

[letterhead removed to protect privacy]

June 15, 1964

Dear Dagne:

Some of my friends, serving on the Commission for the Status of Women, have urged me to write to you, pointing out a few legal matters that could be improved upon.

No. 1. It is very upsetting for a woman whose husband has just passed away to discover also that she does not even have funds to exist on due to their joint bank account being tied up in probate. I have known several cases of this, even in a wealthy family. Many a married woman is entirely unaware of this until it happens.

No. 2. When a man enters into marriage with a woman who was previously married, with children under eighteen years of age and from the previous marriage, the man does not have to adopt her children. He can, if he wishes - he can give them a trial, then make up his mind or never adopt them. But what about the situation if it is just in reverse. Those children are hers the moment she says "I do". Is this the reason why so few women dare to marry a second time.

No. 3. Then there is the problem that arises in income tax work so often. The wife has been very kind in giving her money to a joint venture for them (husband and wife) to earn a livelihood. It is a great venture at first. The husband takes command but he soon tires of it (prefers to drink). Finally the poor wife is doing most of the work. But as long as she failed to have a partnership agreement drawn up all the credit and social security benefits are credited to the man. This is not fair. Every woman should know of these matters before she even considers marriage or better yet, laws like these should not be in existence.

No. 4. This has happen to me. I worked ten years in my ex-husband's office. I was never allowed to spend a day at home. Because he was an attorney and not in a partnership, I could not draw a salary. He would have liked very much to have paid me but the law did not allow that so I just worked. The sad part of it is that I do not have any social security benefits for that period of time yet he does. To me that is not right. There should be an adjustment law. In the eyes of God I'm sure I have a right to those benefits as well as he but not according to the laws made by "man". Some day I may have to live on charity. I hope not but it could happen.

Well, Dagne, these are just facts brought to light. Please don't get the idea that I'm feeling sorry for myself. I'm not but I do write of experiences. To me the purpose of the Commission is to find facts and take notice.

See you in Bismarck in July. Sincerely, [name withheld]