

WHAT HAS 535
HEADS, 1,070
LEGS, AND MAY
GET YOU IN
1975? (SEE
PAGE 97)

FEBRUARY/1975

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Ms.

**HISTORIC PETITION:
100 SIGNERS FOR
SEXUAL CHOICE**
**VOLUNTEERS:
THE GREAT
DEBATE**



**WOMEN IN FILM -
AN
ENDANGERED
SPECIES**



ERIC BURSTEIN, ERIC ROFFERY, Shirley MacLaine



When males do it, they can be dollar-a-year men in Washington, with power and prestige increased by financial independence. When females do it, they are often powerless and disdained. Thus volunteerism, like most other kinds of work in this country, is illogically valued according to the "worth" of the doer.

Okay, we should fix that injustice. Volunteers, female or male, should be valued by their skills. But the question is more complex: What do we volunteer *for*? Social status? Saving lives? The church? Work that should be paid for but isn't? Or only work so revolutionary that there can be no pay? If we can afford to volunteer, should we pledge to make it into a

paying job—and then leave it to someone else? Or use volunteerism only for training?

These are a few of the questions women are struggling with. And this four-part feature reflects some of the wounds, skirmishes, and discoveries of the struggle. —*Gloria Steinem*



"TAKE IT OUT OF MY SALARY"

VOLUNTEERS ON THE PRESTIGE CIRCUIT

BY EUGENIE BOLGER

When Marian L. was asked to be chairman (the organization's word) of a large city's annual opera ball, women she hardly knew rushed to congratulate her. "My dear," they said, "you have arrived!"

What Marian had arrived at was a position that rewarded hard work—not with a paycheck, but with an invitation to every important social

event, and a secure place in the social whirl.

Like other wives of successful men in cities around the country, Marian does volunteer work on the prestige circuit (the women's committees and women's auxiliaries of art museums, symphony orchestras, opera companies, and public television stations) that includes the elite activities of volunteerism. And like so many of her counter-

parts, Marian is without illusions about her work, yet anxious to protect the identity it gives her. She is willing to discuss her organization, but only if her real name is not mentioned.

Few join Marian's auxiliary (where membership is by invitation only) out of a serious interest in the opera. "Some like the idea of meeting and mingling with opera stars," Marian says. "Others just want to

get out of the house or do something in the community. And then there's always the social angle. You become friends with people in this town's highest society."

Society friendships are often useful. They can give a husband's career a needed boost. They raise a woman's self-esteem. Association with people who are known gives women the feeling they, too, are known, perhaps the overriding reason for volunteering at cultural institutions, where rosters are bright with local luminaries. Then, too, a certain glamour attaches to these organizations, removed as they are from the world of the poor and suffering most commonly served by volunteers.

Volunteers in prestige groups are often interested not so much in service as in accomplishment. They want to make decisions, exercise authority, get around. A major accomplishment may be defined as a TV appearance, or getting one's name and picture in the paper, or as simply achieving membership in an exclusive group. Getting connected to these organizations is no easy matter.

A woman must be tough to survive in these groups, notes Marian. "A lot of women in the opera auxiliary talk about power," she says. "They see all these new faces coming along and they're afraid of slipping. So they try to keep people out. They use the power of the guest list. They decide whose picture will be in the paper.

"The year I chaired the opera ball was the most gruesome in my life. At my first meeting with the committee, I looked down that long table and saw all those sour faces looking up at me and I knew what they were thinking. Can she do it? or: What's *she* doing up there? Of course, I didn't trust them, either.

"I was awake night after night, worrying. You see, no one in my family had ever done anything on such a social and competitive scale. And I'm conscientious. I go into everything wholeheartedly."

Volunteers like Marian tend to regard their work as part of the natural order of things, an obliga-

tion that follows inevitably the decision to marry and raise a family. It is an attitude rooted in the Protestant Ethic, which obliges the fortunate to serve the needy. But the development of government agencies and professional social workers has altered the nature of volunteer work, forcing affluent women into different activities, often largely cultural.

Few of the prestige volunteers would consider a paying job. Since these women have never been exposed to sex discrimination in employment, what deters them from entering the paid labor force is not the caliber of work that they might have to do. For Marian, for example, the primary deterrents are the demands that paid employment would make on her time, and her concern about her husband's attitude. The size of his income would cause her earnings to be taxed at the highest rate, leaving her little to show for her efforts. Not mentioned (perhaps not acknowledged) is the widespread belief that a financially independent wife is a threat to her husband's self-esteem and to her marriage. So Marian spends her time in volunteer work, most of it on the prestige circuit. Asked what she thinks of it, Marian shrugs. "It's all right, once a woman has had a fling at college, work, raising a family," she says.

Betsy T. is relatively new at the volunteer game. As a supervisor of other volunteers at a public television station, she puts in six hours a day, five days a week, for almost four months a year. "What I like about volunteer work is the feeling of importance it gives you," she says. "Sure, you're doing something for the community, but you're doing something for yourself, too. I don't think it's human nature to be self-sacrificing. Anyway, there's enough self-sacrifice in being a housewife without going looking for more."

Betsy claims that no organization could compensate her for the time and energy she invests. In fact, her real problem is reconciling the value of the work she does with the higher value she assigns herself. "To be

paid too little is more demeaning than not being paid at all," she says, adding that she has other rewards. For one thing she has her own desk and telephone at the station. "It's a spot that's mine, something no other volunteer has. It makes a fantastic difference. Everyone knows where to find me. And knowing I'm there at a specific time in a specific place allows the staff to give me even more to do."

Betsy knows that, even in prestige groups, good volunteer jobs are scarce, and rummage sales and benefits are often the main activities. Since Betsy's job brings her into close contact with those staff members who plan the annual auction, public television's major fundraising event in many cities, she feels at the center of the action.

"Everyone wants to be seen on TV," she says. "I get all these phone calls from people who want to work on the auction. They say, 'I'm a friend of so-and-so and she told me to call you.' They think I'll give them a special job on-camera."

Although this TV station uses both women and men as auction volunteers, and has recently established a separate men's committee, women volunteers still outnumber men. Regardless of a volunteer's previous experience and qualifications, she is assigned a simple clerical job. As she becomes better known, she may be tapped by the staff for better assignments: proof-reading, acting as tour guide for groups visiting the station, or, occasionally, doing research. On-camera jobs in the TV auction are plums given to those who work longest and hardest.

The volunteer group at Betsy's station is large, and membership is unlimited. A different situation prevails at Pittsburgh's Museum of Art of Carnegie Institute, where the women's committee rarely admits more than five new members a year. Membership is held at about 155 women, and each new member must be proposed by a woman already on the committee. "Obviously, it is a nondemocratic process," says James Walton, director of Carnegie Institute. "Still, the committee is a mixed



NOW TASK FORCE ON VOLUNTEERISM Pat McCormick, National Coordinator

group from different sections of the community." Just as obviously, women who are "well placed in the community" (to use one member's euphemism) predominate, since their husbands are often in a position to contribute generously to the museum.

"Every woman who gets on that committee has to work damned hard, but just try to get on it," one nonmember sighs. To justify limited membership, the argument is made that a larger group would be unmanageable. The smaller group allows all those in it to keep busy. And busy they are, selling wares in the committee's shop, making ornaments for Christmas trees, stuffing and addressing envelopes, acting as hostesses for tour groups, and doing all the book work for the committee's auction.

Major fund-raising is left to the board of trustees, which, like most prestige boards, is almost exclusively male. As one board member explains it, "You need men who are business leaders to go out and get community leaders to give. We use the girls for day-to-day work. They're the ones with lots of time."

James Walton appreciates his volunteers. "Without the women, I'd have to hire a lot of fund-raisers and public relations people," he says, oblivious to the possibility that women might feel exploited working without pay at jobs others would be paid for.

Staff attitudes toward volunteers are not always sanguine. Rather than accept the free labor with gratitude, staff people often complain of volunteers who give them orders, lack discipline, play at the idea of work, and have no sense of how organizations operate. Some staff members will not allow volunteers in their departments; others are more tolerant but hardly respectful. Many a paid director of volunteers, confronted with the task of teaching and placing unpaid workers, will at some point decide it would be easier to do the job herself. "You could go crazy planning everything around a volunteer's tennis dates and hairdresser appointments," is a standard la-

The fifth NOW National Conference (1971) passed a resolution which cautioned women to distinguish between two types of volunteering. Traditional, or service-oriented, voluntary activity was contrasted with political, or change-oriented, volunteering. The first of these is viewed by NOW as being detrimental to improving the status of women while the second is viewed as having the potential for change and as benefitting women.

Traditional service-oriented volunteering has been and is the unpaid labor of women (primarily) in the area of providing social services. It is the work which, as many state, "would not otherwise get done." Essentially this type of volunteering is usually person or situation directed and does not focus on reforming the larger political or economic system. In real terms, it is doing work for no salary or no wages, alongside of people who are being paid, or instead of people who should be paid, by government.

Political or change-oriented volunteering however, focuses on changing the larger social, political or economic system. It is working for no salary or wages at tasks for which few (e.g. legislators) will be paid by government for performing in a democratic setting. It is also performing change-directed activities which lead to more direct participation in the decision-making process. Examples of this sort of volunteering would be working for organizations such as NOW, the NAACP, the Sierra Club, a political party, etc. Serving on appointive policy-making bodies and task forces of governments is another example of this.

Why has NOW taken a position against service-oriented volunteering? NOW believes:

- * That such volunteering is an extension of unpaid housework and of women's traditional roles in the home (such as helper, buffer and supporter) which have been extended to encompass the community.
- * That such volunteering reinforces a woman's low self-image by offering work which, because it is unpaid, confers little status.
- * That volunteerism has been society's solution for those, including but not limited to women, for which there is little real employment choice.

Essentially, however, NOW believes that service-oriented volunteerism is providing a hit-or-miss, band-aid, and patchwork approach to solving massive and severe social ills which are a reflection of a social and economic system in need of an overhaul. More than this, NOW believes that such volunteering actually prevents needed social changes from occurring because with service-oriented volunteering, political energy is being used and will increasingly be used, to meet society's administrative needs. Women (as well as some men) have been and are being used to perform tasks for which society would otherwise pay if the priorities of the country were more socially oriented. NOW believes that as long as people are encouraged to use their limited time and energies to provide direct social services to others that the chances of accomplishing the needed structural changes such as tax reform or diminishing military expenditures, are lessened.

The goals of the NOW Task Force on Volunteerism include examination of and education of the general public regarding: (1) Revenue sharing and volunteerism; (2) Office of Voluntary Action (OVA); (3) National Center for Voluntary Action (NCVA). NOW believes that where high priorities are given, the "work which would otherwise not get done" gets done! And it gets done by paid employees in a planned and coordinated manner. It is clear that neither revenue sharing nor volunteerism has been suggested in such high priority areas as the development of space technology or in the areas of the military or national defense. How much would have been accomplished in the field of space if the government had asked of its citizens that they volunteer their services, in their free time, and at no pay, to get a rocket to the moon. Are our social problems any less complex or important than a journey to the moon?

[For a contrasting view of the NOW position, see page 74]

ment. Even the best volunteers can fail to complete an unpleasant job, or decide not to work. "Volunteers make this little joke that drives me wild," says Ceci Sommers, director of special events and auction manager for station WQED in Pittsburgh. "Whenever you complain that something wasn't done properly, they say, 'Take it out of my salary.'"

Lack of payment corrodes the work relationship in both directions. It devalues even the most outstanding volunteer efforts, and it erodes the confidence and sense of responsibility of competent women. Moreover, when a volunteer job is

restructured into a paid position, the volunteer who held the job is usually replaced by an outside "professional" whose worth was established by her or his prior salary. Barbara Widdoes (who in 1960 planned and produced the first Three Rivers Festival, an outstanding annual exhibit of the work of Pittsburgh area artists) thought it natural for a man to be given her job when it was made a paying one the following year. It never occurred to her at the time that she should automatically qualify to fill it.

One woman whose volunteer position at a TV station is the envy of everyone and whose competence

has won the staff's respect says, "At first I was happy to get that kind of experience. I even felt I was using the organization. Now I feel the organization is using me." No matter how resentful they feel, however, women with good volunteer jobs seldom quit. For them the only alternative is the boredom of no job at all.

When volunteer work is highly institutionalized, competition for choice assignments can be ugly. Heads of committees, jealous of their jobs, refuse new volunteers even menial tasks. Women complain that, even if some organizations are easy to join, getting assignments is difficult. But despite the few opportunities for real accomplishment, if the volunteer society affords the only work opportunity the women know, squabbling and backbiting to get in sometimes become endemic. "Never join an elite organization cold," advises an expe-

rienced volunteer. "If you don't have a friend to protect and sponsor you, the women will make you completely miserable."

A few women do break out of the prestige circuit to obtain paying jobs or return to school. Ann Pride, a former volunteer planner of benefit galas who is now an editor at KNOW, did a little arithmetic before she left her group. Adding up all the out-of-pocket expenses she incurred during one year of volunteer work—mileage on her car, gasoline, baby-sitters, tickets for the annual benefit, new clothes—she multiplied the total by the number of women in the organization. The figure she came up with was larger than the amount of money the women raised, considerable though that was. "It would have been better for each of us to write a personal check to the charity instead of spending our money to raise other people's money," she says.

Most volunteers admit that fund-raising benefits use their time and talents inefficiently. "After all," one says, "who cares about cost-cutting or budget experts when labor is free?" Still, there is reluctance to dispense with fund-raising affairs. Many women are left with the question, "What would we do with ourselves?"

Eleanor M. has one answer. Now employed in a government job, she vows she would never return to volunteering. "It's not the money that counts," she says. "I've always had enough of that. It's that people treat you differently when you're paid. They listen to you and don't waste your time. For the first time in my life I feel adult, independent—like a full-fledged member of the human race."

Eugenie Bolger, a free-lance writer and publicist, has done public relations for nonprofit organizations.



IN DEFENSE OF UNPAID LABOR

BY ELLEN SULZBERGER STRAUS

The official position of the National Organization for Women (see page 73) remains unchanged since the wordy manifesto of 1971, which challenged the "beneficial effects of service volunteering not only for women but for society" and went on to attempt a distinction between change-oriented volunteer activities and volunteer activities

that serve to "maintain women's dependent and secondary status."

Congresswoman Bella Abzug (Dem.-N.Y.) recently "employed" volunteers to work in her district office to plan a community conference. Journalist Pat Joblin is charged with the task of finding volunteers to provide child-care services so that mothers may attend the meetings of the Manhattan Women's Political

Caucus. Volunteers undertake to do child care at conferences sponsored by the New York Radical Feminists. Educator Ann Welbourne supervises the most widely acclaimed Sex Information Service in the country with trained volunteers as counselors.

Who is to say which or our sisters is right or which is wrong?

Political action is often acceptable

to NOW leaders. But how—NOW—do you evaluate the relative virtues of one sister who volunteered to work for CREEP in the Nixon campaign organization as against another who worked at one-to-one draft counseling? Is working (unpaid) as a file clerk for NOW so clearly a higher calling than (volunteer) advising a young woman on her abortion problem? Such questions are for individuals—not organizations—to decide. NOW's desire to be the final judge of what a woman can or cannot do with her life, either during or after working hours, is understandable, but unacceptable.

The first step when you're lost is to rethink carefully where you've been; and where you want to go. Women everywhere, recognizing the monumental contribution that NOW has made on the national scene, can help in the rethinking process.

If NOW is saying that the consciousness of volunteers needs raising, that their status must be upgraded, that they should receive benefits such as day care, out-of-pocket expenses, insurance, inclusion in the Social Security system, and tax credits, that's a path we can travel together to "bring women into the mainstream of American society." If NOW is saying that women must first of all be economically independent, but also free to choose how they intend to contribute (or not) to society, then again we must join together.

If NOW can recognize that change seldom comes from inside the system and therefore that citizen participation on a broader scale is essential to our efforts to refind ourselves as a nation, let us all say Amen. For surely, we all wish to avoid the devastating spectacle of women, just as they achieve new status and power, turning and fighting with each other while ignoring outside goals. Consciousness-raising is crucial—but not at the cost of a lowered conscience.

In this postindustrial era, we are just beginning to grapple with new concepts of what constitutes work—and its interrelationship with ser-

(More on volunteers, page 87)

CALL TO ACTION:

the author's model for professionalism in volunteer work

Call for Action is a nationwide information, referral, and advocacy service. It is made up of volunteer professionals who attempt to match an individual who has a complaint with the individual or institution that can resolve it. The volunteer professionals use the individual complaints as a collective springboard to locate and attack major issues. These targets have turned out to be governmental, voluntary, and private sector institutions where paid employees by necessity have to "go along to get along" and who, therefore, are hardly in a position to take action against the system.

The task of promoting institutional change is aided considerably by the fact that Call for Action operates under the auspices of a local radio or TV station. This gives the volunteer professionals a commodity called "clout" and generates a responsiveness from agencies not offered the ordinary citizen.

"Our chairperson is so super she could run U.S. Steel." That evaluation from a Pittsburgh broadcaster might raise some eyebrows in the carpeted corporate boardrooms of the Steel City, but not if the directors who congregate in them were exposed to Call for Action leadership and volunteers." Thus wrote Edgar May, a Pulitzer prizewinning investigative journalist in a recent study of Call for Action for the Ford Foundation. He went on to say that "the only reservations might be that it's doubtful any Call for Action chairperson would want to run U.S. Steel."

The 2,000 volunteer professionals at Call for Action are mostly women; 82 percent have had paid jobs for five years or more, 11 percent have paying jobs now. At Call for Action they are hired and

fired, trained and supervised, promoted and given job references when they choose to move to another profession. Their relationship with the broadcaster is spelled out in a written agreement clearly specifying the rights and responsibilities of both parties. It is this written agreement or contract and the seriousness with which it is taken that has served as the major underpinning for Call for Action success. When, as has happened in six different cities, either the broadcaster or the volunteers failed to live up to the agreement, the Call for Action contract was withdrawn and the operation closed down.

The move from volunteer to paid professional is not a leap, but a relatively easy side step. Thirty-seven women, young and old, who had never held paid jobs previously, were trained at Call for Action and presently work full time in the job market, five of them with salaries in excess of \$20,000.

Forty-five major U.S. cities have already felt the impact of Call for Action. As this new nationwide effort enters its seventh year, the thousands of Call for Action volunteer professionals who have provided a voice for the voiceless feel certain that they are well on their way to establishing the nation's first sociological early warning system. Because the information is supplied directly by individual complaints, Call for Action can locate *specific* problems ahead of an institution designed to look for problem areas. Besides, how many institutions are designed to *look for* problems?

The Call for Action mechanism not only detects new crises in our society before they explode, but in cooperation with broadcasters is developing enough power to insist on the change and reform that are so desperately needed. —E.S.S.

VOLUNTEERISM
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 75

vice and leisure. With shorter work-weeks, voluntary participation, by female and male, young and old, is becoming the norm—not the exception. But NOW continues “challenging women’s traditional role as unpaid community servants.”

A funny thing happened to NOW on its way to the high purpose of consciousness-raising. Following generations of men who have lost themselves in the desert of the work ethic, NOW comes to the rescue of society—and winds up worshipping the same almighty dollar. It is sad to see women embrace with such relish one of the arid fea-

tures of the U.S. lifestyle: the identification of money as the *ultimate* status symbol, the amount of a paycheck as the *only* human measure of value. At the same time that many Americans are questioning their

CHANGE
SELDOM COMES
FROM INSIDE
THE SYSTEM

“mind-sets,” desperately seeking for valid human motivations other than greed, the NOW position implies that the base of human dignity is monetary.

It is indeed essential that women become economically independent. But if we limit our sights to that goal alone, if we make economic independence our sole objective, when and if we do achieve it, the cost of that journey will be psychic bankruptcy.

Ellen Sulzberger Straus arrived at her present volunteer position as chairperson of Call for Action by way of paid jobs as civil servant, foreign correspondent, political campaign director, editor, and columnist. Her other current volunteer activity is auxiliary policewoman. (She and her husband, Peter, president of WMCA radio, are assigned to New York’s Central Park.)



THE BIG GIVEAWAY
WHAT VOLUNTEER WORK IS WORTH
BY MARGARET A. SANBORN AND CAROLINE BIRD

American women give away nearly \$14.2 billion worth of work every year to worthy causes (in addition to the more than \$499 billion worth of free labor they do for their families annually). By 1980, women’s volunteer work may be worth more than \$18 billion.

Despite occasional surveys and some theorizing, no one really knows precisely how many volunteer workers there actually are, and what percentage of them are women. “It’s just an incredible guess to make,” says one official of the National Center for Voluntary Action (NCVA), a federal agency that serves as a facilitator for volunteer programs. “And then to break it

down into sex—very, very hard.”

One source of documentation is a 1965 survey done by the Office of Manpower Research of the Department of Labor that found that of the approximately 36.6 million volunteers (excluding political, religious, and fraternal organizations) in the United States at that time, 60 percent, or 22 million, were women. Current estimates of the size of the volunteer force place the total number at at least 43 million; if past trends hold true, at the very least the women volunteers are nearly 26 million strong.

If each of these 26 million women contributes only five hours of her time each week to the various causes (a conservative figure), these wom-

en rack up an impressive total of nearly 7 billion hours of work annually. At the current federal minimum wage of \$2.10 an hour—and since women are generally valued at no more than minimum wage anyway, we may as well use this figure—their donated time is worth nearly \$14.2 billion annually.

In a 1969 Gallup poll, 69 million Americans of both sexes stated their willingness to donate their services to remedy problems in their own communities. The Department of Labor puts the total estimated economic value of these 69 million volunteers at as much as \$30 billion annually by 1980. If three out of every five future volunteers are women, there will be by that time

41 million women voluntarily contributing more than \$18 billion worth of work to help provide services which would not otherwise be available.

Other estimates say that there are already more women volunteers than the government surveys would suggest. A 1971 Russell Sage Foundation report, "Indicators of Trends in the Status of American Women," found that 52.7 million women were active participants in voluntary organizations. Of these women, nearly half were involved in religious-affiliated organizations. Another 316,200 were working in social service organizations; 632,400 in public affairs; and 2,793,100 in nonprofessional social welfare capacities.

Whatever the precise number of volunteers, women form the majority, having had, traditionally, more free time, or, rather, time unfilled by work with a dollar sign attached. Women are also thought to have the emotional equipment necessary to render charitable work more palatable to the recipient. But former NCVA President Douglas Kinsey, speaking to this point in late 1972, emphasized the need for more men in the volunteer forces, saying that compassion and free time are not solely the possessions of women. "People are needed in this service, so let's get men away from their TV sets and involved in their communities' problems."

Many of the tasks performed by volunteers are identical to positions found in the salaried work world, ranging from clerical work to fund-raising and technical work in public health programs. The 3,177 local chapters of the American National Red Cross counted 1,594,020 adult volunteers of both sexes in the year ending June 30, 1973. These workers determine organizational policies, and plan and carry out Red Cross programs. Many are skilled in their fields, conducting blood-donor programs and safety and health campaigns. They work in hospitals, clinics, and relief centers in disaster-stricken areas. In addition to the tremendous volume of work accomplished by this organi-

zation, our economy is spared the burden of \$1 billion that would otherwise have to be spent each year to buy these skilled services.

The utilization of volunteer labor not only saves money that would have gone toward salaries but in some cases actually cuts down on spending in other areas. In 1970, Women in Community Service, a federated group of women's church organizations, spent an average of \$44 on seminars and other training programs for each woman enrolled in the Job Corps, while the U.S. Employment Service spent \$101 in training each of its recruits less thoroughly.

According to the American Association of Blood Banks, volunteer blood donation saves us \$100 million a year in medical costs and reduces the incidence of hepatitis, which would cost more money to cure than it does to prevent. Only one blood donor in 10 is a woman, but women make up four-fifths of the people who recruit donors, who type, process, and match blood.

The woman who remains in her home, working neither for a salary nor as an outside volunteer, may also be thought of as a volunteer, whose economic value to society can be calculated. In 1973 a research team at the New York State College of Human Ecology at Cornell University computed the number of hours a woman spends working in her home and affixed a dollar value, based on what it would cost to hire someone else for the jobs. They found that a housewife could be earning as much as \$8,000 a year without leaving her home, if society found her work worth paying for.

Other estimates of the value of housework are even higher. Economists at the Chase Manhattan Bank in 1970 demonstrated that an American housewife works a 99.6-hour-a-week job, and if her job paid according to its labor market value, she would be worth \$13,391.56 a year, or \$257.53 weekly. (Since wages in the private sector had gone up roughly 33 percent by the end of 1974, the value of the work would now be \$342 a week.) For example, the original fictional sal-

ary includes 44.5 hours weekly as a nursemaid, at \$2 an hour; 17.5 hours as housekeeper at \$3.25 an hour; 13.1 hours as cook for \$3.25 an hour; and dishwasher at \$2 an hour for 6.2 hours weekly.

The more than 28 million women who remain in the home, according to the original estimate, work a total of at least 145 billion hours a year, at a monetary worth of \$375 billion, a figure that represented nearly one-third of the \$1.15 trillion gross national product for 1972. (Again, with inflation, the total monetary worth of this work would go up from \$375 billion to \$499 billion.) If, in addition, the women who work in the home were to receive Social Security old-age benefits upon reaching the retirement age of 65 (even though they never really retire), Social Security payments would rise by more than \$6 billion a year, computed on the basis of the \$8,000 salary suggested by the Cornell study group.

Rather than receiving any of this theoretical money, the volunteer worker in or out of the home is often out-of-pocket for expenses incurred in her volunteer career. This "cost of volunteering" is the factor that often prevents the middle- or low-income person from contributing time.

One of volunteerism's most vulnerable points has been, until recently, the lack of insurance coverage for the person engaged in volunteer activities. Unlike paid workers, who are covered by Workmen's Compensation, a volunteer injured on the job or sued in connection with her or his duties has been personally liable. In 1972, a non-profit organization, Volunteers Insurance Society, a pilot project of NCVA, provided volunteers with coverage for work accidents, personal liability, and auto damages incurred while using a car in the course of a work day. This insurance was available (at a cost of \$1.50 a year, paid by the agency) to any volunteer working through a formal agency or nonprofit tax-exempt organization. The policy provided \$2,500 accidental medical and death coverage for the volunteer, and \$1

million in liability protection should the volunteer be sued in connection with volunteer services. Although the project is no longer in effect, a comparable insurance plan is now being worked on by NCVA.

The Internal Revenue Service permits few income-tax deductions for the volunteer. Transportation from home to the place of service is acceptable, as are meals and lodging away from home while donating services to a qualified organization, or attending a religious convention as a representative of a church. Other deductible expenses include automobile costs, at a rate of 6 cents a mile, including parking fees and tolls. (The National Center for Voluntary Action hopes to have this raised to 10 cents a mile: the acceptable deduction for businesses.) The volunteer may also deduct the cost and upkeep of uniforms that have no general utility and that are required apparel for performing donated services. The IRS treats as income a *per diem* allowance by an organization for the travel expenses of its volunteers, if the allowance exceeds the actual expenses. If the expenses exceed the allowance, the excess may be deducted.

In a recent decision the IRS ruled that one woman can deduct from her income tax the baby-sitting expenses incurred while doing volunteer work. After waiting 10 months for a decision, Susan Meehan of Washington, D.C., received a personal ruling allowing the \$1.25 an hour she pays a baby-sitter as a legitimate deductible expense, provided that the work is for a tax-exempt charity. This decision, however, does not apply across the board. "The IRS has made it clear that it was, indeed, an individual ruling," says Eugene Goldman, Special Assistant for Legislative and Regulatory Affairs at NCVA. "It hasn't been repeated, and probably won't be."

Representative Edward I. Koch (D.-N.Y.) has had a bill in the last six sessions of Congress proposing a \$25 charity tax deduction for each pint of blood, up to five pints a year, given by a volunteer donor to a nonprofit blood collecting agency.

A VOLUNTEER INJURED ON THE JOB OR SUED IN CONNECTION WITH HER DUTIES HAS BEEN FOUND PERSONALLY LIABLE.

Under Sweden's blood program, which some regard as a model for the world, all blood is given by volunteers without compensation, but each donor receives 30 kronor (roughly \$6.90) for lost time and for bus fare to and from the blood bank.

While income tax deductions for hours of volunteer work are still not recognized, there are now three bills before the House Ways and Means Committee. The newest twist in counting volunteer hours against income taxes is the concept of the tax credit, which is thought by some to be more equitable because it is not based solely on income.

On the volunteer's tax form a deduction is subtracted from the income before the tax rate is computed. The tax credit, as proposed by Representative Stewart McKinney (R.-Conn.) in HR 13586, would be subtracted from the total amount of taxes due after all income, other deductions, and tax rate are computed. In order to qualify, the volunteer must perform services within certain specific fields: work for the physically handicapped and the mentally infirm, for an agency designated by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, or for a nonprofit, tax-exempt agency providing these same services. The volunteer would have to donate a minimum of 50 hours a year before tax credit could be granted. Above 50 hours, the number of hours worked is multiplied by the current minimum wage and that total is subtracted from payable taxes. Under this bill, the maximum tax credit would be \$750 a year for an

individual, and \$1,500 on a joint return.

As always, financial donations made to a recognized charity are automatically deductible, up to 50 percent of the contributor's adjusted gross income. Typically, women may do the actual work, but in a money-oriented society where men control the economy, earn the wages, and pay conscience money to charity—the men get the credit.

Margaret A. Sanborn, Class of '73, was the editor of the "Vassar Miscellany." Caroline Bird, author of "Everything a Woman Needs To Know To Get Paid What She's Worth" (Bantam), has a new book coming out in March—"The Case Against College" (David McKay)—for which Margaret Sanborn assisted her in research and interviews.

For further information on volunteerism . . .

- *Call for Action*, 888 Seventh Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019.
- *National Center for Voluntary Action*, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036—assistance and activities to support volunteerism; clearinghouse for national volunteer programs; publications; bimonthly newsletter.
- *National Organization for Women*, Public Information Office, 527 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022—details on NOW National Task Force on Volunteerism; workshops; speeches; research reports; news of legislation; conferences; monthly newsletter.