dominated fields that had been suffering shortages, such as nursing and teaching. Finally, she encouraged older women whose children had grown to contribute to the economy, their communities, and their own personal satisfaction by seeking paid work, volunteering, and even going back to school if they desired. Still, she maintained the philosophy that women who had young children at home should devote themselves to raising those children, free from the distractions of work outside the home.

Leopold and Miller: A Recap

This philosophy was consistent with the script Leopold followed for her own life. Although she had a promising career in business management, she dropped out of the workforce to stay home with her children. While they were small, however, she threw herself into various projects that kept her engaged in the community -- designing toys, heading up the PTA, and, later, becoming involved in the Connecticut Republican party. She abstained from paid work during this time, but found many other ways to contribute to her community while her children were in school and allowed her husband to support the family financially.

Miller, however, did not have this option. As a woman partnered with a woman, she and her long-term companion, labor activist Pauline Newman, both worked outside the home. Newman chose a less demanding career path, continuing her work with the WTUL on a largely freelance basis. Newman's greater job flexibility allowed her to take on more responsibility for the household when Elisabeth was young, and although Miller was her legal guardian, Elisabeth rarely accompanied Miller on her European travels. However, neither Miller nor Leopold dropped out of the labor force completely, and Miller had to balance her work life with her responsibilities as a parent in a way that fathers were not usually expected to do at the time. Therefore, her energies as Director of the Women's Bureau were far more concentrated on working mothers, particularly women heads of households. Miller did not significantly change the policy positions set down by Anderson throughout the 1920s, 30s, and 40s -- she, too, opposed the ERA on the grounds that it would make unconstitutional several state-level laws that regulated working conditions and hours for women. However, Anderson's rhetoric defending women's right to work in order to support their families gave way to Miller's assertion that women should not only be allowed to work for a fair wage, but to work in industries and professions that had previously been closed to them.

Conclusions

The impact of Miller and Leopold's distinct personalities and experiences on labor policy during the 1940s and 50s provides a striking example of how much an individual's character matters when it comes to selecting federal appointees. While positions like Women's Bureau director might seem to some like a convenient place to hand out patronage positions, such

appointments should not be taken lightly. Miller and Leopold's appointments were not accidents of fate, but rather were extensions of the philosophies of the administrations under which they served; and therefore (theoretically), each represented the will of the people who had elected those men President. In some cases, appointees may matter more than the President himself, such as in the event of a national emergency like a war, a labor shortage or, as in New Orleans in 2005, a natural disaster. As voters, we should continue to study bureaucratic history as a reminder that Presidents sometimes prioritize party affiliation above experience and dedication when making appointments in order to preserve the party line.

Frieda Miller and Alice Leopold represented opposite ends of the political spectrum, and each shaped policy as each was shaped by her background and life experiences. While both worked for the rights of women in the workplace, their approaches, methods, and goals differed greatly. Miller's efforts revolved mainly around providing opportunities for women who wanted to work but were kept out of the jobs they wanted because of gender discrimination. While she was concerned with educated, professional women and bringing women into non-traditional fields like engineering and the sciences; she focused especially on working-class women whose incomes were an important source of support -- sometimes the only source of support -- for their families. And as a result of her experiences with the Women's Trade Union League, she also fought for improved working conditions for women, even if that fight meant taking the decidedly un-feminist position that women required more protection than men in the workplace. Equal treatment, for which Miller fought when it meant better wages and opportunities, was less important to Miller than improving conditions for women, even when conditions for men

remained the same. For instance, while she supported minimum-wage legislation that would have raised wages for both sexes, she opposed the Equal Rights Amendment because, by declaring women to be equal to men, it would have nullified special privileges granted only to women on a state-by-state basis, like shorter work hours and mandatory rest breaks.

Leopold, on the other hand, openly acknowledged that equality was not her goal. Instead, she sought to promote education and to integrate women professionals into the established political and social norms, which placed home and family at the center of a woman's life. She looked for ways that educated women could use their abilities and talents for the greater good, without sacrificing the welfare of their children. Much of her work focused on channeling women's energies into appropriate, non-vocational outlets, like local Parent-Teacher associations, the American Red Cross, and other civic and volunteer organizations. When it came to employment, she encouraged women whose children were grown to use the skills they had gained as homemakers and mothers in fields like teaching, nursing, and social work -- female-dominated industries -- to make extra money and send their children to college. But, unlike Miller, she did not get directly involved in disputes between already-employed women and their employers, nor did she encourage women to blaze new trails by seeking jobs that had been traditionally filled by men.

Miller and Leopold's juxtaposition as Women's Bureau directors brought their differences into sharper contrast, but this shift in leadership was not mere chance. Miller, the product of a more progressive background, served during a more progressive administration. Leopold, as committed to the Republican Party as she was to improving women's lives, provided

an avenue by which the Bureau could continue to operate in the conservative early years of the Cold War. While by many accounts Leopold appears to have held back the progress Miller had started in opening up new fields and opportunities for women, in many ways she began fighting against the “problem with no name” more than ten years before Betty Friedan dubbed it “The Feminine Mystique.” By acknowledging the social norm that women were expected to be primarily homemakers, Leopold reinforced the prevailing attitudes about women and employment. But by encouraging homemakers to educate themselves, to seek involvement in community organizations, and generally take steps to make themselves marketable as future employees, she also strove to prove that women could do more than just stay at home and bake cookies, even if full-time paid employment was out of the question.

The dual nature of Leopold’s approach to women’s issues in the 1950s reveals the internal struggle between her personal and professional life. Her inner conflict stands in stark contrast to Miller’s life, which was often defined by its departure from social norms. Miller did not quite fit in with society’s ideas of what a woman should be or do. Her lesbian partnership and lifelong status as a “career woman” clearly set her apart from the typical woman worker of the 1940s and 50s. But perhaps Alice Leopold struggled to fit in as much as Miller did. In many ways, Miller rejected the social norms of the 1940s and 50s and forged her own path. But Leopold embraced the “family values” and particular brand of middle-class conservatism that is often credited with the wholesale repression of women in the 1950s. Despite her early success in the business world and her obvious ambition, Leopold quit her job as personnel director, donned her pearls and high heels, and set herself to the task of becoming a full-time housewife.

Still, Leopold could not deny her intelligence and ambition, and her life story reveals an ongoing tension between her conservative values and her desire to use her business sense, her charisma, and her political savvy to the greatest extent possible. Leopold's very traditional life choices -- husband, house in the suburbs, two children and a couple of dogs -- meant that she had to find creative ways to extend her world beyond hearth and home without neglecting her duties as wife and mother. When her children were young, she struck a balance by starting her own business and becoming involved in civic organizations. Even after her children were grown, even as she rose to the top levels of government, still she struggled to make peace between her responsibilities at home and her professional life, even going so far as to fly back to Connecticut every weekend rather than ask her husband to come live in D.C.

Perhaps the greatest continuity between Miller and Leopold lies in the message that women could and should take an active role in the world outside their homes. During a scripted radio interview in 1944, Miller argued for women's right to equal employment with the simple and concise statement, "Women *are* people -- and *citizens* too."¹³⁹ On this, at least, Miller and Leopold could agree. Women's citizenship and all the rights and responsibilities that come with it were paramount to both women's philosophies, values and goals. Their personal and political agendas notwithstanding, both women fought for women's rights to full participation in American society. However, their definitions of "full participation" certainly differed. For Miller, it meant equality in wages and opportunities as well as social acceptance of women workers, even in male-dominated industries. For Leopold, it meant the freedom to contribute politically and socially, to receive an education and to pursue one's interests, be they vocational

or voluntary. Regardless of the different ways they expressed their convictions, however, they both became involved with the Women's Bureau because they both believed that women are, in fact, people -- and citizens too.

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