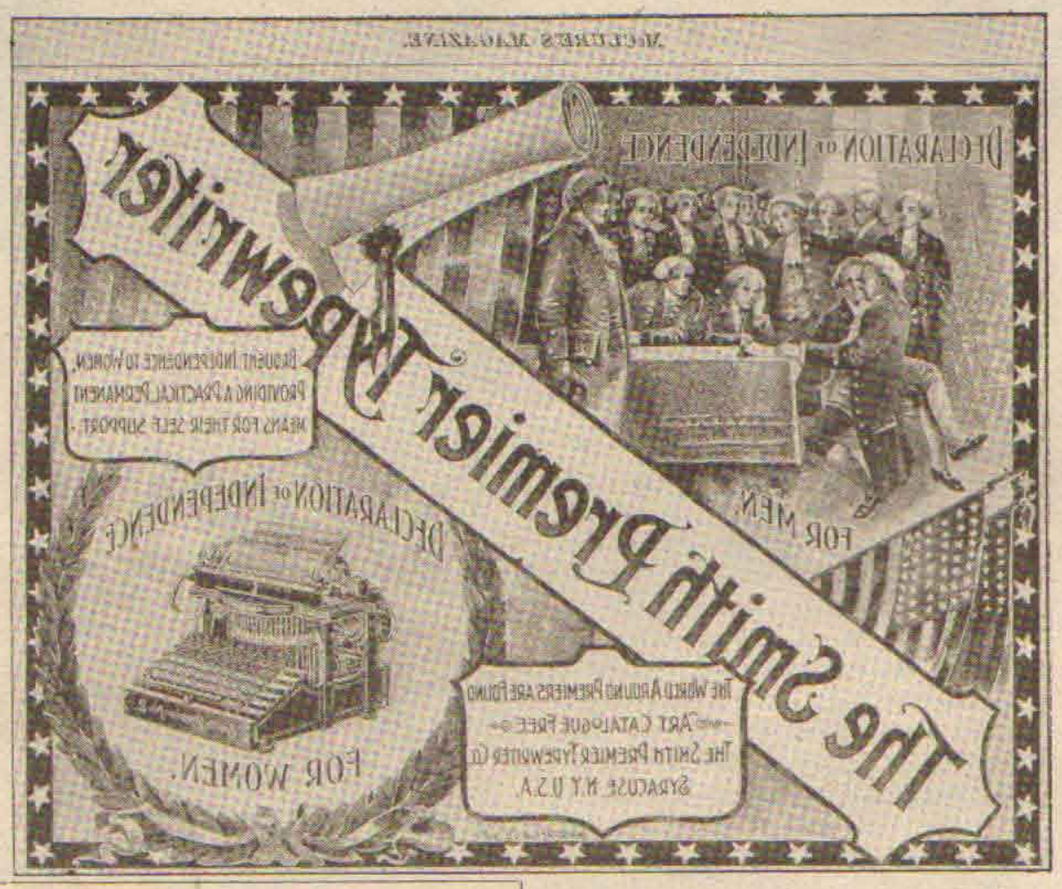
"Can you type?" is the question the archetypal employer asks the archetypal female job applicant, thereby providing abundant grist for the modern feminist's mill of offense; for obviously, the woman applicant, having earned her degree in nuclear physics, should not be subjected to the lowly stereotype of mere writing-machine operator.

Unfortunately for those who would change them, stereotypes tend to have a basis in reality, and, as well, they serve an important function: they help people organize information about other people, in order to establish a mutual basis for further discussion. Thus people give up their stereotypes reluctantly.

The stereotype of the female typist, meantime, was not always thought to be an offensive thing. Witness the Smith Premier advertisement here, where the machine self-promotes as the "Declaration of Independence for Women."

The other advertisements shown here present a woman quite naturally at the typewriter. The earliest of these appeared in the early 1890s; by the early 1920s, a Corona was clearly the Christmas present that would make the little woman breathless with joy.

Our culture has apparently reached the point where, the day after Christmas, she would return the typewriter to the exchange counter, where she might get something more useful.