

is "natural," that God or Freud or biology decreed us to be second-class citizens. And we have gained majority support in popular-opinion polls; most people now support the idea of equality. That means we're ready for and just beginning to make institutional changes, including parental leave and child care—for women and men. We have the idea of equal pay but are pretty far from having it. We have majority support for the idea of equal parenthood but don't have equal parental leave; it's still women who take care of the kids more than men.

How will progress be affected by the current conservative climate?

Once you get majority support, two things happen: you are ready for institutional change, and you get a backlash because you are a majority challenge to the old order, which is what is happening.

Legalized abortion is more popular than Ronald Reagan is, was or has ever been; but in spite of that there is a newly alarmed and organized minority. There is concern on my part that some of our gains will be eroded. We have spent a great deal of our time during the Reagan administration battling just to save and hang onto the ground we already have, which is a waste of energy when we should be moving forward. But it's also the way change happens. If the women's movement has learned anything, we've learned this is a long-term process.

Recently you were a substitute host on the "Today" show. Will you be doing more work on television?

I plan to continue working for the "Today" show about once a month as a contributing correspondent. I'm also very excited about plans for "Ms. TV," a weekly

video version of the magazine, in which I will act as one of the hosts.

You have obviously become a kind of icon for the feminist movement in the United States, just as Marilyn was an icon for women in her time. How do you feel about your role as one of the most influential women's spokespersons?

I'm not saying there aren't moments of considerable fear and discomfort, but by and large it feels like an opportunity to report what women are doing and feeling. I can be a journalist in an unusual sense: most newspapers and TV shows can report on only a small proportion of what people are doing. It's my pleasure, as a journalist and feminist, to report on what very ordinary and very courageous women are doing and what solutions they're finding. Maybe if you report on a solution here, someone over there won't have to reinvent the wheel. I feel more like a bridge than an icon.



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