

ADC: Working for the “Man”

Fifth Estate Collective

1971

“That man over there say that a woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me a best place...And ain't I a woman? Look at me. Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me...And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man when I could get it, and bear the lash as well...and ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and seen them most all sold off into slavery. And when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard...”

—And ain't I a woman? (Sojourner Truth: Speech before the Woman's Rights Convention at Akron, Ohio, 1851)

Most women on welfare are on ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) because they have children and they left the man they were living with or he left them. Maybe their husband died, or they were never living with a man but got pregnant and had a child.

The majority of people on welfare live under ADC and the majority of women receiving ADC are white (contrary to the myth): the average length of time on ADC is 2 to 3 years. Almost all ADC “clients” are women, and the only parent at home (referred to as ADC mothers throughout the rest of this article).

The average ADC mother has three children and applied for assistance when she and her husband separated because she had no income and needed financial help. I have never had an ADC case where women received alimony. According to a lawyer I know, the vast majority of divorces do not involve alimony, but often do involve child support payments. However, when the courts track down a father to pay for his children (which isn't often) he will only have to pay about \$10 to 15 a week per child which no one could possibly live on. So ADC is available and pays the woman very little more.

In Michigan the budgets are set up to include \$44 per month per person in the family. A maximum budget for a four person family (one parent and three children) looks like this:

\$176 food, clothing, incidentals

\$100 maximum for rent or home purchase

\$29 utilities (heat, electricity and water)

\$305 Total monthly “allotment” (If the woman gets support payments they are subtracted from this total and she gets the remainder—she's not ahead.)

That's hardly enough to live on decently, and there's nothing for an emergency. But on top of that, the ADC is “given” out by the department of Social Services as if the mother is begging for it, and the state is doing her a “favor” by doling out money to “help” her family.

One social worker said “These women have no pride. Why don't they go out and work instead of getting hand-outs from ADC? That same social worker's mother never “worked.” But she is proud of her mother and would be

thoroughly insulted if you said, “Why didn’t your mother have enough pride to go out and work instead of caking handouts from her husband?”

The fact is that ADC is just a substitute MAN and I will refer to ADC as the “Man” from now on as it makes the whole issue a lot more clear. Let me explain.

The principal economic fact about this society is that “man’s labor” is paid for and “women’s work” is not. Women’s work is defined as child bearing, child raising and housework. That’s what every little girl is told she will do when she “grows up.” She is taught to think of “women’s work” as her main goal in life, and to be proud of this; everything in the culture reinforces her. Probably her mother was a housewife and she’ll be one too. Its a rigid sexual caste system.

The essential thing to being a housewife and child-raiser is a man to dole out money for food, clothes and rent from his check which he gets for working. (Work is defined by this male-dominated culture to mean work which you get paid for). Women only get paid for doing another woman’s housework = one who is working (and can’t hire a “househusband” to work for her): or a woman whose husband is wealthy enough to free her from low-status wifely chores.

The fact that housework is low-status is important. Housework when done by a “domestic worker” is the lowest paying job in this society. In fact, almost all women are domestic workers—paid or unpaid. All things in this materialistic society have a monetary value, but housework and child-raising have no monetary value when done by a wife and mother for a man.

Even the New Left defines work as what you get paid for. When talking about the working class they include those domestic laborers who work for other women for pay. But they exclude all women who work solely as housewives full-time for Men (at least 52%) because they don’t get wages—only room and board and handouts now and then. This is a chauvinist definition of workers.

What if a housewife and mother, working without pay, is suddenly without that man who got paid for his work? Does it enter this woman’s head to now demand pay for the work she is doing? No. She has been conditioned to think that her work is “special women’s work,” “you can’t put a price on motherhood.” and “it’s not a job—it’s unselfish devotion.”

No one would pay her for her work even if she demanded it. They’d laugh her out of the unemployment security commission offices if she applied for unemployment compensation. Besides, she’s still doing her “work” and not getting paid for it. It’s the only layoff where the employee has to keep right on working.

So she goes to the only place that is available, to the S.S. (Social Services, that is) to get welfare. She is made to feel that she is being “given” something for nothing. Meanwhile she’s still doing that housework and child-raising she was supposed to devote her life to. But now somehow she’s bad, lazy and a leech for doing all that hard work.

What about the argument that ADC mothers could find jobs to support their families if they had enough pride to get off welfare? The stigma of ADC is so great that many ADC mothers believe this themselves, But the argument is shallow for a number of reasons. For one, if a woman has a large family (two or more children) she will most likely not be able to support her family on a woman’s wage rate. If you don’t believe this here are figures on women’s wages:

in 1966, the median income for a white man was \$7,164:

for a non-white man, \$4,528;

a white woman, \$4,152;

a non-white woman \$2,949.

In 1968, the figures were substantially the same.

Things are getting worse, and the gap between men’s and women’s income is widening. More than 2/3 of all women working in full-time, year-round jobs had incomes of under \$5,000, while fewer than 1/4 of all men were in this bracket. Men often make more money than women in the same type of job. Women sales workers earn 60% less than male sales workers. Women managers, officials and proprietors earn 45% less than men in those same

jobs. Women clerks earn 44% less than male clerks. Besides, women are systematically kept out of the labor market; their unemployment rates are highest.

Even if a woman does get a job, she's likely to get -more money on ADC than from work outside her home. She will also have problems finding and paying for baby-sitters or daycare. This has been a very effective way, so far, for this male-controlled economy to keep mothers with pre-school children from working Outside the home. When she's finally got her job, she will realize why so many ADC mothers stay home. Now she has two full time jobs, and only one for pay! Her life will be a continual round of backbreaking labor with hardly any time for leisure or to enjoy her children: And all that for poverty-level wages.

When you put all these facts together some curious patterns emerge. "The Man" (ADC) had been set up to preserve the family system, where the men get paid and the women are unpaid and kept in a colonized position (economically and psychologically dependent on a "master"). This is done by refusing to pay women-for honest work done in the home and treating them as welfare "recipients"; by making ADC checks so low that women have to live with a man to be adequately "provided" for; by not providing child care centers, and in fact, making it difficult to: set them up; by not discouraging discrimination in 'the Work incentive Program referrals. Even ADC literature is full of male-supremacist dribble, all sugar coated in terms of "helping" these women.

There is no just solution to the situation of women under welfare within the present male-dominated family system. The only way out is for women to get together themselves and create new structures which do not treat women as a caste, labor group or oppress children. Structures where women and men share all tasks and decisions of the society for equal rewards and treatment. The Women's Liberation Movement has already begun to bring women together to try to work out alternatives to the present family system; women on welfare are also beginning to organize themselves to confront the welfare system. The two groups need to work more closely with each other, as they are sisters confronting the same issues.

The saddest thing about "the Man" is that "he" turns woman against woman. Some women would say, "Well, got along without "the Man" (ADC). But chances are you couldn't have gotten along without some man to pay for them.

Remember, sister, if you have a child or the potential to bear a child—in other words if you're a woman—you are a potential recipient of "the Man."

fifth Estate

Fifth Estate Collective
ADC: Working for the "Man"
1971

<https://www.fiftheastate.org/archive/126-march-4-17-1971/adc-working-for-the-man>
Fifth Estate #126, March 4-17, 1971

[fiftheastate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://www.fiftheastate.org)