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DOES SEXUAL LIBERATION EQUAL WOMEN'S LIBERATION?

The "lifestyle" or "women's" sections of metropolitan newspapers certainly have very different features from those they had fifteen years ago. Gone are the days when a couple of pages were filled with brides in wedding dresses and engagements of young women and men who pledged to live together in traditional marriage.

Now the brides are relegated to small pictures on less prominent pages, while the headlines and the friendly photos are given to those who live what is euphemistically called "alternate lifestyles." Readers are treated to a steady succession of features about different living arrangements, such as lesbian mothers, or women who decide to have a child but refuse to allow the child to have a father.

One big-city newspaper recently devoted an entire "lifestyle" page to flattering pictures and a laudatory feature article in praise of Linda LeClair and Peter Behr, two anti-Vietnam college students from the late 1960s who, we are told, deserve their niche in history as the standard bearers of the New Morality.

No, Linda didn't do something constructive based on personal achievement like Dr. Sally Ride. No, Linda wasn't elected or appointed to high office. No, she didn't succeed in business or a profession, or distinguish herself by volunteer service. What she did, as a sophomore at Barnard College, was to live unmarried with her lover in 1968 and to be the first to flaunt her immoral behavior on a college campus.

The female author of this newspaper feature apparently believes that this makes Linda something of a folk hero who opened up new worlds for women. "She really liberated things." The article credits her with the shift to coed dorms on college campuses.

To the discerning reader, a few small details toward the end of the story blemish Linda as a role-model. Linda and Peter broke up soon after their extra-marital liaison became known. She dropped out of college and, 15 years later, is a single working mother still seeking a college degree. Peter owns a massage therapy clinic in Canada and is married to a woman he met at a massage therapy convention.

A recent issue of TV GUIDE featured an article by Marlo Thomas talking frankly about her roles in television dramas. Fifteen years ago, she said, the girl she played in a TV series never slept with her boyfriend; the script made that very clear. When she kissed him, they were never in a bedroom; he was always at the door on his way out.

This year, Marlo Thomas said, she started a new TV series about a woman who has a lover, not a boyfriend. She says it is now OK for a television heroine to have an adulterous relationship. According to Marlo Thomas, this means that women have "grown up." In her view, this is liberation, and television reflects the advances women have made.

Why are so many media sources constantly selling the message that "sexual liberation" is part of "women's liberation"? "The sexual revolution" has forced women to take most of the risks in order to accommodate the promiscuous playboy lifestyle.

Most of the media refer to abortion as the preeminent "women's right." The sex act involves two people, yet the woman is expected to assume the risk for the "mistake" -- the physical risk plus the emotional trauma of killing her own baby. The woman is left with the bitterness of being exploited.

Contraceptives are usually touted as another evidence of "women's liberation." Again, the reponsibility for the worry, the inconvenience, and the physical risk from side effects falls on the woman.

Disease? The woman suffers more. She bears the high risk of cervical cancer from promiscuity. Even with incurable Herpes, the women's sores are more painful and they last longer. Beyond that is the threat that her VD experience poses to her unborn children, not only now but even later in life.

Easy, no-fault divorce has come about over the last 15 years as part of "women's liberation." The result has been economic devastation for women; divorce is the chief cause of the feminization of poverty. The ex-husband's standard of living goes up after divorce, and he can look for a younger wife; the ex-wife's standard of living goes down dramatically, and she has a hard time finding a younger husband.

The double standard is more devastating now than ever before. "Sexual liberation" is just a snow job to con women into taking the risks so that men can reap the rewards of the playboy lifestyle. "Sexual liberation" imposes most of the financial, physical,and psychological costs on women.