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## Crystal eastman - now we can begin

Eastman delivered the Now We Can Begin speech after ratifying the 19th Amendment, outlining much more needs to be done to achieve gender equality. It was published in The Liberator in December 1920. Most women will agree that August 23, the day when the Tennessee legislature finally passed the federal election amendment, is a day to begin with, not a day to end. Men may say, Thank God, this woman's eternal struggle is over! But women, if I know them, say, Now we can finally get started. Fighting for the right to vote, most women sought to be either non-committal or fully respected on any other subject. Now they can tell you what they are really after; and what they are after, together with the rest of the struggling world, is freedom. Freedom is a big word. Many feminists are socialists, many communists, and not a few of them are active leaders of these movements. But a true feminist, no matter how far to the left can be in the revolutionary movement, sees the struggle of women as distinct in their subjects and different in their methods from the struggle of workers for industrial freedom. She knows, of course, that the vast majority of women as well as men are without property, and are necessarily bread and butter slaves within a system of society that allows very sources of life to be privately owned by a few, and she counts as a loyal soldier in a working-class army who marches to overthrow this system. But as a feminist, she also knows that all of a woman's slavery is not summed up in the system of profits, nor her total emancipation ensured by the fall of capitalism. Women's freedom, in a feminist sense, can be fought for, and it is conceivable that before opening the gates to industrial democracy. On the other hand, women's freedom, in a feminist sense, is not an integral part of the communist ideal. All feminists know a revolutionary leader who doesn't see the women's movement. What's going on with women? My wife is fine, she says. And his wife, he usually states, is raising his children in a Bronx apartment or gloomy suburb, to which he returns from time to time to eat and sleep when all possible emotions and stimuli have been cut out of the fight. If we had ended communism tomorrow, this man's attitude towards his wife would not have changed. A proletarian dictatorship can, but cannot, free women. We must now start enlightening future dictators. So what is the issue with women? What is the problem of women's freedom? It seems to me that this is: how to organize the world so that women can be human beings, with the chance to enjoy infinitely diverse gifts in infinitely different ways, rather than being destined by chance for their gender to one field of activity - homework and raising children. And secondly, if and when they choose and raising children, children, to regard this profession by the world as a work that requires a certain economic reward and not just entitles the performer to depend on a person. This is not all feminism, of course, but enough is enough to begin with. Oh, do not start with economics, often protest my friends, woman does not live only bread. What he needs first and foremost is a free soul. And I can agree that women will never be great until they have achieved some emotional freedom, strong healthy selfishness and certain non-personal sources of joy - that in this inner sense we cannot free a woman by changing her economic status. However, we can create conditions of external freedom in which the soul of a free woman can be born and grow. It is these external conditions with which the organised feminist movement must be involved. Freedom of choice in the profession and individual economic independence of women: How are we to approach this next feminist goal? Firstly, breaking down all other barriers, real and legal, which make it difficult for women to enter or succeed in different professions, enter and start a business, study professions and practice, join trade unions. The main of these remaining barriers is wage inequality. Here the earth is already broken. This is the easiest part of our program. Secondly, we need to introduce a revolution in early childhood training and education for both boys and girls. It must be feminine as well as masculine, to earn a living, to stand on its own feet. And it must be masculine, as well as feminine, to know how to cook and sew and clean and take care of yourself in ordinary life. Needless to say, the second part of this revolution will be more passionately resisted than the first. Men will not give up the privilege of helplessness without a fight. The average person has a carefully nurtured ignorance about home affairs - from what to do with crumbs to a grocery store phone number - a kind of joyous inefficiency that protects him better than a reputation for a violent temper. It was his mother's fault at first, but even as a boy he was quick to see how the overall reputation for not having good at home would serve him all his life, and semi-consciously began to cherish this helplessness to this day this is the despair of feminist wives. More and more men admire a woman who has a job, and especially since the cost of living has doubled, rather like the idea of their own wives contributing to family income through external work. And of course, for generations there have been entire cities full of wives, which are forced by the hottest need to spend the same hours in the factory that their husbands spend. But these bread-winning wives have not yet developed husbands homemaking. When they both return home from the factory, the man during his wife's dinner, and he does so with exactly the same sense of ordained law as if he were supporting her. Higher on an economic scale, the same is true. A business or professional woman who is married may involve a chef, but the responsibility is not shifted, it is still hers. She rents and fires, orders meals, buys, meets and solves all domestic crises, deals with moving, equipping, settling down. She may be, like her husband, a busy executive in her office all day, but unlike him, she is also an executive in a small way every night and in the morning at home. Her hour at noon is spent planning, and too often her Sundays and holidays spend catching up. Two business women can make a house together without one being overburdened or over-bored. That's because they both know how they both feel responsible. But this is a rare man who can marry one of them and continue the homemaking partnership. But if there are no children, there is nothing fundamentally different in combination. Two self-persuasive adults decide to live together: if they are both women, it is a pleasant partnership, more fun than work; If someone is a man, then it is almost never a partnership - the woman simply adds running the house to her regular work outside of her. Unless she is very strong, it is too much for her, she gets tired and bitterly over it, and finally perhaps gives up her job outside and condemns herself to tiring half-cleaning work for two. Cooperation systems and electrical appliances will simplify the homemaking business, but will not get rid of it completely. As far as we can see in advance, people will always want houses, and a happy home can not be without a certain amount of enough monotonous work and responsibility. How can we change the nature of man to honorably share this work and responsibility and thus make a home company a song instead of a burden? Certainly not by laws or revolutionary decrees. Perhaps we ourselves need to nurture or simulate this highly valued helplessness. But basically it's a problem of education, early childhood training - we need to raise feminist sons. Sons? Daughters? They are born from women - how can women choose their profession freely, always nurturing their economic independence, unless they stop having children? This is another question for feminism. If the feminist program goes to pieces after the arrival of the first child, it is false and useless. Ninety-nine out of a hundred women want children, and seventy-five out of a hundred want to look after their own children, or in any case so strictly lend them care to prevent any other full-time activities for at least ten or more Years. Is there such a thing as freedom of choice in the women's profession? And it is the inevitable economic unit and individual economic independence of the woman, at least during this period, is there no doubt? A feminist must have the answer to these questions, and she has. An immediate feminist program must include voluntary motherhood. Freedom of any kind for women is not worth considering unless it is assumed that they will know how to control the size of their families. Birth control is as elementary as equal pay. Women are supposed to have children whenever they want, that's the first thing. This provides some freedom of professional choice: those who do not want to be mothers will not have unwanted activities that they will have on them by accident, and those who wish to be mothers can choose in general terms how many years of their life they devote to the profession of raising children. But is there any way to ensure a woman's economic independence while raising children is her chosen occupation? Or does it have to sink into this dependent state from which, as we all know, it is so difficult to rise up again? This brings us to the fourth feature of our program - maternity subsidies. It seems that the only way we can free mothers, at least in a capitalist society, is to establish the principle that the profession of raising children is a service to society in particular and directly, and that a mother who naturally falls under the necessity and privilege of doing so is entitled to an appropriate economic reward from the political government. Talking about the real economic independence of women is idle unless this principle is adopted. But thanks to the generous endearship of motherhood provided for by the legislation, with the repeal of all laws against voluntary motherhood and education in its methods, with the feminist ideal of education adopted at home and school, and all special barriers removed in every area of human activity, there is no reason why a woman should not become an almost human thing. It will be enough time to consider whether he has a soul. Speaking from the . .

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