Behind all the rhetoric and name-calling of some of the more hysterical of its protagonists, there is a great deal of justification for the current excitement over Women's Liberation. It is not a simple matter, and it is not to be dismissed merely by remarking that "most women don't want to be liberated" and that "God made the difference between men and women."

The part of it I happen to know most about is that involving women in academic careers. I taught at a women's college for ten years, and at the University where I now teach many of my best students are women. Furthermore, I am married to an academic woman, who has her Ph.D. degree. If anyone thinks that women have an equal chance in academic life, he had better think again. The cards are stacked against them in a fashion that is more formidable because it is largely unrealized by those doing the stacking.

To illustrate what I am talking about, let me take the instance of a young woman who stopped by my office the other day to ask me to write a letter of recommendation for her file at our University's placement office. This young woman is about to begin writing her doctoral dissertation, having successfully completed the preliminary examinations. She is a first-rate student, and being both attractive and articulate, would make a first-rate classroom teacher. In fact, she has been such, for after receiving her master of arts degree some years ago and before returning for doctoral study, she was a successful college teacher.

Now if she were unmarried and competing on the national academic job market, she would doubtless be able, with her record, her strong recommendations from those who have taught her, and her general personality, to secure a reasonably good teaching position despite the shrinking job situation.

But because this young woman is an attractive, warm, feminine person, she is entering the academic job market with several severe handicaps. She is happily married; her husband teaches at a nearby university. Furthermore, she is expecting a child soon. What this means is that she is limited in the places where she may find employment to the immediate area of the university where her husband teaches, and also that the writing of her doctoral dissertation will soon have to take second billing to motherhood. She will therefore have to find employment at a school which is willing to wait an extra year for her to get her doctoral degree.

Now the immediate response that one thinks to make to this goes something like the following: Well, she made her choice, and she can't have it both ways. If she wants to get married and raise a family, then she can't expect to have the same opportunities as if she had placed her career first.

But is this fair? Did she really have the choice between the two careers? Not really. As a man, I did not have to make such a choice. Society did not inform me, in effect, that if I wanted to live a normal family life, find a mate, have children, etc., I could not expect therefore to have a professional career. Society didn't give me an either/or ultimatum. It didn't tell me that if I wanted to utilize my brain and make use of the nineteen years or so of education I received, I would have to subordinate and deny my masculinity.

Yet this is precisely what this young woman is being told. She is being told it in a dozen ways. Not only do most colleges and universities prefer men to women teachers, and full-time to part-time teachers, but they also have rules so that part-time teachers cannot receive academic tenure or promotion. This means that a woman who has young children has a much more difficult time getting a job or keeping it, and much less opportunity to secure job tenure and promotion in rank and pay.

Most universities also have what are called "nepotism" rules. This means that two members of the same family cannot be hired in the same department, and sometimes even in the same college or university. And even if they haven't such rules, most university and college department chairman have a prejudice against hiring "faculty wives." Instinctively they don't like the fact that a faculty wife applying for a job is doing so because she must teach in or near the place where her husband teaches, rather than because she wants to teach at that particular school. Instead of sympathizing with a woman caught in that situation, they resent her. Instinctively they think of the faculty wife as being somehow less "professionally oriented" than other teaching job applicants. They assume that because a woman also wants to be a wife and mother, she is therefore less dedicated to a scholarly career than a man who also wants to be a husband and father.

Back a hundred years and more ago, when our society was set up along much different lines than it now is, this situation didn't cause too much trouble (or at any rate, the trouble didn't "surface"). But for the past fifty or sixty years we have been encouraging women to think, to be educated, to use their intelligence for purposes other than keeping house. Yet when women do these things, what they then discover is the men who run the society don't allow them to make use of what they have learned. They want them to get their doctoral degrees, for example, and then stop thinking and return to being a "normal"—i.e., non-career—woman. They refer to them as having "made their choice"—a choice that as men they themselves didn't have to make at all.

That, in effect, is what Women's Lib is all about. That is why the young woman who came into my office this morning, and who is one of the most able of all students, men and women, that I have taught, is going to be hard put to find a good teaching job for next fall, while many other students not nearly so able as she will have far less trouble. What we have told her is that she must choose between celibacy and boredom. Some choice!