



The Phyllis Schlafly Report

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Motherhood in the Eighties

Children Crying For Moms at Home

Not so many mothers are at home in the afternoon any more. Those who are at home are usually "moms" to latch-key children, too. Confronted with the prospect of going home to an empty house, children will usually, if they can, gravitate to the home of a schoolmate whose mother is at home.

Indeed, so-called experts are now instructing latch-key children to do exactly that. In a latch-key course for 9-to-13-year-olds, pupils are given a multiple-choice question. "You are walking home alone from school and you think a man in a car is following you. What would you do? (A) Stand still and see what he does. (B) Walk quickly home and lock yourself in the house. (C) Walk to a neighbor's home and stay there. (D) Other." The correct answer is (C) because "if you go home and lock yourself in the house, you could be followed, and there might not be anyone there to help you."

Brenda Hunter, author of *Where Have All The Mothers Gone?*, eloquently described her life as a latch-key child. "No matter how sunny the atmosphere outside, an empty house is always cold and dark and lonely. I always made a check under the bed and looked in the closets to make sure that no burglar had entered our home."

The liberated lifestyles which encourage wives and mothers to do their own thing have left children to bear burdens of loneliness, depression, and the empty home. Latch-key children are crying out for the love of moms who will subordinate their own career ambitions and desire for material things to the well-being of their children.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census published some interesting figures which cast light on changing socio-economic trends and provide evidence that millions of mothers still accord a higher priority to giving mother-care to their children than to material things. It is a special study called "Earnings in 1981 of Married-Couple Families." This report provides statistics on the intact family where a husband and wife are living together, which is the big majority of the American people. There are 49.6 million married couples (99 million Americans). The study does not cover the situation of the single-parent family.

Considering only the 42.2 million married couples where at least one spouse is employed, the Census Bureau figures show a vast difference in standard of living between one-paycheck families (husband-breadwinner and wife-homemaker) and two-paycheck families. In the 14 million traditional families in which the husband is employed but the wife is not, the average earnings are \$22,300.

But in the 26.3 million families where both the husband and wife are in the paid labor force, the average earnings are \$28,560, and that figure shoots up to \$34,560 if both spouses are employed full time. These figures show that married couples where the wife is a full-time homemaker are living at a significantly lower income level. The disparity in standard of living is probably even greater than these figures indicate, since full-time homemakers often have more children than women who are in the labor force.

The national media and feminist spokespersons put forth an incessant drumbeat to persuade Americans that, in this day and age, mothers "must work," and that the government "should" facilitate that lifestyle by providing child-care facilities. The Census Bureau report shows, however, that 14 million mothers have rejected that notion and chosen the traditional role of motherhood even though it means living at a lower income level.

Millions of wives today are economizing and stretching every dollar in order to feed and clothe their families on the husband's single income so that their children can have something more precious than money can buy: the emotional security of a mom at home. That's the kind of dedication to the role of motherhood that should be encouraged, not discouraged, by our tax laws and social legislation.

Yet, the Federal income tax law gives preferential treatment amounting to several thousand dollars a year to the wife who chooses the paid job instead of the role of motherhood. That's why the first step in addressing the problems of latch-key children is to give the full-time wife equality in the income tax law with the wife in the paid labor force.

Costs of Non-Mother Child-Care

In recent months, television viewers and newspaper readers have been given a steady stream of commentary about the alleged need for day-care subsidies for children whose mothers are in the paid labor force. TV segments portray the plight of the employed wife who must spend a large portion of her salary for child care.

Clearly, there is a push for "somebody" to subsidize the cost of child care so that wives can remain on the job. But those agitating for this goal never seem to get around to addressing the questions, (a) how much will this cost? and (b) who will pay the costs?

Let's make it clear at the outset that this report, and the feature articles and TV segments referred to above, do *not* refer either to the single-parent family or welfare circumstances. We are discussing the intact family where the wife has taken a paid job in order to increase the family income, and then discovers how much it costs to hire someone else to care for her children.

Edward M. Levine, professor of social psychology at Loyola University in Chicago, estimates that the cost per child per year for quality day care ranges from \$6,000 for children over age 3 to \$18,000 for infant care. The cost is so high because guidelines for adult-child ratios are 1 to 4 for children over age 3, and 1 to 2 for infants.

When you add up the real costs of providing child-care by hired personnel who work a 40-hour week, the financial burden is immense. If parents want to pass this cost on to the taxpayers, that means that the real burden shifts from the parents of the two-income couples onto the backs of childless couples, unmarried persons, and single-earner couples who are farther down on the income scale.

U.S. Census Bureau figures show that the 14 million married couples who live on only the husband's income have an average family income \$5,260 per year LOWER than the 26 million married couples where both husband and wife are in the labor force. Those 14 million wives will hardly take kindly to the notion that they be taxed in order to subsidize child-care for the 26 million wives whose average family income is \$5,260 higher.

When I first wrote about these Census Bureau figures, I received a spontaneous letter from one wife in New York. I'm going to share it with you because she articulated her views so well.

"Dear Mrs. Schlafly. Ten years ago, I quit working outside the home (I am an RN) and began the part of my life devoted to raising our children. At that time, it cut our income in half and put us in the low end of low-middle income. There were many months when we didn't know how we were going to make it.

"We are now middle-income. Our children are 8 and 10 years old. We do not have many extras and do not have much left over for saving or entertainment. But I still count myself lucky to be able to stay home and be there for my children.

"We live in half of a double home which we own. We outgrew the apartment 5 years ago, but when I ask the children if they'd rather have me work to get a nicer house *or* stay home, they look at me as if I'm crazy. It is quite obvious that it is *not* the house that makes them warm, secure and happy — it is the home!

"I am very tired of hearing from friends and family that they simply cannot get along on one income. I also feel that double income families are, to a large degree, responsible for inflation, making it more difficult for those of us who choose to stay at home.

"As to the notion that I am a woman of leisure, I have worked outside the home full time, and believe me, I remember it as a vacation. Having less money available requires a great deal more work to make it stretch. But then we don't waste a whole lot, either. When people ask me, 'do you work?', I reply, 'not outside the home.'

"What all I've said boils down to is that I feel, if you want to stay home for your children, it can be done. The exception is the single-parent homes, and my heart goes out to these parents and children.

"I also believe that no career can be as important as helping to form the future of our children in the best way we can. Their future is our future and, if we can raise them to be happy, healthy, secure and capable, that will be the future of our world. I can't even begin to equate this with owning a new house and going out to dinner.

"As one of the 14,000,000 parents who elect to put their children before the dollar, I applaud you for speaking out in our behalf and in behalf of the children. Thank you."

Can Babies and Husbands Cope?

The NBC News White Paper called "Women, Work and Babies" put an important subject out on the agenda for national discussion. Jane Pauley, America's most famous working mother of twins, posed the question "Can America cope?" with the phenomenon of mothers of babies who have full-time jobs.

The program was not about single parents trying to support themselves and their children. The program was about two-earner couples in which the wife (a) wants a professional career for her own self-fulfillment, (b) simply likes the extra money (to go on vacations, etc.), or (c) admits she can't stand being at home with her children and would rather be anywhere else.

Any successful lawyer knows that, if he can frame the question, he can often get any verdict he wants from judge or jury. The question really is not "can America cope?", but "can babies cope?" and "can husbands cope?"

NBC presented the problem from the feminist point of view and, true to form, offered the solution from the liberals' point of view. The *New York Times* review of the TV show, commenting on the ideological bias of the White Paper, called it "a plea for free lunch." The message was that "society" should provide more taxpayer-financed day-care centers and employer-financed special benefits and job security for mothers. The *Times* concluded, that's the way to "solve" the "problem" of the kids so that we can all shout "hooray for the two-income couple and self realization in the marketplace!"

Let's be blunt about this demand. Any plan for "society," or "government," or "corporations," to assume the direct and indirect costs of caring for babies, means imposing the real costs on the taxpayers and the general

public, which, in turn, means on the singles, the couples who have already raised their families, and the couples who are living on a lower single income in order to provide full-time mother-care for their children. It's hard to think of anything more unjust.

Non-mother care of babies is very, very expensive. This is true even at the minimum wage rates paid to workers in most child-care centers, and even with the inadequate conditions and supervision in most child-care centers.

But cost is the adults' problem. From the babies' point of view, "day-care diseases" are more serious. Anyone who has watched flu bugs and other contagious diseases go through a family of several children at home must recoil in horror at the thought of 30 toddlers in diapers, all ill and screaming for their mothers. The NBC program admitted that day-care babies are 12 times more likely to get the flu than home-care babies.

Another major problem from the babies' point of view is the constant change of personnel. Babies don't adapt well to the high turnover rate of hired "care providers."

While babies are the biggest losers in any system of non-mother care, it was clear from the NBC program that husbands lose, too. When a woman has a baby and a career, the husband ranks third on her scale of priorities, and a poor third, at that, because she's simply too exhausted for anything else even if she has any extra time, which she usually doesn't.

The lifestyle sections of newspapers have had many articles in recent months about how men in their 20s and 30s are rejecting or avoiding marriage. Is it any wonder? What man wants to risk a financial/emotional commitment, buy a ring and assume a mortgage on a house, when he will rank only #3 in the heart of the woman he loves?

All that talk about egalitarian marriages in which the husbands share 50-50 in child-care simply doesn't happen in practice, as Jane Pauley has complained so bitterly. The NBC program said that only 13% of husbands share baby-care as the feminists say they should, and that figure is probably exaggerated.

Jane Pauley tried to tell us that it is "the rule, not the exception" for mothers of small babies to be in the labor force and she predicted that the traditional Mom "seems headed for extinction." That was a self-serving slur to try to justify her own lifestyle. Fourteen million mothers have made the commitment to give their babies full-time care at home, and they are staggering under the income tax burden that is so unfair to families with children.

The Feminization of Poverty

We have heard a great deal of comment in the last couple of years about the phenomenon called "the feminization of poverty," which means that more of the poor are women than men. This fact has been used to assert that the cause is "sex discrimination," and also as an argument against Federal spending cuts because most of the people who suffer from spending cuts are female.

Contrary to popular belief, most women who are poor are not the elderly but the young. The major causes of the feminization of poverty are divorce and out-of-wedlock births.

According to a Census Bureau report, if family composition in 1980 had been the same as in 1970 (and other variables were held constant), the figures on poverty would have been dramatically different. Whites would have had a three percent rise in median family income (instead of only a one percent rise). Blacks would have had an eleven percent rise in median family income (instead of a five percent decline).

Single-parent families have risen from nine percent in 1960 to 22 percent of all families with children in 1982. Thirty-seven percent of black married women age 25-44 are now separated or divorced, and the figure for white women is 16 percent. Half of the female-headed households are in poverty.

During the decade of the 1970s, most states made two major changes in their marriage laws as a result of lobbying by militant feminist groups. States adopted easy, no-fault divorce laws, and they sex-neutralized their marriage laws by repealing the legal obligation of the husband to support his wife financially.

Easy, no-fault divorce was supposed to eliminate fighting about who had misbehaved with whom. The fighting still goes on, just as bitterly and even more expensively; couples just fight about money and child custody instead of about fault.

The feminists seem to believe that traditional marriage is a sort of oppression of women and that, therefore, easy divorce provides liberation for women to terminate an unhappy marriage. They seem to think that requiring husbands to support their wives financially during marriage, or to pay alimony to ex-wives after divorce, is an outmoded stereotype and that society should be liberated from such notions of dependency.

Until recent years, dictionaries defined alimony as "an allowance paid to a woman by her former husband." Then, in the 1979 case of *Orr v. Orr*, the Supreme Court redefined alimony to give the courts the power to order wives to pay alimony to their ex-husbands, thereby rewriting the alimony laws of about half the 50 states.

Feminists cheered this decision on the ground that any gender-neutralization of statutes is an advance for women's rights. As a practical matter, this decision didn't matter much anyway since alimony has practically gone out of existence. Courts seldom award alimony any more. If they do, it lasts only for a year or two; then the ex-wife is supposed to support herself no matter how long she has been out of the labor force.

Feminists urged the elimination of alimony, which they deemed demeaning, and its replacement by "equitable distribution" which they said would be fairer to women. The feminists who promoted these equitable-sounding words were out of touch with the real world.

The only women who could possibly benefit would be those whose husbands owned significant property or assets to distribute. A recent article called "Women and Divorce" in *New York Magazine* relates case after case of how women are financially devastated by the new divorce laws.

In the majority of marriages, there is relatively little property to distribute except a mortgaged home, and the real wealth is the present and future earning power of the husband. After divorce, the husband's income continues to rise as he moves into his higher-earning years, while the wife is cut off at the pass with little or no earning power, having to start at the bottom of the earnings ladder.

Divorce thus has dramatically diverse effects on the financial circumstances of the former spouses. One study made by a Stanford sociologist concludes that a woman's standard of living generally falls by 73 percent in the year following a divorce, while a man's typically rises by 42 percent.

Of course, there are two sides to most divorce cases and, whether you talk to the man or the woman, both sides usually believe they have been shafted by the system. Divorce is a no-win situation for everyone; there is simply no way a man and woman can live as well separately as they did in the same household.

TV Trends in Motherhood

I feel sorry for the advertising agencies that must produce the 30- and 60-second commercial spots costing hundreds of thousands of dollars on primetime television. They have the task of making their product irresistible to a market they don't understand. Women do most of the buying of consumer goods, so the sales pitch must appeal to women. But how do you create a commercial spot featuring a woman without alienating some of the women you would like as customers?

Highly-paid ad men are discovering what Walter Mondale didn't seem to know when he put Geraldine Ferraro on the ticket. Women are simply not a bloc with the same attitudes (commercial or political) who can be appealed to as a group.

The feminist movement has carried on a running criticism for the last decade against advertisements that show mothers taking pride in clean households, good cooking, and other evidences of a homemaker's domestic skills. In the feminist view, women should be liberated from the "stereotype" that homemaking is a fulfilling career for a woman.

Yet marketing research shows that mothers constitute 60% of the primetime audience and so they are the target of 75% of primetime advertising dollars. The percentages are even higher during daytime TV.

A 1978 Enjoli perfume TV spot showed a mother saying to her husband, "I can bring home the bacon, fry it up in a pan and never, never, never let you forget you're a man." In 1984, the Enjoli woman has changed her tune, saying, "I can bring home the bacon, fry it up in a pan, but once in a while you've got to give me a hand."

The *Wall Street Journal* calls this change "Madison Avenue trying to keep up with motherhood." But is Enjoli selling perfume or selling changing lifestyles and women's lib? It seems obvious that the smell of frying bacon would smother the delicate fragrance of perfume no matter what the words in the woman's mouth.

Some advertisers have succumbed to feminist demands by domesticizing Dad. Dads now cook Aunt Jemima's waffles, change diapers with Johnson & Johnson baby powder, and go supermarket shopping for Kraft cheese. Is this the way life is, or the way the avant garde wants it to be? Such advertising may be raising false hopes in career-oriented young women.

In my fall tour of college campuses, quite a few female students asked, "Why can't the husband stay home and take care of the baby while the wife pursues her career?" I replied that these women don't have to get my permission for such an arrangement; all they need is to find a man who wants to be a househusband; and my observation of the real world is that such men are a small minority.

Many advertising agencies are coping with conflicting social trends by censoring mothers out of their commercials altogether. A survey of 250 recent TV spots found that only nine showed women as mothers. A large percentage didn't show women at all, using men or only the products themselves.

Recent commercials show a significant increase in commercials that use employed women to peddle a product. United Airlines shows a mother looking at a family picture in her briefcase while on a business trip, while Pour-A-Quiche shows mother and dad driving home together from their jobs.

Statistics show that 53% of women are employed outside the home and 47% are not. If companies want to sell their products, they can't afford to omit advertising empathy for nearly half of the market just for the sake of being trendy. So mothers still exist in TV commercials and probably always will.

The artificial world of primetime TV programming, by contrast with advertising spots, seems to have abandoned the traditional family and plunged into a world where there are almost no mothers. June Cleaver, Harriet Nelson, Lucy Ricardo, and other stay at home moms have vanished. They've been replaced by single women, divorced women sharing homes, and female detectives with unemployed husbands. Some mothers appear, but they are usually widowed, divorced, unwed, or their children are peripheral to the plot.

In the real world, however, the tide is going against feminism and toward motherhood. Every woman doesn't need a baby, but every baby still needs a mother.

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