

The American Mother Can Make it Tough for the Jobholders

There is evidence that the American Mother is no less fierce, resolute and courageous than her predecessors in myth and history. She defies city hall, the police and all forms of authority when she believes that her young are not getting a fair shake in their daily rounds of school and play.

Recently, in New York City's Central Park, a band of these maternal vigilantes, accompanied by dozens of children, linked arms to prevent a bulldozer from turning a playground into a parking lot. The poor man atop the bulldozer quailed and gave up. So did the police who arrived on the scene to restore law and order. A craven administration used guile, and in the dark of night threw up a stout fence behind which the work could proceed with decorum. The women hired a lawyer and rushed into court to obtain an injunction against the park officials. They got the injunction, but the city fights on.

In Chicago, a Baby-Carriage Parade made its way to city hall, where several angry spokeswomen demanded that a traffic light be installed at an intersection. Forewarned, the administration had put up the device the night before. "Why not go home, ladies," an official purred, "and have a look at the corner?" The ladies were only slightly abashed. One shouted, "We made you do it!" The official, a man of tact, merely bowed and held his peace.

Almost daily across the nation, the irate mother is up in arms about an untidy lot or strewn streets, traffic lights or playgrounds, school conditions or the smells from a nearby factory. Sometimes the good ladies are right. But too often, in the immemorial tradition of irate mothers, they fly off the handle and rush to the attack before considering the problems involved or the routine way to record a gripe.

But no matter how wrong they are at times or how right, mothers on the warpath are entitled to admiration. They and their perambulators get things done while their husbands are being casually brushed off by indifferent bureaucrats.