August 25, 1994 Phyllis Schlafly

GENDER EQUITY IS JUST MORE PORK

It isn't just the Crime bill that is Christmas-treed for special interest groups. A similar travesty exists in the big spending bill for elementary and secondary schools, S.1513. The section called "Equalization assistance, technical and other assistance regarding school finance equity" is actually a well-larded pork barrel for the radical feminists to put their people on the public payroll.

This section is based on the spurious allegation that public schools are unfair to girls because they are subjected to various "gender inequities" such as "less attention from classroom teachers." To remedy this alleged problem in the schools, a whole new industry called "gender equity" is to be financed by the taxpayers.

Twelve pages are devoted to the numerous purposes for which feminisis are invited to apply for taxpayer funding: "technical assistance activities ... the operation of centers •.. the convening of conferences ... applied research and analysis designed to further knowledge and understanding of methods to achieve greater equity . grants to, or contracts or cooperative agreements with any public or private organization ••• the evaluation of curricula, textbooks and other educational materials to ensure the absence of gender stereotyping and bias."

The idea for this special-interest legislation originated in a report issued last year by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) purporting to show that classroom bias systematically undermines schoolgirls by depleting their confidence and self-esteem. This report caused newspaper headlines all over the country parroting the theme that "gender bias is shortchanging girls."

As pointed out by Christina Hoff Sommers in her new book, "Who

Stole Feminism?", the data used by the AAUW were never subjected to peer review and it was very difficult for reporters to inspect any of the AAUW material at all. Professor Sommers's book provides a mountain of documentation to prove that dozens of feminist allegations about discrimination (which have been reported by the media at face value) are unscholarly, unscientific, and just plain untrue.

The complaint that teachers discriminate against girls because they call on boys more often than girls is ridi ulous. The authors of those findings ignore the obvious gender difference that boys in school are "called on" because they are reprimanded more often than girls.

The feminist movement is based on a denial of the facts of human nature and a hopeless attempt to change them. The movement is kept going only by the large numbers of feminists who get taxpayer-paid jobs in the government or academia or get taxpayer-paid grants to finance their projects.

The *Providence Journal* recently published a big three-page analysis called "The Fading of a Movement." It quoted the consensus of Rhode Island feminists that today they have "not many women, not much movement."

The aging feminists complained bitterly that younger women "are furious with the women's movement. They say, 'It's your fault I can't have babies because I waited too long or took birth control too long or whatever. You told us we could have it all. Now we see we can't.' "

That's not a provincial Rhode Island complaint. It's the theme of commentator Anne Taylor Fleming's new book "Motherhood Deferred," which poignantly describes the bitterness of the older feminists who passed up their opportunity to have a family.

The diehard Rhode Island feminists also expressed their antagonism at the young career women who refuse to be called "feminists." They

won't accept what they call the "F-word" because it "has come to stand for strident, argumentative, angry, humorless."

The aging Rhode Island feminists also complained that "the greatest proportion of them [women] say they want to be married and want to have babies. Things are really very slow to change here in Rhode Island."

Again, that's not a provincial Rhode Island attitude. It's true in all the other 49 states, too. The newspapers are now full of stories with headlines such as "Superwoman goes home," "Working mothers jilt their jobs for home and family," "Young women trade jobs for marriage," and "Return of the Sole Breadwinner as fastest-growing family unit."

Demographers are speculating about the causes of these changes: lower interest rates on homes, increased income taxes, the high costs of maintaining a second job (car, wardrobe, restaurants, etc.), daycare diseases, and the opportunities of telecommunication in the home.

Our societal policy should be to let women make their own decisions about marriage vs. career without the interference of taxpayer-funded gender-equity federal busybodies. Trying to change human nature won't work, but the effort will waste a lot of taxpayers' money and mess up a lot of young women's lives.