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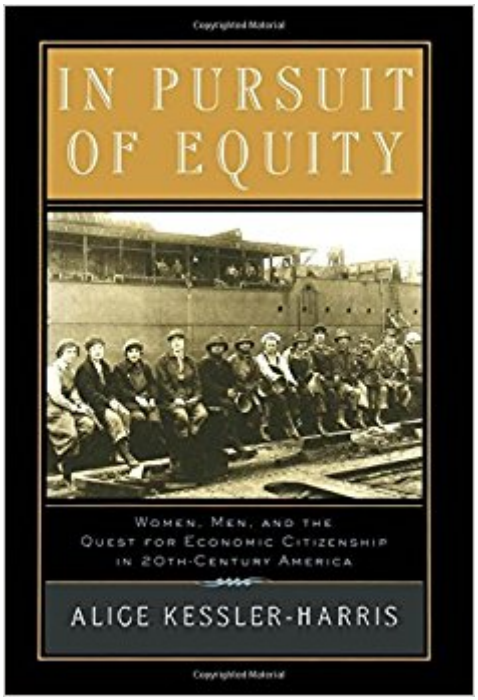

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Synopsis

In this volume, Alice Kessler-Harris explores the transformation of some of the United States' most significant social policies. Tracing changing ideals of fairness from the 1920s to the 1970s, she shows how a deeply embedded set of beliefs, or "gendered imagination" shaped seemingly neutral social legislation to limit the freedom and equality of women. Law and custom generally sought to protect women from exploitation, and sometimes from employment itself; but at the same time, they assigned the most important benefits to wage work. Most policy makers (even female ones) assumed from the beginning that women would not be breadwinners. Kessler-Harris shows how ideas about what was fair for men as well as women influenced old age and unemployment insurance, fair labor standards, Federal income tax policy, and the new discussion of women's rights that emerged after World War II. Only in the 1960s and 1970s did the gendered imagination begin to alter--yet the process is far from complete.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A leading scholar on women's history and public policy, Kessler-Harris expands the work she began in her previous book, Out to Work: The History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States, to examine not just women's employment history, but also the forces that have shaped economic policy for the past 100 years. In the introduction, she says, "For generations, American women lacked not merely the practice but frequently the idea of individual economic freedom." For anyone even remotely familiar with employment trends, this doesn't seem like a revelatory comment, but Kessler-Harris proceeds to make it one. By looking at crucial pieces of legislation and important

court cases, she reveals the subtle shifts in language that marked progress for women and changed the work landscape. She points out that some employment areas, like Social Security legislation and tax laws, proved to be particularly resistant to equality for women, and changed very slowly over decades. Others, like the corporate glass ceiling, have yet to budge in some industries. Although focused on the larger issues of gender and economic policy, the book is also a refreshingly compact and useful primer on 50 years of employment legislation, detailing the crucial arguments and heated congressional debates that brought both men and women from the depths of the depression to the brink of equal economic citizenship. Historical perspective is especially important in later chapters, as she describes the effects of legislation that gave many middle-class women economic freedom, but had unforeseen negative consequences for poor women and women of color. But Kessler-Harris's cautious optimism about our shared economic future is hard to resist. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

One of America's leading scholars on the economic impact of gender bias on women, Kessler-Harris (history, Columbia Univ., Columbia Inst. for Research on Women and Gender; A Woman's Wage) offers a vigorous historical analysis of the 20th-century U.S. social policies that produced differential access to resources for men and women. Beginning in early 20th-century America, she explains how the gendered conception of the right to work emerged differently among men and women and then follows the unfolding of this conception during the New Deal era. She concludes this solid, erudite, heavily noted history by exploring notions of fairness in early federal income-tax policy, issues of equal employment policy in the 1950s and 1960s, and the newly witnessed women's rights movement after World War II. Kessler-Harris succeeds in showing how gender has shaped the rules by which we live, how gendered habits of mind have been inscribed in social policies that continue to frame our lives, and how, once these habits are embedded in the legislative, judicial, and policymaking mechanisms of society, only such a critical, penetrating analysis as this can challenge them and begin to advance the cause of modern feminism. Highly recommended for all academic libraries supporting labor law, economics, and women's studies. Dale Farris, Groves, TX Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This was a good purchase. Downloadable books are always the best because you get the book in minutes. I enjoy the reading and believe that all men, husbands and sons, both majority and

minority should stand up for the rights of women. They are our equals and should not be treated any different. They should not have to change their last name when married as we. They should be equal heads of the household and not secondary citizens to ourselves. This book lets you see the continued unequality that exist and I am thankful .com has this book available. Although the review recieved 5 stars, I was not satisfied that the book did not have page numbers. Page numbers are important, especially when you are in school and you have to cite references.

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