

HE SAYS: (Continued)

of military-style discipline. Privates in the Army don't debate orders with their commanding officer; they simply do what they're told, unless their opinion is sought. That's the way it should be with children—with the parents giving the orders. But wives and mothers have been espousing the cause of equal rights and equal voice for so long that it's beginning to rub off on the kids, too.

AMERICAN women have gained for themselves that greatest of all privileges—the right to second-guess. They use it tellingly.

For example, with family decisions which have to be made—whether to buy a new car, take a new job, move to a new town—these problems can and should be discussed thoroughly. But eventually it's the man who has to make the final decision.

Traditionally, the woman's role is "whatever you think is best, dear, but . . ." This leaves her a woman-sized escape hatch if things don't work out 100 percent. This is admittedly a good position to be in. It forces the husband to one of two tactics: either let the wife make the decisions (which few of them will actually do when forced to the wall), or do the best he knows how and ignore the second-guessing. Throughout all this, of course, he has to put up with television serials, movies, popular songs, and magazine articles which persist in portraying the husband-father as a sort of low-grade, bumbling moron being gently guided through his daily affairs by an all-knowing wife.

Then there's the inordinate concern shown the housewife over things that husbands take in stride every day. When Mom cooks a dinner—any old dinner—everyone says how good it is; but when was the last time you can remember a family telling a husband how well he earned his pay check last week? Yet we help dry the dishes for Mom, make the beds, and do the housework—so she'll have more time to campaign for equal rights.

Coming home from a recent business trip on a plane, my seatmate looked wistfully after the departing stewardess, who had just finished serving him his meal with a few deft female touches and soothing words.

"What a contrast," he sighed. "If only we could deal with all women like that. If only they'd be—women. I'll be home in a few hours, and my wife will have a dozen problems that have to be hashed over. She'll kiss me when I get in the car, if she happens to think of it, because that's the thing to do. Then she'll probably beef all the way home because she had to miss a meeting to pick me up at the airport. We're partners, by golly, and the partnership problems have to be discussed, whether I feel like it or not."

ONE of the greatest pieces of salesmanship that has ever been foisted on the public is the portrait of the timid, withdrawn, self-sacrificing American wife, plodding steadfastly about her \$35,000 home to keep it sparkling, working miracles with an inadequate income, raising the children singlehandedly, and always managing to look pert and cheerful when Dad gets home from work after a tough day of luncheon chitchat and coffee breaks. The gals have been reading this in the women's magazines and telling it to themselves for so long that they are actually beginning to believe it.

As a result, there is a growing tendency toward a non-personal relationship between husband and wife—a sort of owner-manager relationship, with the husband-owner dropping in occasionally to see how the wife-manager is handling things.

In a recent survey of 300 Chicago suburban housewives, more than half didn't once voluntarily mention their husbands during the whole interview, and 84 percent neglected to mention—without prompting—their own role of wife (although most talked at length about motherhood). Almost three-fourths of the women declared that providing a good income is the most important role of the husband; only a smattering mentioned fatherhood, and even fewer the role of husband.

This emphasizes the fact that most women are poor psychologists. They'd go a long way toward solving many of the problems they suffer with so vocally if they'd just put the lid on some of their self-sufficiency. I'm not advocating a return to the days of washtubs and wood-burning stoves. The girls' work is done for them today by electricity, and I say fine. I just wish they'd devote some of their extra time to activities other than complaining about their long-suffering lot.

They might even have a fling at just being a wife. It's an honorable occupation and proved quite satisfactory for a good many centuries, I've heard.



"He showered me with jewels. Seven, to be exact . . . all in this watch!"

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