

women's best interests to be in the forefront of the telecommuting revolution, feminists are forming alliances with those who oppose economic freedom in general, and home work in particular. Resolutions against computer home work have been passed at union conventions, with rhetorical threats of "electronic sweatshops." In at least one instance, local authorities have shut down a computer home worker because of alleged violation of a zoning law.

A 1943 Labor Department ruling bans all home work in seven industries. Only recently, Secretary of Labor Donovan attempted to rescind the most notorious restrictions forbidding workers to knit outerwear at home, but he faces court challenges from the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union.³ Thus, the most conspicuous proponents of comparable worth, unions and government, are fighting against the real civil rights issue of the 1980s: the right to work without rigid restrictions and meddlesome intrusions.

Not all women would wish to telecommute. But women benefit from having as many options as possible, including a division of labor in which a man is the chief breadwinner. They

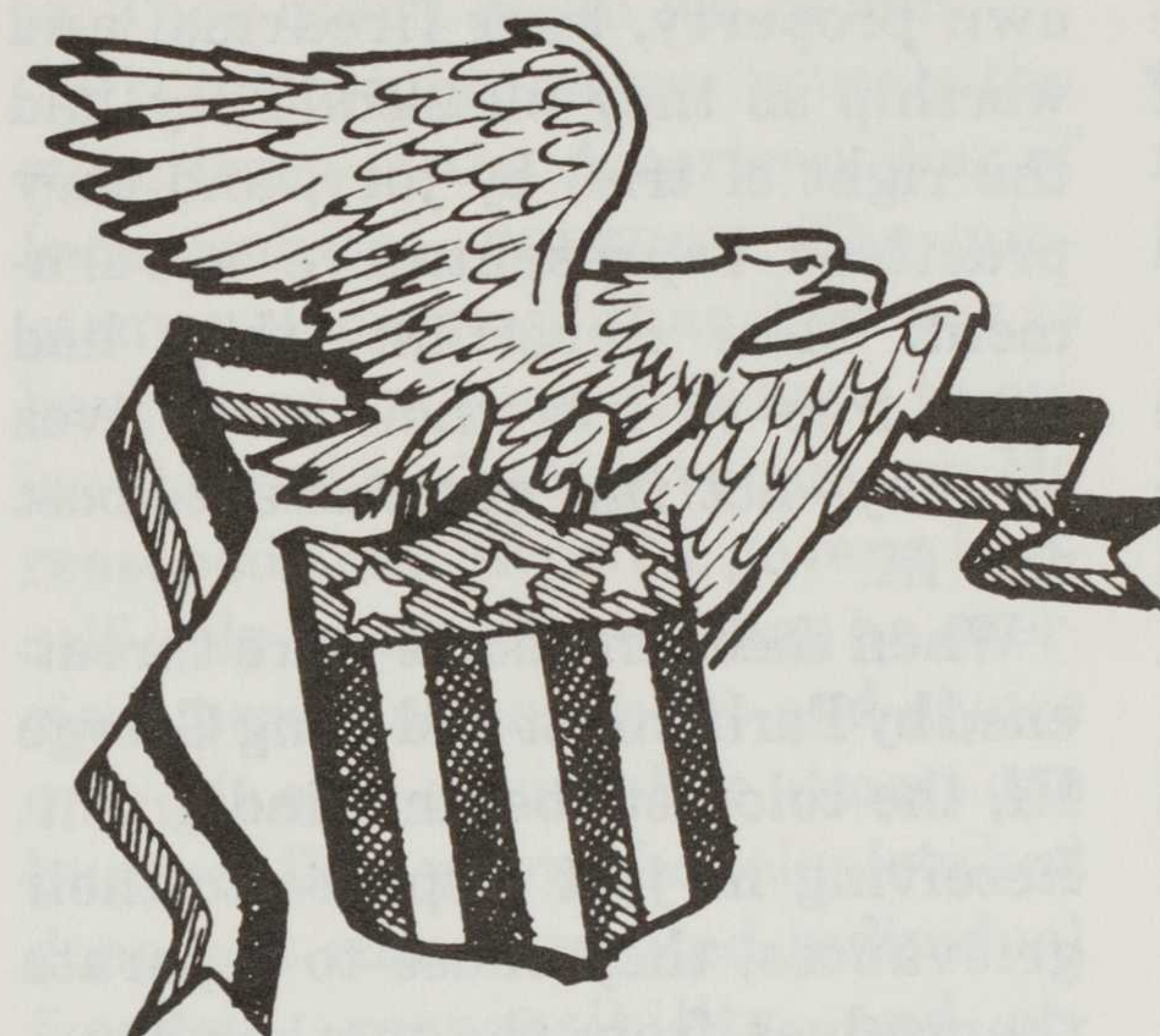
³David Rubins, "Telecommuting: Will the Plug Be Pulled?" *Reason*, October 1984, p. 25.

should encourage their daughters to learn their mathematics, since inadequate quantitative skills exclude women from a wide variety of occupations. They might advocate expansion of vocational education, in view of the glut of college graduates. They should favor policies that promote economic growth, which creates jobs. Above all, they should support a system that is open to the unforeseen opportunities resulting from innovation and technological advance, which has already relieved them of much of their great-grandmothers' drudgery. In short, women belong in the front lines of the battle to preserve economic liberty.

George Bernard Shaw, Fabian socialist, after rejecting comparable worth, eventually concluded that everyone should be paid exactly the same amount. He recognized only one difficulty: what about the poor bloke who just wasn't worth what society was obligated to pay him? Shaw suggested that we simply execute such a fellow, in a kindly manner of course.

Comparable worth advocates don't propose to execute people, at least not yet. But for a small increase in the paychecks of some, the demise of the rule of law, the death of economic freedom, distorted growth, aborted potential, and stillborn opportunities are too high a price. ☪

Robert Bearce



The Spirit of Freedom

ON July 3, 1776, the events of the previous day were fresh on John Adams' mind when he wrote to his wife Abigail: "The second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epocha in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forevermore."

John Adams was enthusiastic about the historic action taken by the Continental Congress on July 2.

A resolution favoring independence from Great Britain had been carried by the affirmative vote of twelve Colonies. Not until the 4th of July, though, was the actual Declaration of Independence formally adopted. Although Adams missed foretelling the exact day of future celebrations, he accurately described the manner in which America's Independence Day would be remembered by later generations.

Each Fourth of July, Americans commemorate the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. "Old Glory" comes out of the closet and appears on front porches across the nation. Bands play "The Stars and Stripes Forever." Thoughtful citizens give thanks for the blessings of liberty.

Such patriotic enthusiasm appears as a yearly ritual across the United

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