

Some thinksheets are born by the coming together of two with gleams in their eyes. The two in this case are an excellent family counselor who spoke to our clergy group yesterday (14 May 86)--a woman--and, today, the book A LESSER LIFE: THE MYTH OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN AMERICAN--by a woman. The former was Jean Swanne of Cambridge and Hyannis. The latter is Sylvia Ann Hewlett, the director of the (U.N. Association) Economic Policy Council. Each, from her own angle, focuses on THE FAMILY. And both, each from her own angle, consider "equality" a dysfunctional principle vis-a-vis father/mother in the American family.

1. Let's have a short go at "equality" itself. Present rhetorical uses of the word are sociopolitical extensions, legitimate or not, from the A-S-law phrase "equality before the law" (with, as logo, Miz Justice blindfolded and bearing a gravity scale). Even this original meaning is little observed on the earth, and properly preached and exported (cultural imperialism?) by English-speaking countries. No problem with the sermon, I say; but what do you do "after the service"? What implications and applications? I find myself with critical questions on most of the imps. & apps.

2. Eg---and here SAH reinforces what I've long said--women's equality in the workplace is, in some ways, simply awful for women. The author, when teaching at Barnard, found faculty feminists opposed to maternity leave and daycare: feminists should be for equality, not special privileges. Her book, here, cries out for special privileges in recognition of female biology, MORE-THAN-equal rights; it's a "passionate plea for economic justice for women," and justice here calls for equity against equality.... She doesn't make as much of the great word "equity" as I'd like to see; "equity" correlates with justice, "equality" correlates with arithmetic and is coldly impersonal. But what she calls the "anti-men, anti-children and anti-motherhood" strain in current feminism prefers "equality," partly out of fear of overrecognition of biological factors--fear of the baneful effects of the old Freud bromide "Biology is destiny." Too, "many of the early leaders of the movement... were fleeing...(the) domestic world. Their agenda was to get out there as autonomous individuals, as clones of the male competitor....But 90% have become mothers" who need biological protection against workworld equality with men+ (somehow!) more help in the mother-child relationship (though more help from their husbands / male live-ins is a wan hope). (In almost all human groups on the earth, men have had and have almost nothing to do with child-rearing and house-care, and that's not apt to change significantly except here and there in some small sections of the upper-middle class; so "society" has to address, structurally, the excessive burdens of the adult female in peasant and "advanced" societies.)

3. Neither "= pay for =work" nor "comparable worth" touches the basic problem, which is that working mother-housewives need MORE \$ than do men in spite of their being LESS dependable employees. NOTE: Studies I've seen show women, on the days they work, MORE punctual and reliable than men. But, for biological reasons, they can't be counted on to work as steadily, day after day, as men do; they have more sick-offs, and want time off to have babies and take care of children's emergencies. At present, of course, we're two steps away from this need: women, now, are in as wide a gap from men, pay-wise, as before the women's movement. The "Equality!" cry inhibits, as equity furthers, moving toward justice. The two aspects of equity are justice and fairness. Just to mention one fairness issue: Is it fair to men to get (1) only = pay, or even (2) less pay, than a woman who's behind in knowledge and skills from having had to drop out on childbearing-and-infancy leave? In either

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misogyny would be increased: men would have one more reason for hating women. (The present situation invites to misandry: women have a removable reason for hating men.) Women's special workworld needs: "job-protected maternity leave, child care, flextime and specially tailored career ladders." (Some of my quotes from the author are from her book, some from the May/June/86 COMMON CAUSE MAGAZINE interview with her.) Further, since the working mother doesn't have as much time to spend educating her child(ren), there's need for "early childhood education programs."....Further adding to the workingwoman's burdens is that "We have lost the protections of the traditional family, with divorce up there at 50% and alimony having gone the way of the trolley."

4. Aggressive promotion of abortion would offer some relief to some workingwomen--and to society: premies now cost \$5,000 per day in hospital, and "the federal government is picking up most of those expenses because most of those premie babies are poor babies." Note on workingwomen's statistics: It's unfair to throw in teen mothers, who now cost the federal gov't. \$16 billion per year: most of them will be extremely-low-pay throughout life, and there are so many of them that to include them radically skews the statistics. Yet I know of no statistics that exclude them.

5. Shocking quote: "Our nation doesn't see childbirth as a very nationally important event....The only other country that doesn't is S.Africa." Another: "Men are picking up only 5% of child care." At present, in effect, we are punishing workingwomen for becoming mothers; and increasing numbers of them are, partly consequently, opting not to. Attendant problem: These nonmothers in the workworld are the best-educated women, which leaves America's mothering to be done by less-educated women.... "'Equality' is very appealing, but it doesn't help produce the concrete support and services that we now desperately need."....Worry: Welfare encourages childbearing; would workworld maternity rights? Probably.... Neglect: "Feminism has failed to give vigorous support to family issues."ERA wastes energy and resources and would be bad news for equity. "Feminism should not be equated with equal rights."

6. The other woman, Jean Swanne, grew up in an Irish (let's not talk about our problems) family and specializes--what else?--in helping families talk about, and do something concrete about, their problems. (Yes, ethnicity is important in family counseling: every ethnos is both strong and weak in family, and it's important--says the authoritative text on the subject--to get your head into the right ethnos if you're going to be helpful. Be prejudiced in the sense of prepared with the right ethnic paradigm; generalize from the paradigm to the particular family, being prepared for surprises of course--just as in generalizing on the bases of race or religion or sex.)....Systems analysis is necessary to helping the dysfunctional family: everybody and everything on board. The "family" is a social-emotional unit, a survival support-system. To see it helpfully, one must constantly revise one's situation-definition of "the problem."

7. Since the family counselor seeks to help the family "grow," s/he views every situation as basically "a developmental problem." (But I have some problems with defining "growth" as individual movement toward autonomy: that's the Enlightenment-Modern, not the biblical, ideal.)Families use their problems as organizing centers....Recombinant families ("step-families") have all family problems + confusions about roles/rules/expectations/communication....Members are intersupportive of dysfunctionalities; eg, she's well when he's drinking and sick when he's not....Do a genogram family tree (3 generations on each side), including unreconciled griefs...What's a request in a health family is, in a dysfunctional family, a demand. Negotiate former, threat latter.