



The

Phyllis Schlafly Report



VOL. 23, NO. 9, SECTION 2

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APRIL 1990

Facing the Future: Family vs. Feminism

When *Newsweek* devoted an entire issue of 100 pages (less ads) to "The 21st Century Family" last November, the lead sentence was "The American family does not exist." In case you are a member of this time-honored institution which *Newsweek* relegated to the age of the '50s (in the eyes of the authors, just as remote as the age of the dinosaur), perhaps you should do your own "hard thinking about what a family is for" instead of relying on the thinking of writers of undisclosed family status and sexual/marital preferences.

Newsweek pontificated that it was "inevitable" that "we" would "reinvent" the family. "We" apparently means the dozen or so writers who contributed to this issue.

This redefinition of the family, according to *Newsweek*, includes families of divorced parents and stepchildren, unmarried couples living together, single women deliberately having babies by donor insemination, gay and lesbian couples with or without children, grandparents raising children, and genetically made-to-order babies. Proclaiming that "most scholars now consider the 'breadwinner-homemaker' model unusual, applicable in limited circumstances for a limited time," *Newsweek* didn't include the traditional pattern among the current family "varieties."

Newsweek seemed to think that the so-called Ozzie and Harriet lifestyle was simply created and validated by television, and that therefore the media can now play God and design a different version for the '90s.

But is the new family described in *Newsweek* an improvement? Does it serve our goals of providing a base from which to face life's challenges, a safe haven to care for our young, a nest where love and companionship can grow, and an encouragement to nurture each other through life's many stages of aging? One searches the pages in vain to find positive answers to these questions.

If you stick with this magazine's tome to the bitter end, you will find that *Newsweek* reported the new evidence that infants in daycare for 20 or more hours a week are at risk, and that the high turnover rate among paid caregivers and the high disease rate of institutionalized children make daycare a very uncertain and unhappy place for children.

Back on page 92, *Newsweek* ruefully admitted: "Despite the compelling evidence about the dark side of daycare, many experts say there's a great reluctance to discuss these problems

publicly." Why? "Because they're afraid the right wing will use this to say that only mothers can care for babies, so women should stay home."

What the liberals and the feminists are really afraid of is not the right wing but the eternal truth that the traditional family is still the best way to live, and that babies still need mothers in the home.

War Of the Roses

The movie *War of the Roses* is, surprisingly, an old-fashioned morality play lurking behind an R-rated movie with bad words and embarrassingly explicit sexual scenes. The moral of this 1990 black comedy is that, of all the options a married couple can choose, divorce is the worst. Lessonmaster Danny DeVito gives it to us straight and unvarnished at the end of a couple of exhausting hours.

The plot is as simple as the special effects are improbable and convoluted. Boy meets girl; they marry and have two children; husband is a successful lawyer and makes lots of money; they buy and furnish the house of her dreams. They have 18 years of a good marriage: good sex, good income, good children, no adultery, no alcoholism, no poverty, no abuse, no worries. Their biggest problems were making house decorating choices.

Then one day, out of the blue in the middle of the night, Mrs. Rose announces that she wants a divorce; she just doesn't want to live with Mr. Rose any more. There was no provocation, no fault; she didn't even deign to offer a reason.

Although she certainly was no lady, she expected him to play the stereotypical gentleman and get out, leaving *her* to enjoy the house that *they* built. To her surprise and dismay, he fought to keep the marriage contract they both had signed and, at the very least, for his equal rights to their house.

Ten years ago, in the popular movie *Kramer vs. Kramer*, the divorcing couple fought for custody of their child. It's a mark of our age of materialism that, in *War of the Roses*, the couple fought for possession of the house, and custody of the children was irrelevant.

The movie is so busy with the physical and emotional confrontation between the Roses that one scarcely has time to ask *why* Mrs. Rose wants a divorce. The only motive one can reasonably deduce from the script is that Mrs. Rose succumbed

to the disease of women's liberation.

The ideology of women's liberation teaches a woman to rank her own self-fulfillment above every other value, including solemn promises, husband, and children. Mrs. Rose suddenly decided that she would be more personally fulfilled if she lived in the house alone and ran a little catering business making liver paté under her own name.

The popularity of *War of the Roses* among moviegoers this spring was probably due primarily to the fact that it touched a tender nerve in contemporary society. Some people are beginning to lament the fallout from the fundamental change in our divorce law that swept through 50 state legislatures during the 1970s, starting with trendy California in 1969 and ending with Illinois in 1984.

The feminists argued that easy, no-fault divorce would spell liberation for women. What it really did was to enable one spouse to terminate a marriage contract without the consent of the other, and virtually without penalty. Divorce "reform" laws eliminated "fault," supposedly in order to prevent bitterness. As both *Kramer* and *Roses* confirm, bitterness does not go away; it just takes other forms.

At the peak of the women's liberation movement in January 1975, Barbara Walters confidently proclaimed in a three-hour NBC television special called "Of Women and Men" that wives should be liberated from their menial role and from the prison of a home. We were entering a new era of "serial marriages," she said, which means a succession of temporary roommates, without commitment or responsibility.

Probably more women than men have been hurt by this change because more men than women have the opportunity to exchange their spouse of 20 years for a younger model. But plenty of men have been hurt, too, not so much by wives who seek a new, more successful husband, but by wives who want to go it alone, while manipulating old traditions to hang on to custody of the children and the house.

Fortunately, we are beginning to see the divorce rate inching down; 1989 rates are down 4 percent from 1988. One newspaper has even called trying to work things out and stay hitched the "contemporary thing."

Psychologists are trying to figure out why. Perhaps the baby boomers are maturing out of the "Me" generation. Perhaps the fear of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases is persuading couples to stay together. Perhaps the post-divorce statistics are having a chilling effect on the rush to divorce. Current figures show that more than 60 percent of second marriages end in divorce.

Psychologist Dr. Diane Medved started to write a book to help people with decision making about the "morally neutral" option of divorce. When she faced the reality of her data, she found herself compelled to write *The Case Against Divorce* (Donald I. Fine, 1989). That case is powerful, indeed.

Asking Questions About Divorce

Way back in 1970 when the women's liberation movement was just gathering momentum, a New York University professor named Warren T. Farrell provided the rationale for why it should be supported by men. Essentially, his argument was that men should eagerly look forward to the day when they can enjoy free sex and not have to pay for it.

Farrell advocated a never-never land where a husband

would no longer be "saddled with the tremendous guilt feelings" when he leaves his wife with nothing, after she has given him her best years. If a husband loses his job, he should not feel compelled to take any job to support his family, Farrell told the American Political Science Association Convention. Farrell spoke in academic verbiage, but his message was clear. A husband should be able to go "out with the boys" to have a drink without feeling guilty, and alimony should be eliminated.

The male millennium that Professor Farrell so eagerly sought and predicted has largely come about. The chief change in our now-liberated society was the adoption of easy, no-fault divorce.

This change in our divorce laws has affected the social, economic, cultural, and legal fabric of our society more than anything else that has happened in the last two decades. One can avoid participating in or succumbing to other changes, but the changed laws and attitudes about divorce affect us all. No one can force you to have an abortion or to read pornography. If you can't pray in school, you can still pray at home, in church, and in your heart. You can escape what you deem to be intolerable situations by changing your job or your school.

But divorce—the dissolution of a solemn mutual contract in which you pledge your life, your honor, your name, your commitment, and your future — can be thrust upon you without your consent. It takes two to marry, but now one spouse can terminate the marriage without the consent of the other. The very existence of this sword of Damocles hanging over every husband and wife validates the attitude that marriage is temporary and based on self-satisfaction, rather than on commitment and responsibility.

The radical feminist movement peddled easy, no-fault divorce as "liberation" for women when, in fact, it was chiefly liberation for men. The feminists didn't discover their mistake until Lenore Weitzman published her landmark 1985 book, *The Divorce Revolution*, which proved that easy divorce means economic devastation for women.

A booklet called *The Human Costs of Divorce: Who Is Paying?* by Peter M. Weyrich (Free Congress Foundation, 1988) is another springboard for national discussion. Weyrich has synthesized the major current research on what happens to children after divorce, and it's not a happy picture. He documents his booklet from recent studies which analyze the effects of divorce on the child's psychological attitude toward his parents and siblings, his gender identity, and his scholastic achievement.

It certainly is time that someone spoke up and said out loud that a large part of the human costs of divorce is paid by the children. Weyrich has rendered a service in collecting divorce data in a nonjudgmental way and posing the questions. If we don't ask the hard questions, we'll never get the answers.

Shame On Fortune Magazine

Fortune Magazine joined the cabal trying to make no-fault divorce a social good by publishing its cover story called "The CEO's Second Wife" (August 28, 1989). The article proves what George Gilder wrote in his landmark book *Men and Marriage*, namely, that "the only undeniable winners in the sexual revolution are powerful men. Under a regime of sexual liberation, some men can fulfill the paramount dream of most

men everywhere; they can have the nubile years of more than one young woman."

The *Fortune* article presents a long succession of CEOs of major corporations who divorced their wives after a marriage of several decades and married a flashy, trim babe who helps him spend his money while consorting with the other rich and powerful. The article conveniently includes a list of names and ages of some 40 CEOs and their second (or third or fourth) wives. The essential requirements, according to *Fortune*, are to be thin, expensively groomed, and have your own career.

Don't get the idea that *Fortune's* article is unbiased reporting. On the contrary, the article reeks with the editorial message that in the '80s "divorce is fully respectable," and the CEO "with the old, nice, matronly wife is looked down on. He's seen as not keeping up appearances. Why can't he do better for himself?"

Nowhere does the article ask the question: if the CEO doesn't live up to his marriage contract, why should anybody believe his word on anything else? Nowhere does the article criticize the untrustworthiness of a man who treats his wife like his automobile, i.e., when he tires of her, he trades her in for a younger model. No, instead, *Fortune* justifies the practice of powerful CEOs indulging their desires with "trophy wives." It's one of the perks of success, like a company jet. *Fortune* even helps the faithless husband to salve his conscience by predicting that he may become more considerate to his employees. Sometimes, *Fortune* says in extra large type, dumping his wife and marrying a younger woman "even results in his becoming a more considerate manager."

The *Fortune* writers apparently had no difficulty interviewing a long series of second wives and photographing them in their expensive clothes as they teach another woman's husband how to "build a new life" without children. Some of the second wives even revealed how they connived to get the married CEO to succumb to their wiles. Funny thing, *Fortune* didn't interview or print a picture of the most famous of all the second wives, Leona Helmsley. She's the classic example of the dynamic second wife (Harry Helmsley dumped his first wife after 33 years of marriage).

Fortune has gone Professor Warren T. Farrell one better by telling the up-and-coming CEO that he not only does *not* have to feel guilty; taking a second wife as a "trophy" is the "in" thing to do.

In his essay on the consequences of such a social system, George Gilder accurately says that the rich and powerful man who does this "is no less effectively a polygamist than if he had maintained a harem." Our easy divorce laws, adopted under pressure from the women's liberation movement during the 1970s, have enabled one spouse — without the consent of the other — to say "I divorce thee" three times and then be free to live with a new partner (just as Islamic law allows).

The first and obvious victims of this system are the cast-off wives who grow old alone when their husbands leave and remarry. Between the ages of 35 and 65, there are 50 percent more divorced or separated women than divorced or separated men, because the middle-aged and older women do not marry young men.

Gilder says that "a society is essentially an organism," and we cannot simply expel a few million women from the fabric of families, remarry their husbands to younger women, and

quietly return to our business as if nothing had happened. "What has happened," he says, "is a major rupture in the social system, felt everywhere."

Exposés Of Feminist Foolishness

The American public wouldn't be so confused about feminist ideology if they had a chance to read books that dissect and refute feminism. Allan Bloom wrote about the "closing of the American mind" at universities, but the closing of the booksellers' doors to books critical of feminism is even more pronounced.

The refusal of bookstores to stock and libraries to purchase *Men and Marriage* by best-selling author George Gilder (Pelican, 1986) is a national scandal. The latest critic of feminism to feel the lash of feminist censorship is Nicholas Davidson, whose book *The Failure of Feminism* (Prometheus Books, 1988) would be an excellent textbook for anyone who wants to understand this complex subject.

Davidson methodically summarizes the writings of leading feminists such as Betty Friedan, Germaine Greer and Kate Millet. He places them in historical context and refutes their silly notions which are so contrary to common sense. Davidson debunks the sacred cows of feminist dogma one by one: the claim that what we call masculine and feminine personality traits are merely culturally conditioned, the claim of the existence of human societies without the nuclear family, the desirability of unisex child rearing, and the need for women's history courses in universities.

Davidson's second book on feminism, *Gender Sanity* (University Press, 1989), is an anthology of essays on different facets of feminism by 17 authors, including George Gilder, James Webb, Steven Goldberg, and Midge Decter. It is a truly important book for anyone who seeks to understand feminism and its broadside attack on our culture, our laws, our institutions, our military, and indeed on biology and human nature.

Another book that deserves a place in any "women's studies" courses is *Feminism and Freedom* by philosophy professor Michael Levin (Transaction Books, 1988). Levin wrestles with the feminist intelligentsia on their own terms and proves their ideology to be barren, self-contradictory, and ultimately destructive of a free, democratic society.

Levin warns that the potentially devastating consequences of the indiscriminate mixing of the sexes in military units cannot be fully predicted short of wartime combat.

"If males and females have equal predispositions for aggression and nurturance," wonders Levin, "why have not half of all human societies encouraged women to be aggressive and men to be nurturant?" None of them has because our biological nature determines otherwise.

In areas such as Affirmative Action, Comparable Worth, and the Family, feminist ideology refuses to accept the way we are and insists on trying to force its vision upon us by government edict. Levin cites the 1979 federal case of *Beckman v. New York City Fire Department* where the feminists claimed that the physical-standards test used in selecting new firefighters was discriminatory because substantially fewer women passed than men.

Levin dismisses the oft-heard distinction between radical and moderate feminism. All feminism is radical, he says,

because contrary to the overwhelming findings of the natural and social sciences, feminists refuse to believe that there are inherent differences between men and women which should be manifested in the basic organization of society.

If slavery and Nazism were totalitarian because each denied the natural equality of human beings, Levin argues, feminism is no less so because it denies the natural differences between men and women. Not only does feminism deny them, but feminists rely on the brute force of government to impose their ideology on the rest of us. That is why Professor Levin comes to the conclusion that "feminism is an antidemocratic, if not totalitarian, ideology." Feminism is not compatible with freedom because free men and women will not voluntarily submit to social engineering to restructure society according to an ideology that runs counter to common sense and all historical experience.

One of the delights of Dr. Levin's book is the way he illustrates through analogy. Feminists are fond of saying that it is not that they dislike women *per se*, but only that they dislike women who have been raised up under patriarchy. Levin says, that's like saying that you really enjoy baseball but are bored by baseball as it has actually been played since the time of Abner Doubleday. Who's fooling whom?

Working Girl Explodes A Feminist Myth

To the anguished moans and groans of feminists, the movie script writers have struck again. Even if television news departments, editorial writers, and Congressmen haven't discovered it, the movie script writers (who are on the cutting edge of cultural trends because they must lure customers into the theaters today) know that we are in the post-feminist era.

First they gave us *Baby Boom*, in which a high-powered female executive chucked success on the fast track in favor of life in the country with a man, a baby, and home-based, kitchen-oriented work. Then came *Fatal Attraction*, in which the heroine was the fulltime homemaker, a beautiful package of fulfillment and emotional serenity, while the villain was the fortyish career woman, violently desperate to possess a man and his baby.

Working Girl dashed even more feminist dreams and delusions. It shows that women in business are just as cutthroat as men, and that some successful women executives treat their female subordinates just as ruthlessly and oppressively as men have been alleged to do.

Feminist ideology teaches that the business and professional world is a male enclave whose borders are guarded by sexist, discriminating men who protect their territory by security measures as impassable as the Berlin Wall once was. Even if talented and able women somehow make it onto the playing field, the theory goes, they are oppressed and kept from rising to the top by a "glass ceiling" (a new tool of semantic warfare invented by feminist ideologues).

But that isn't all. Feminist mythology also teaches that, "comes the revolution," when women rise to positions of power and importance in business and professions, the entire business environment will be different. Women executives will be compassionate, caring, cooperative, and change the workaday world from power-seeking to pleasantries.

Working Girl shows that "tain't so," after all. When the Ivy League business school graduate, with her expensive clothes

and aristocratic ways, makes it into the front office with a view over Manhattan, she is just as dictatorial, dishonest, and downright horrid to her female underlings as the archetypical male in feminist fairy tales.

To add insult to injury, those who lend a helping hand to the poor little working girl from the wrong side of the tracks, who is trying to lift herself up by her own bootstraps by attending a lowbrow budget college at night, are successful men! *They* are the ones who give her the big chance to rise out of the secretarial pool, where she would otherwise be doomed to suffer the daily indignity of being expected to make coffee for her boss.

Working Girl confirmed a revealing article published in the *New York Times Magazine* (June 26, 1988), called "Why Feminism Failed." Written by a feminist journalist, Mary Anne Dolan, who rose to become editor of a then major metropolitan newspaper, the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, it described the feminist dream that "female" qualities would produce a new management environment which would "make mincemeat of the male business model." Under her direction, the *Herald-Examiner* soon boasted the first 50/50 male/female masthead in the country. Women got most of the coveted positions, including editor of the editorial page and sports columnist.

Ms. Dolan, whose own perspective is revealed by her admission that she was an enthusiast of Geraldine Ferraro's vice presidential campaign, was vivid in her description of what happened. Ms. Dolan regretfully admitted that five years later those women had taken on "the worst aspects of the stereotypical corporate ladder-climbing male. As soon as masthead status was achieved, the power grab began." She said that the supposedly "wise and mature" women she hired turned out to be "brittle, conniving, power-hungry and unyielding."

Ms. Dolan is not particularly optimistic that this situation will change soon. She noted that, when one of her woman journalist friends died young from cancer and they all gathered at the funeral, the most power-grabbing feminist of the bunch sat in the pew "with the current and former publishers of the newspaper, both men, one at each elbow."

'Twas ever thus. Feminism is doomed to failure because it is based on an attempt to repeal and restructure human nature.

Phyllis Schlafly is the president of Eagle Forum, a national pro-family organization. She is the author or editor of 13 books. Five of them relate to some area of family and feminism: *The Power of the Positive Woman* (1977), *The Power of the Christian Woman* (1981), *Equal Pay for Unequal Work* (1984), *Pornography's Victims* (1987), and *Who Will Rock the Cradle?* (1989).

The Phyllis Schlafly Report

Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
ISSN0556-0152

Published monthly by The Eagle Trust Fund, Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002. Second Class Postage Paid at Alton, Illinois. Postmaster: Address Corrections should be sent to the Phyllis Schlafly Report, Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002.

Subscription Price: \$15 per year. Extra copies available: 50 cents each; 4 copies \$1; 30 copies \$5; 100 copies \$10.