
Betty Friedan’s 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*, from which this excerpt is taken, changed the lives of many American women by bringing their restlessness and unhappiness to public attention. It is widely seen as one of the major contributors to the development of second wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s.

The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night—she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question—“Is this all?”

For over fifteen years there was no word of this yearning in the millions of words written about women, for women, in all the columns, books and articles by experts telling women their role was to seek fulfillment as wives and mothers. Over and over women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity. Experts told them how to catch a man and keep him, how to breastfeed children and handle their toilet training, how to cope with sibling rivalry and adolescent rebellion; how to buy a dishwasher, bake bread, cook gourmet snails, and build a swimming pool with their own hands; how to dress, look, and act more feminine and make marriage more exciting; how to keep their husbands from dying young and their sons from growing into delinquents. They were taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents. They learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights—the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for. …

By the end of the 1950s, the average marriage age of women in America dropped to 20, and was still dropping, into the teens. Fourteen million girls were engaged by 17. The proportion of women attending college in comparison with men dropped from 47 percent in 1920 to 35 percent in 1958. A century earlier, women had fought for higher education; now girls went to college to get a husband. By the mid-fifties, 60 percent dropped out of college to marry, or because they were afraid too much education would be a marriage bar. Colleges built dormitories for “married students,” but the students were almost always the husbands.

Then American girls began getting married in high school. And the women’s magazines, deplored the unhappy statistics about these young marriages, urged that courses on marriage, and marriage counselors, be installed in the high schools. Girls started going steady at twelve and thirteen, in junior high. … By the end of the fifties, the United States birthrate was overtaking India’s. …

The suburban housewife—she was the dream image of the young American women and the envy, it was said, of women all over the world. The American housewife—freed by science and labor-saving appliances from the drudgery, the dangers of childbirth and the illnesses of her grandmother. She was healthy, beautiful, educated, concerned only about her husband, her children, her home. She had found true feminine fulfillment. As a housewife and mother, she was respected as a full and equal partner to man in his world. She was free to choose automobiles, clothes, appliances, supermarkets; she had everything that women ever dreamed of.

In the fifteen years after World War II, this mystique of feminine fulfillment became the cherished and self-perpetuating core of contemporary American culture. … For over fifteen years, the words written for women, and the words women used when they talked to each other, while their husbands sat on the other side of the room and talked shop or politics or septic tanks, were about problems with their children, or how to keep their husbands happy, or improve their children’s school, or cook chicken or make slipcovers. Nobody argued whether women were inferior or superior to men; they were simply different. Words like “emancipation” and “career” sounded strange and embarrassing; no one had used them for years. …

If a woman had a problem in the 1950s and 1960s, she knew that something must be wrong with her marriage, or with herself. Other
women were satisfied with their lives, she thought. What kind of a woman was she if she did not feel this mysterious fulfillment waxing the kitchen floor? She was so ashamed to admit her dissatisfaction that she never knew how many other women shared it. If she tried to tell her husband, he didn’t understand what she was talking about. She did not really understand it herself.

For years women in America found it harder to talk about the problem than about sex. Even the psychoanalysts had no name for it. When a woman went to a psychiatrist for help, as many women did, she would say, “I’m so ashamed,” or “I must be hopelessly neurotic.” “I don’t know what’s wrong with women today,” a suburban psychiatrist said uneasily. “I only know something is wrong because most of my patients happen to be women. And their problem isn’t sexual.” Most women with this problem did not go to see a psychoanalyst, however. “There’s nothing wrong really,” they kept telling themselves, “There isn’t any problem.”

But on an April morning in 1959, I heard a mother of four, having coffee with four other mothers … say in a tone of quiet desperation, “the problem.” And the others knew, without words, that she was not talking about a problem with her husband, or her children, or her home. Suddenly they realized they all shared the same problem, the problem that has no name. They began, hesitantly, to talk about it. Later, after they had picked up their children at nursery school and taken them home to nap, two of the women cried, in sheer relief, just to know they were not alone. …

Just what was this problem that has no name? What were the words women used when they tried to express it? Sometimes a woman would say “I feel empty somehow . . . incomplete.” Or she would say, “I feel as if I don’t exist.” Sometimes she blotted out the feeling with a tranquilizer. Sometimes she thought the problem was with her husband or her children, or that what she really needed was to redecorate her house, or move to a better neighborhood, or have an affair, or another baby. Sometimes, she went to a doctor with symptoms she could hardly describe: “A tired feeling. . . I get so angry with the children it scares me. . . I feel like crying without any reason.” A Cleveland doctor called it “the housewife’s syndrome.” …

It is easy to see the concrete details that trap the suburban housewife, the continual demands on her time. But the chains that bind her in her trap are chains in her own mind and spirit. They are chains made up of mistaken ideas and misinterpreted facts, of incomplete truths and unreal choices. They are not easily seen and not easily shaken off.

How can any woman see the whole truth within the bounds of her own life? How can she believe that voice inside herself, when it denies the conventional, accepted truths by which she has been living? And yet the women I have talked to, who are finally listening to that inner voice, seem in some incredible way to be groping through to a truth that has defied the experts. …

I began to see in a strange new light the American return to early marriage and the large families that are causing the population explosion; the recent movement to natural childbirth and breastfeeding; suburban conformity, and the new neuroses, character pathologies and sexual problems being reported by the doctors. I began to see new dimensions to old problems that have long been taken for granted among women: menstrual difficulties, sexual frigidity, promiscuity, pregnancy fears, childbirth depression, the high incidence of emotional breakdown and suicide among women in their twenties and thirties, the menopause crises, the so-called passivity and immaturity of American men, the discrepancy between women’s tested intellectual abilities in childhood and their adult achievement, the changing incidence of adult sexual orgasm in American women, and persistent problems in psychotherapy and in women’s education.

If I am right, the problem that has no name stirring in the minds of so many American women today is not a matter of loss of femininity or too much education, or the demands of domesticity. It is far more important than anyone recognizes. It is the key to these other new and old problems which have been torturing women and their husbands and children, and puzzling their doctors and educators for years. It may well be the key to our future as a nation and a culture. We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: “I want something more than my husband and my children and my home.”

Gloria Steinem became a spokeswoman for American feminism, especially younger feminists, in the late 1960s and 1970s. This article in *New York* magazine connected “Women’s Liberation” to Black Power and to the experiences of young women in “the Movement” (a blanket term for the New Left, counterculture, anti-war, and civil rights movements) in general.

Once upon a time—say, ten or even five years ago—a Liberated Woman was somebody who had sex before marriage and a job afterward. Once upon the same time, a Liberated Zone was any foreign place lucky enough to have an American army in it. Both ideas seem antiquated now, and for pretty much the same reason: Liberation isn’t exposure to the American values of Mom-and-apple-pie anymore (not even if Mom is allowed to work in an office and vote once in a while); it’s the escape from them. …

What do women want? [The Women’s Liberation Movement] is in no way connected to the Bloomingdale-centered, ask-not-what-I-can-do-for-myself-ask-what-my-husband-can-do-for-me ladies of Manhattan, who are said by sociologists to be “liberated.” Nor do the house-bound matriarchs of Queens and the Bronx get much satisfaction out of reading about feminist escapades. On the contrary, the whole thing alienates them by being a) radical and b) young.

The women behind it, and influenced by it, usually turn out to be white, serious, well-educated girls; the same sort who have labored hard in what is loosely known as the Movement, from the Southern sit-ins of nine years ago to the current attacks on the military-industrial-educational complex. They have been jailed, beaten and maced side-by-side with their social-activist male counterparts. (It’s wonderful to see how quickly police from Selma to Chicago get over a reluctance to hit women.) They have marched on Senate committees, Pentagon hawks, their own college presidents and the Chase Manhattan Bank. But once back in the bosom of SDS, they found themselves typing and making coffee. “When it comes to decision-making or being taken seriously in meetings,” said one revolutionary theorist from Berkeley, “we might as well join the Young Republicans.”

Such grumbling noises were being made aloud at Movement meetings as early as five years ago. But women were ridiculed or argued down by men (as well as some “Uncle Tom” women). Eventually, they were assured, “the woman question” would come up on the list of radical priorities—as decided on by radical men. Meanwhile, more backstage work, more mimeographing, more secondary-role playing around the revolutionary cells and apartment-communes. …

Finally, women began to “rap” (talk, analyze, in radical-ese) about their essential second-classness, forming women’s caucuses inside the Movement in much the same way Black Power groups had done. And once together they made a lot of discoveries: that they shared more problems with women of different classes, for instance, than they did with men of their own; that they liked and respected each other, … and that, as black militants kept explaining to white liberals, “You don’t get radicalized fighting other people’s battles.”

At the SDS Convention in 1967, women were still saying such integrationist things as, “the struggle for the liberation of women must be part of the larger fight for freedom.” Many Movement women still are. But members of groups like the Southern Student Organizing Committee and New York Radical Women … withdrew to start concentrating on their own problems. They couldn’t become black or risk jail by burning their draft cards, but they could change society from the bottom up by radicalizing (engaging with basic truth) the consciousness of women; by going into the streets on such women’s issues as abortion, free childcare centers, and a final break with the 19th-century definition of females as sex objects whose main function is to service men and their children.

All this happened not so much by organization as contagion. What has come to be known in the last two years or so as the Women’s Liberation Movement (WLM) is no more pin-downable than the Black Power Movement; maybe less so … WLM-minded groups are springing up on dozens of campuses where they add special student concerns to their activities: professors who assume
women aren’t “serious” about careers; advisers who pressure girls toward marriage or traditionally feminine jobs, and faculties or administrations where few or no women are honored in authority. ...

If all this sounds far-out, utopian, elitist, unnecessary or otherwise unlikely to be the next big thing in revolutions, consider two facts: 1) the WLM is growing so rapidly that even its most cheerful proselytizers are surprised, spreading not only along the infrastructure of the existing co-ed Movement, but into a political territory where anti-Vietnam petitions have rarely been seen; and 2) there are a couple of mass movements, from highly organized through just restless, that the WLM might merge with, becoming sort of a revolutionary vanguard.

The older, middle-class women come first, the ones who tried hard to play subordinate roles in the suburbs according to the post-war-baby-boom-women’s magazine idyll but found Something Missing. Betty Friedan, who explained their plight clearly and compassionately in The Feminine Mystique, named that Something: rewarding work. But when these women went out to find jobs, they found a lot of home-truths instead.

For instance, there is hardly a hierarchy in the country—business, union, government, educational, religious, whatever—that doesn’t discriminate against women above the secretarial level. Women with some college education earn less than men who get as far as the eighth grade. The median income of white women employed full time is less than that of white men and Negro men. The gap between women’s pay and men’s pay gets greater every year, even though the number of women in the labor force increases (they are now a third of all workers). ... The subtler, psychological punishments for stepping out of woman’s traditional “service” role are considerable. (Being called “unfeminine,” “a bad mother” or “a castrating woman,” to name a traditional few.) And, to top it all off, the problem of servants or child care often proves insurmountable after others are solved. ...

If the WLM can feel solidarity with the hated middle class, and vice versa, then an alliance with the second mass movement—poor women of all colors—should be no problem. They are already organized around welfare problems, free daycare centers, for mothers who must work, and food prices. For them, unequal pay, unequal training and sex discrimination for jobs (not to mention the woman-punishing rules of welfare) exact a daily price: Of all the families living below the poverty level, 40 per cent are headed by women.

A lot of middle-class and radical-intellectual women are already working with the poor on common problems, but viewing them as social. If the “consciousness-raising” programs of the WLM work, they’ll see them as rallying points for women qua women. And that might forge the final revolutionary link. Rumblings are already being heard inside the Democratic Party in New York. It’s the women who staff and win elections, and they may finally balk at working for only men—not very qualified men at that—in the mayoral primary.

There is plenty of opposition to this kind of thinking, from women as well as men. Having one’s traditional role questioned is not a very comfortable experience; perhaps especially for women, who have been able to remain children, and to benefit from work they did not and could not do. Marriage wouldn’t go straight down the drain, as traditionalists keep predicting. Women’s liberation might just hurry up some sort of companionate marriage that seems to be developing anyway.

But there is bound to be a time of, as social anthropologist Lionel Tiger puts it, “increased personal acrimony,” even if the revolution fails and women go right back to darning socks. (Masculinity doesn’t depend on the subservience of others, but it will take us a while to find that out.) It might be helpful to men—and good for women’s liberation—if they just keep repeating key phrases like, “No more guilt, No more alimony, Fewer boring women, Fewer bitchy women, No more tyrants with all human ambition confined to the home, No more ‘Jewish mothers’ transferring ambition to children, No more women trying to be masculine because it’s a Man’s World . . .” (and maybe one more round of “No more alimony”) until the acrimony has stopped.

Because the idea is, in the long run, that women’s liberation will be men’s liberation, too.
Conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly rose to prominence as an anti-feminist speaker and organizer. She led the successful movement to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment, which would have outlawed discrimination on the basis of sex.

Phyllis Schlafly Proclaims the Power of the Positive Woman, 1977

The first requirement for the acquisition of power by the Positive Woman is to understand the differences between men and women. Your outlook on life, your faith, your behavior, your potential for fulfillment, all are determined by the parameters of your original premise. The Positive Woman starts with the assumption that the world is her oyster. She rejoices in the creative capability within her body and the power potential of her mind and spirit. She understands that men and women are different, and that those very differences provide the key to her success as a person and fulfillment as a woman.

The women's liberationist, on the other hand, is imprisoned by her own negative view of herself and of her place in the world around her. This view of women was most succinctly expressed in an advertisement designed by the principal woman's liberationist organization, the National Organization for Women (NOW), and run in many magazines and newspapers and as spot announcements on many television stations. The advertisement showed a darling curlyheaded girl with the caption: "This healthy, normal baby has a handicap. She was born female."

This is the self-articulated dog-in-the-manger, chip-on-the-shoulder, fundamental dogma of the women's liberation movement. Someone—it is not clear who, perhaps God, perhaps the "Establishment," perhaps a conspiracy of male chauvinist pigs—dealt women a full blow by making them female. It becomes necessary, therefore, for women to agitate and demonstrate and hurl demands on society in order to wrest from an oppressive male-dominated social structure the status that has been wrongfully denied to women through the centuries.

By its very nature, therefore, the women's liberation movement precipitates a series of conflict situations—in the legislatures, in the courts, in the schools, in industry—with man targeted as the enemy. Confrontation replaces cooperation as the watchword of all relationships. Women and men become adversaries instead of partners.

The second dogma of the women's liberationists is that, of all the injustices perpetrated upon women through the centuries, the most oppressive is the cruel fact that women have babies and men do not. Within the confines of the women's liberationist ideology, therefore, the abolition of this overriding inequality of women becomes the primary goal. This goal must be achieved at any and all costs—to the woman herself, to the baby, to the family, and to society. Women must be made equal to men in their ability not to become pregnant and not to be expected to care for babies they may bring into the world.

This is why women's liberationists are compulsively involved in the drive to make abortion and child-care centers for all women, regardless of religion or income, both socially acceptable and government-financed. Former Congresswoman Bella Abzug has defined the goal: "to enforce the constitutional right of females to terminate pregnancies that they do not wish to continue."

If man is targeted as the enemy, and the ultimate goal of women's liberation is independence from men and the avoidance of pregnancy and its consequences, then lesbianism is logically the highest form in the ritual of women's liberation. Many, such as Kate Millett, come to this conclusion, although many others do not.

The Positive Woman will never travel that dead-end road. It is self-evident to the Positive Woman that the female body with its baby-producing organs was not designed by a conspiracy of men but by the Divine Architect of the human race. Those who think it is unfair that women have babies, whereas men cannot, will have to take up their complaint with God because no other power is capable of changing that fundamental fact. On some college campuses, I have been assured that other methods of reproduction will be developed. But most of us must deal with the real world rather than with the imagination of dreamers.

The third basic dogma of the women's liberation movement is that there is no difference between male and female except the sex organs, and that all those physical, cognitive, and emotional differences you think are there, are merely the result of centuries of restraints imposed by a male-dominated society and sex-stereotyped schooling. The role imposed on women is, by definition, inferior, according to the women's liberationists.

The Positive Woman knows that, while there are some physical competitions in which women are better (and can command more money) than men, including those that put a premium on grace and beauty, such as figure skating, the superior physical strength of males over females in competitions of strength, speed, and short-term endurance is beyond rational dispute. . . .

The new generation can brag all it wants about the new liberation of the new morality, but it is still the woman who is hurt the most. The new morality isn't just a "fad"—it is a cheat and a thief. It robs the woman of her virtue, her youth, her beauty, and her love—for nothing, just nothing. It has produced a generation of young women searching for their identity, bored with sexual freedom, and despondent from the loneliness of living a life without commitment. They have abandoned the old commandments, but they can't find any new rules that work . . .

The differences between men and women are also emotional and psychological. Without woman's innate maternal instinct, the human race would have died out centuries ago. There is nothing so helpless in all earthly life as the newborn infant. It will die within hours if not cared for. Even in the most primitive, uneducated societies, women have always cared for their newborn babies. They didn't need any schooling to teach them how. They didn't need any welfare workers to tell them it is their social obligation. Even in societies to whom such concepts as "ought," "social responsibility," and "compassion for the helpless" were unknown, mothers cared for their new babies.

Why? Because caring for a baby serves the natural maternal need of a woman. Although not nearly so total as the baby's need, the woman's need is nonetheless real.

The overarching psychological need of a woman is to love something alive. A baby fulfills this need in the lives of most women. If a baby is not available to fill that need, women search for a baby-substitute. This is the reason why women have traditionally gone into teaching and nursing careers. They are doing what comes naturally to the female psyche. The schoolchild or the patient of any age provides an outlet for a woman to express her natural maternal need.

Finally, women are different from men in dealing with the fundamentals of life itself. Men are philosophers, women are practical, and 'twas ever thus. Men may philosophize about how life began and where we are heading; women are concerned about feeding the kids today. No woman would ever, as Karl Marx did, spend years reading political philosophy in the British Museum while her child starved to death. Women don't take naturally to a search for the intangible and the abstract. The Positive Woman knows who she is and where she is going, and she will reach her goal because the longest journey starts with a very practical first step.
that white southerners had established after desegregation. Church militants forced a reversal and then girded for battle.

In 1979 Paul Weyrich, Richard Viguerie, and others met with Jerry Falwell, a minister of a large Southern Baptist church in Virginia who had his own television program, about building a "moral majority" that would unite Protestants and Catholics against "secular humanists" by stressing their common "family values" and opposition to abortion, gays, and feminism. Within a year the Moral Majority (an echo of Nixon's "silent majority") claimed 400,000 members. Falwell was briefly the most influential preacher in the country, eagerly dispensing his version of Republican gospel: low taxes, military strength, anticomunism—and family values.

Weyrich, a Wisconsin Catholic, former Republican senatorial aide, and founder of the Heritage Foundation, was the main architect of the Moral Majority. Weyrich saw the Moral Majority as an agent in a "culture war" of Christians against abortionists and other liberals that, like the law and order, progun, and antiwelfare movements, could enhance the Republican party's appeal among ordinary voters, especially in the South and Midwest.

The family will be to the decade of the 1980s what environmentalism and consumerism have been to the 1970s and what the Vietnam war was to the 1960s.

It is possible that the enemies of the family and society may at last have set up a situation where the majority in this nation who still subscribe to moral principles and traditional values can unite into a cohesive political movement to change the direction of the country.

There was, in fact, a moral majority of sorts who were in power in this country for many years, into the early part of this century. But the Scopes trial and the revolt against Prohibition swept these fundamentalists, if you will, out of power, and they have been on the defensive ever since, until recent times.

Television and the new breed of religious leader, exemplified by the Rev. Jerry Falwell and by Pat Robertson of the 700 Club, have given life and effectiveness to the Word of God as articulated by these men, who are not ashamed to pronounce that the Bible is the unerring truth. Unlike many of their predecessors, these "electronic preachers" understand the linkage between the religious and moral issues and the politics of our time.
Meanwhile, the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church has produced a whole new dimension which its modernist advocates did not intend. The liberal Catholic promoters of the excesses of Vatican II had a vision of a one-world Church, void of doctrine and beliefs, united at last with the "near beer" versions of mainline Protestantism. It is true, of course, that since Vatican II the social gospel advocates in the Catholic and Protestant churches have been working ever more closely together. But the "ecumaniacs" had not counted on a reverse coalition. Now, however, the true-believing Gospel-oriented Catholics, having been told by the hierarchy that they should seek accommodation with their Protestant brethren, have taken to working with fundamentalist/evangelical Protestants in, for example, the right-to-life movement rather than with liberal Protestants in boycotting grapes with Cesar Chavez.

The alliance has produced great results. The media often portray the right-to-life movement as a tool of the Catholic bishops. Movement insiders know it is a truly grassroots effort and that if anything the Catholic bishops have hindered its success. Any typical right-to-life gathering these days is a microcosm of the moral majority, with urban ethnic Catholics, Gospel-believing Protestants, Mormons and Orthodox Jews working together.

The upshot of this new alliance is that hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of lives have been saved because of the visibility of the issue. We never hear about these lives. They don't make the statistical counts. These are the babies born of the mothers who have heard the message that abortion is murder.

Because of the strong political reaction against abortion, the necrophiliac agenda for euthanasia, limiting the number of children a family may have (population control) and other overt antifamily schemes has been slowed down considerably.

And the movement has given teenagers of this generation a cause, something more important than themselves, for which to work. In this "era of the self," no other political movement has managed to accomplish anything like it.

What the right-to-life movement has managed to put together on the abortion issue is only a sample of what is to come when the full range of family and educational issues becomes the focus of debate in the 1980s.

The homosexual rights advocates, genetic engineers and militant secular humanists who insist on their religion in the schools had better understand what is happening.

The threat to the family has caused leaders of various denominations to put aside their sectarian differences and, for the first time in decades, agree on basic principles worth fighting for. This is no false unity based on papering over doctrinal differences. The various leaders of the individual communities have given up none of their beliefs in order to cooperate. Rather, the pro-family movement is a recognition that the moral majority must be put together as a coalition—because our very right to worship as we choose, to bring up our families in some kind of moral order, to educate our children free from the interference of the state, to follow the commands of Holy Scripture and the Church are at stake. These leaders have concluded it is better to argue about denominational differences at another time. Right now, it is the agenda of those opposed to the Scriptures and the Church which has bought us together....

The alliance of which Falwell spoke has great potential and political implications. Clear-cut moral choices can be offered the American voter for the first time in decades. The alliance on family issues is bound to begin to look at the morality of other issues such as SALT and the unjust power that has been legislated for union bosses.

What is more, all of this occurs at a time when the political parties have declined to the point where, in certain parts of the country, they are no longer taken seriously.

It is a coalition which can work. It can be the basis for a Christian democratic movement rooted in the authentic Gospel, not the social gospel.

Each part of the coalition brings something useful. The fundamentalist/evangelical Protestants bring a knowledge of and devotion to the Bible which no politician can shake. In addition, they have mastered the use of television and radio for their efforts, and this will make communications easier. The Catholics and Eastern Orthodox bring philosophical underpinnings which can help make the coalition imperious to attack, so that this alliance will not be swept away as happened earlier in this century. The Catholics also bring with them their rich cultural traditions from places like Ireland and Italy which can serve well during these times of attack on the family. The Mormons bring a superb knowledge of organization and outreach, and the Orthodox Jews bring not only family tradition but the ability to be productively aggressive.
Ronald Reagan, 1st Inaugural Address, 1981

Reagan’s first inaugural contained the famous dictum: “government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem.” Antitax activist Grover Norquist voiced his hostility to government more bluntly: “I don’t want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub.”

These United States are confronted with an economic affliction of great proportions. We suffer from the longest and one of the worst sustained inflations in our national history. It distorts our economic decisions, penalizes thrift, and crushes the struggling young and the fixed-income elderly alike. It threatens to shatter the lives of millions of our people. Idle industries have cast workers into unemployment, causing human misery and personal indignity. Those who do work are denied a fair return for their labor by a tax system which penalizes successful achievement and keeps us from maintaining full productivity.

But great as our tax burden is, it has not kept pace with public spending. For decades, we have piled deficit upon deficit, mortgaging our future and our children’s future for the temporary convenience of the present. To continue this long trend is to guarantee tremendous social, cultural, political, and economic upheavals.

You and I, as individuals, can, by borrowing, live beyond our means, but for only a limited period of time. Why, then, should we think that collectively, as a nation, we are not bound by that same limitation? We must act today in order to preserve tomorrow. And let there be no misunderstanding—we are going to begin to act, beginning today.

The economic ills we suffer have come upon us over several decades. They will not go away in days, weeks, or months, but they will go away. They will go away because we, as Americans, have the capacity now, as we have had in the past, to do whatever needs to be done to preserve this last and greatest bastion of freedom.

In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem. Government is the problem. From time to time, we have been tempted to believe that society has become too complex to be managed by self-rule, that government by an elite group is superior to government for, by, and of the people. But if no one among us is capable of governing himself, then who among us has the capacity to govern someone else? ...

It is time to check and reverse the growth of government which shows signs of having grown beyond the consent of the governed. It is my intention to curb the size and influence of the federal establishment and to demand recognition of the distinction between the powers granted to the Federal Government and those reserved to the states or to the people. All of us need to be reminded that the Federal Government did not create the states; the states created the Federal Government.

Now, so there will be no misunderstanding, it is not my intention to do away with government. It is, rather, to make it work—work with us, not over us; to stand by our side, not ride on our back. Government can and must provide opportunity, not smother it; foster productivity, not stifle it. ...

In the days ahead I will propose removing the roadblocks that have slowed our economy and reduced productivity. Steps will be taken aimed at restoring the balance between the various levels of government. Progress may be slow—measured in inches and feet, not miles—but we will progress. Is it time to reawaken this industrial giant, to get government back within its means, and to lighten our punitive tax burden. And these will be our first priorities, and on these principles, there will be no compromise.