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Editor's Note

Dawn-Marie Driscoll

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Editor's Note

Dawn-Marie Driscoll

This issue of the *New England Journal of Public Policy* had many beginnings and, like most efforts in which a theme is slowly resolved, probably should not have an ending.

The discussion of this theme started several years ago when a group of senior Boston businesswomen talked about the need and value of meeting on a semiregular basis. Their purpose would be to focus discussions on a narrow but important issue — the economic advancement of women.

The criteria for these informal meetings quickly fell into place. All the women who comprised the group would be drawn from within the private sector and hold senior executive positions; their deliberations would have a low profile and receive no public airing; most important, the common element among the members would be a high degree of mutual trust, respect, and confidentiality. My position at the time was vice president of Corporate Affairs and general counsel of Filene's, and I became an original member.

The group met faithfully in the ensuing years, expanding its membership to include partners in Boston law firms, other executives, senior public officials, and several college presidents. For lack of a better name, we called ourselves the Women's Economic Forum, reflecting our interest.

Many of the women — a number of whom are contributors to this volume — had first pooled their efforts on behalf of another *Journal* contributor, Evelyn Murphy, then a candidate for lieutenant governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Later, as new members joined, individuals supported a range of candidates for state and local office, men and women. Like Lieutenant Governor Murphy, the forum members were acutely aware that the public policy issues which most concerned them centered on a single topic: the position and advancement of women in the economic mainstream of the community.

Sometimes, the questions for the group's agenda were quite specific. For example, mindful that pregnancy is the major reason why young women drop out of Boston schools, we wondered whether we could help support a pilot program for school-based health clinics. Could we "adopt" a troubled Boston school and, at the very least, begin some small programs there?

Other questions were: Whom can the Women's Economic Forum recommend to serve on a local corporate board of directors that is seeking female candidates? Which women who are running for legislative office need help in campaign fund-raising?

Dawn-Marie Driscoll, an attorney and businesswoman in Boston, was the first female chairman of the Boston Municipal Research Bureau.

On other occasions WEF devoted time to brainstorming on pressing problems closer to home. One member's company was involved in a takeover attempt. What support could be advanced from among the group? Another time a member needed help in facing a political battle over a critical public policy issue. Could the group mount a behind-the-scenes campaign to influence a favorable outcome?

While problem solving was the usual agenda, on some days the group celebrated victories. For example, under the leadership of one member, the real estate trade association established a special task force to look into incentives needed to increase space devoted to child care. Another member was successful in having coverage for mammograms added to the health insurance policies for state employees. And despite a low percentage of female legislators, the women who are the Senate and House chairmen of the powerful Joint Legislative Committee on Commerce and Labor meet periodically with the group.

As WEF educated itself by sharing speeches, studies, and anecdotes, members began to speak with one voice. The message was the same: women must become full economic partners in our society. All other public and private policy decisions flowed from that simple concept. Whether the issue was advancement into senior management or opening up highly paid construction jobs on massive public projects to women, the objective was the same.

In October 1988 I was invited to deliver a keynote address for the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, a well-known Boston agency that for decades has promoted the advancement of women. The occasion was the annual Amelia Earhart Award ceremony, in honor of the celebrated former social worker at WEIU. Diane Balser, founder and director of the Women's Legislative Network in Massachusetts, was the award recipient, and each of us, unknown to the other, chose to speak about the same subject: the issues that concern women are economic ones. My speech, "Give Them the Business," was eventually passed to Pdraig O'Malley, editor of this *Journal*, who suggested this volume. After years of WEF members sharing these ideas about the advancement of women among ourselves, who could have predicted that our thoughts would one day take the form of a book?

It was easy to assemble the topics and find contributors. Ideas for the various articles developed naturally from the thinking and activities of many executive and professional women in New England. For example, some women had worked with Janet Short, principal of the Tobin School in Boston's Roxbury district, who wondered how her young female students would make it through to lives of self-sufficiency. We knew that many of them lived among drug dealers. Others had parents who had died of AIDS. Some searched through trash barrels for breakfast. These young women are in constant need of support. Brunetta Wolfman, former president of Roxbury Community College, has examined the issue for these young women in detail in her article about the challenges for those seeking to break the cycle of poverty.

Many young women become mothers at an early age, limiting their options for economic advancement. Many of them require child care to enable them to take advantage of employment training opportunities; increasing numbers of women need child care to remain or advance in the work force. Carol Goldberg, former president of The Stop & Shop Companies, has the unique perspective of both a mother and president of a retail company that historically has employed a large percentage of women. Her article about the issue of child care and other workplace strategies to ensure the advancement of women, written with Aileen Gorman and Kathleen Hansen, reflects some of the viewpoints expressed at the ongoing Carol R. Goldberg Seminar Series.¹

An article in the *Harvard Business Review* by Felice Schwartz² (in which she did not coin the phrase “mommy track”) created a firestorm of comment, reflecting many of the private discussions that have gone on in boardrooms and bedrooms since the realities of the women’s movement took hold.

Is there a “glass ceiling” that restricts upward mobility for women after they have reached a certain level within their corporate structure, and beyond which they are unlikely to progress?

Should there be special career tracks for women in corporations? What strategies are available in the 1990s that will allow women to succeed in male-dominated institutions in order to reach positions through which they can influence policy?

Several prominent senior executive women address these questions. Elizabeth Graham Cook, executive director of the Advertising Club of Greater Boston, presents research that demonstrates how informal support networks can be a positive factor for sustaining career and personal success. Carol Hillman, former vice president of Corporate Communications of Norton Company, suggests ways to deal with the myths and realities of women as managers, and architect Dell Mitchell describes a Boston program for identifying women qualified to sit on corporate boards. Phyllis Swersky, chief financial officer of Artificial Intelligence, gives us her viewpoint on a personal philosophy for balancing family and work and suggests that Felice Schwartz’s notions about what women with families need or want may not be correct.

The continuing refrain in examining economic advancement for women is the need for education. Margaret McKenna, president of Lesley College and former director of the Bunting Institute at Radcliffe, looks at the role of higher education in empowering women students. Sister Thérèse Higgins, president of Regis College, describes an innovative program to reach tomorrow’s Hispanic leaders and educate these young women for future leadership. Chancellor Sherry Penney of the University of Massachusetts at Boston looks at the professional advancement of women themselves in institutions of higher education. Finally, Matina Horner, former president of Radcliffe College, reexamines her original thesis on women’s fear of success and the emergence of double, and in some instances triple, burdens on working women. What is their impact on women’s chances for advancement and the economic interdependence between men and women, a 1990s fact of life?

As these articles were being prepared, women’s issues were in the forefront of the judicial news. Women were being battered or killed by their husbands or boyfriends, and the Supreme Court of Massachusetts released its long-awaited study of gender bias in the courts. Margaret Marshall, a partner at Choate Hall & Stewart and member of the Judicial Nominating Commission of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, looks at women in the legal profession, and Professor Susan Estrich of the University of Southern California Law Center explores whether the continuing controversy over *Roe v. Wade* will activate women into the political arena to preserve their freedom of choice about childbearing, often a major factor in their later economic independence. Cathleen Douglas Stone, a partner at Fine & Ambrogne, widow of the late Supreme Court Justice William Douglas and an active political strategist and participant herself, surveys women in politics and how many pertinent legislative decisions are influenced by their involvement.

Child care, employment and training opportunities, enforcement of child support, affordable housing, and access to health care are all public policy issues that affect the economic advancement of women, and the old guns-or-butter debate is more relevant than ever. If there were more women in policymaking positions, would public policy programs

and decisions about allocation of public resources be different? Kitty Dukakis, First Lady of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and Vivien Li, adviser to Governor Michael Dukakis on women's issues, describe innovative programs instituted by the commonwealth to ensure the economic advancement of women. Lieutenant Governor Evelyn Murphy forecasts the likely public policy issues for the workplace in the year 2000, while Representative Mary Jane Gibson, majority whip of the Massachusetts Great and General Court, argues for an insurance program jointly funded by employers and employees to provide family leave for employees.

Group Insurance Commissioner Dolores Mitchell explores the health care issues that affect women, and Marion Brink, an alcoholism counselor, cites the particular problems of alcohol and related dependencies and their economic impact on women and their families. Marilyn Swartz Lloyd, former director of Boston's Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (the only woman in the country to hold such a position in an agency of this type), shares her observations about how women can use their power to positive ends, giving an example.

How do women who have economic power use it to benefit other women? I have suggested a strategy to harness some of that private economic power and consciousness, and Sheryl Marshall of Smith Barney examines women's attitudes toward money. Marcy Murningham, president of The Lighthouse Investment Group, examines "economic morality," the emerging concept of women's philanthropic organizations and the more traditional viewpoint; Micho Spring, the first female chairman of the Board of Directors of United Way, responds to her research. Sarah Conn, a psychologist and research scholar for the Center for Psychological Studies in the Nuclear Age, reminds us that personal empowerment is a necessary ingredient for economic empowerment and shows the relationship between our personal actions and global responsibility.

Finally, Professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter of Harvard Business School, a feminist, consultant, professor, business scholar, editor, noted author, and commentator on the emerging economic scene, has written a foreword to this publication.

The feminization of economic power is a compelling theme. The articles in this volume represent the personal views of the authors and are not meant as academic treatises. We hope this effort is just the start of further commentary and action, as we all work toward our common objective of economic empowerment and economic independence for all women. As former *Journal* writer Phillip Dross said, "How can I still live if I can't manage to afford life?" Our society has too many women fighting basic economic impoverishment. From that vantage point, choices about becoming involved in children's education, getting good prenatal care, taking advantage of new training or apprenticeship programs, or choosing to live in a stable community are not really choices at all. Women with no economic power have few choices. Similarly, if women are not running for public office because they are not on a level economic playing field, if they are leaving positions of leadership in corporations, law firms, professions, and academia because the personal costs are too high or the glass ceiling too real, then access for those coming along behind them is less sure. We hope that the next issue of the *Journal* will provide even more ideas about accessing economic power.

One final note is in order. When mutual promises were made and the decision to compile our thoughts was final, we were promised a research assistant — someone to check facts, keep authors on track, and challenge our writing and ideas. Nancy Woolley, then a senior at Regis College, was suggested for and accepted the assignment.

Little did anyone know that Woolley would be a living example of economic empowerment. A divorced mother of four, she had enrolled in Regis College to finish her college degree and obtain some economic independence for herself. She graduated summa cum laude, a Truman Scholar, and now, at age forty-five is attending Harvard Law School. Her story of one person's experience with gender bias in the courts and her personal movement toward economic independence and empowerment is so dramatic, we insisted she share it with us; her article also appears in this *Journal*. We are delighted to know Woolley and to have worked with her, and we will take pride in her future professional accomplishments. 🐼

Notes

1. The Carol Rabb Goldberg Seminars are made possible by an endowed fund established with the Boston Foundation in 1981 by a gift from the Edward and Bertha Rose Charitable Trust for the support of public programs in conjunction with Tufts University. The seminars are coordinated and staffed by Tufts University through the Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and its chairman, Professor Robert Hollister, and by John Ramsey, program director of the Boston Foundation. The seminars are named in honor of Goldberg, a distinguished alumna of Jackson College and former trustee of Tufts University. Goldberg's relationship to the seminars has not been confined merely to lending her name, however. From the very beginning, she has played a critical role in the planning and development of the seminars and has been a regular and active participant in them.
2. Felice N. Schwartz, "Management Women and the New Facts of Life," *Harvard Business Review*, January/February 1989:22.

*If we mean to have heroes, statesmen and philosophers, we
should have learned women.*

— Abigail Adams