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The principle is simple. Men and women in different kinds of jobs that nevertheless require "comparable" levels of skill and responsibility should receive the same pay. Or, as some women ask, "Why *shouldn't* a female secretary with an M.A. in English literature and responsibility for managing the office's accounts get paid the same as a Teamsters truck driver who hauls frozen chickens?"

The issue is in the news because last November a federal district court judge ruled that the state of Washington must implement "comparable worth" and pay its female employees back wages of some \$1 billion. (The case is being appealed.) Ironically, the state wound up in court because of a study it commissioned in 1974 from Seattle consultant Norman D. Willis. Willis devised a complex measurement scale to compare different kinds of jobs; he found that women employed by the state were earning 20 percent less than men in "comparable" jobs.

Willis now recoils at the thought that his or anybody else's scorecard should become *law*, Cowley reports. He adds, "Maintaining a standard as vague as "worth" could make quantum mechanics look simple." The Willis scale requires assigning each job a score based on skills required, mental demands, and working conditions. A clerk-typist might be classified as a "C1N 106 C2-f 23 C1N 23 L1A O," entitled to the same pay as anybody else of the same mathematically determined "worth."

Such a system would be an administrative nightmare. Every wage and salary in the nation would be subject to endless dispute and litigation. Market factors would be overlooked: Personnel managers, for example, would have to be paid more than pulp-mill superintendents. Yet, in the real world, good pulp-mill managers are harder to find and thus get higher salaries. Indeed, says Cowley, "the most pernicious aspect" of comparable worth is that it would further encourage undue emphasis on credentials, such as college degrees. "There are far better ways," he concludes, "to fight sexual discrimination in the workplace."

Immigrants in The Old South

"Natives and Immigrants, Free Men and Slaves: Urban Workingmen in the Antebellum American South" by Ira Berlin and Herbert G. Gutman, in *The American Historical Review* (Dec. 1983), 400 A St. S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.

In the American imagination, the ante-bellum South has been reduced to a series of images out of *Gone with the Wind*—a world of rural plantation manors and of masters and slaves. Even historians have forgotten the South's cities and the surprising numbers of European immigrants who were drawn to them before 1860.

Berlin and Gutman, historians at the University of Maryland and City University of New York, respectively, contend that recalling these immigrants clarifies what happened to the South and to its freed slaves after the Civil War. The immigrants—Irish, German, Italian—never exceeded three percent of any Southern state's population before 1860, but in cities such as Savannah and Richmond they comprised up to

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German immigrants arrive in New Orleans in 1857. Some 54,000 Germans had debarked there by 1850, but most settled elsewhere in the South.

one-third of the population. In Mobile, 41 percent of the city's workingmen were European born, 35 percent were slaves, 13 percent were Southern-born whites, nine percent were Northern-born whites, and two percent were free blacks.

By 1850, when the immigrant influx began in earnest, slaves made up a declining share of the Southern urban population, as more and more slave labor was demanded by the growing cotton economy. Many city slaves were skilled artisans (carpenters, blacksmiths, mechanics), and when they were sold to plantation owners, they left behind the sons who would have inherited their skills. The black artisan class shrank, depriving blacks of natural leaders and of skills and business experience that would have helped in the post-Civil War job market.

Meanwhile, the authors argue, the quickening pace of European immigration to the South after 1850 worried the reigning white slave owners. In Nashville, Tennessee, for example, the number of immigrant workingmen tripled between 1850 and 1860. Foreign-born whites throughout the South resented the slave system because it deprived them of jobs. Nor could they be counted on to share Southern views on race.

Indeed, the authors say, blacks and immigrants briefly showed signs of unity. In 1847, for example, Richmond's First African Baptist Church sent \$40 overseas to aid victims of the Irish Potato Famine. Yet by the end of the Civil War, the authors believe, all hope for the creation of a Southern urban working class had been dashed. By then, Southern blacks were largely leaderless and tied to the soil.