

CHAPTER
17
SECTION 2

Section Summary

THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The 1960s and 1970s saw a rise in **feminism**. Feminism is the theory of political, social, and economic equality of men and women. The successes of the civil rights movement encouraged women to challenge the ways in which society judged and discriminated against them.

The role of housewife was seen as the proper one for women, but many women found it deeply unsatisfying. **Betty Friedan** described this unhappiness in her 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*. At the same time, women who worked were paid less than men. Friedan helped establish the **National Organization for Women (NOW)**, which worked toward winning equality for women. The group wanted the **Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)** to pass. The ERA was an amendment to the Constitution that would guarantee gender equality under the law. NOW also worked to protect the right to an abortion. Radical feminists went further, protesting against discrimination. One radical feminist was **Gloria Steinem**. Steinem wrote about feminism and spoke out about it. She also helped co-found the feminist magazine *Ms.* in 1972.

Not all women supported feminism. **Phyllis Schlafly**, a conservative political activist, denounced women's liberation. She worked to defeat the ERA. Although the ERA did not pass, women did gain legal rights. New laws banned discrimination in education and made it illegal to deny credit to a woman on the basis of gender. The 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* assured women the right to legal abortions.

Changes in the workplace came slowly. Today more women work and many work in fields once denied to them, such as medicine and law. Despite these gains, the average woman still earns less than the average man.

Review Questions

1. What right would the Equal Rights Amendment have guaranteed?

2. What causes did the National Organization for Women work toward? Did its efforts succeed or fail?

READING CHECK

Who founded *Ms.* magazine?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *gender* mean in the underlined sentence? Look for context clues in the sentence and surrounding sentences to help you identify what *gender* refers to.

READING SKILL

Identify Causes and Effects

What helped inspire the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s?
