What Caused the Gender Gap?

by Phyllis Schlafly December 12, 1996

Republican politicians are wringing their hands over the gaping gender gap exposed in the November 5 election. A big double-digit spread separated the votes of men and women for Republican versus Democratic candidates.

The facts have spoiled the media's presupposition that the gender gap is caused by the Republican pro-life position. All surveys show that issue to be irrelevant to the voting gap, and Bob Dole conspicuously refused to use the life issue in his campaign.

The Republicans' mishandling of the Medicare issue, on the other hand, was a major factor, and predictably so, since there are many more senior women than senior men. The Medicare/gender gap problem was probably the chief reason why Bill Clinton carried Florida and Arizona.

Media Research Center thinks it has come up with an explanation for how Bill Clinton and the liberal Democrats developed a pipeline to the so-called soccer moms. Too many have been swallowing the pro-Big Government propaganda fed to them by women's magazines whose circulation is in the millions.

A joint Consumer Alert/Media Research Center study of 13 women's and family magazines for one year prior to the November 1996 elections revealed that they carried articles that portrayed government activism in a positive light by a ratio of more than six to one (115 to 18).

The 13 women's and family magazines included Good Housekeeping, Redbook, McCall's, Working Woman, Family Circle, Woman's Day, and Glamour. The largest number of articles calling for government intervention concerned health issues, such as demanding federal action to stop "drive-through deliveries" and more federal funding for medical research.

The magazines directed their readers toward support for "universal" (i.e., federal) health coverage. Not a single article mentioned Medical Savings Accounts, the option that would allow individuals to own and manage their own health care.

During the past year, these women's magazines carried 23 articles urging women to lobby for expanded government programs, and not a single one to lobby for less government or for spending cuts. To urge more federal funding, Good Housekeeping even provided form letters ("Join the Good Housekeeping Lobby") that needed only a signature before mailing.

The women's magazines published favorable profiles of many liberal female activists but none of conservatives. The favorite was Marian Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund, the leading exemplar of using children to expand government programs and regulations.

Researchers looked in vain for articles in these women's magazines that urged a reduction in the tax burden on families, or a reduction in the regulatory burden that is costly, and even harmful, to families and small businesses.

The Clinton campaign tapped into the propaganda flowing through women's magazines by pursuing what U.S. News & World Report called a "Redbook strategy." The rest of us laughed when Bill and Hillary promised that their Administration would force employers to give women time off to attend a PTA meeting or take their dog to the vet, but such talk apparently resonated with the readers of women's magazines.

Bill and Hillary also pursued a strategy to line up women's organizations through a gimmick called the "Contract with Women of the USA." This "contract" consists of twelve pledges designed to implement the Platform for Action adopted by "consensus" of 189 countries at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995.

The "contract" is a comprehensive prospectus for a socialist nation run by feminists. It was never approved by Congress, yet it is now being implemented through Clinton's Interagency Council on Women headed by HHS Secretary Donna Shalala, which has been holding White House-sponsored meetings.

The "contract" uses a vocabulary designed to motivate the radicals to action while deceiving and co-opting those uninitiated in feminist jargon. These phrases include: "empowerment of women in all their diversity," "equal sharing of family responsibilities," "high quality, affordable health care," "sexual and reproductive rights," "gender-fair multicultural curricula," "equal pay for work of comparable value," and ratification of the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women.

"Beijing" has become another political pipeline to the more than 200 women's organizations that signed

on as co-sponsors of the "Contract with Women." These include the National Organization for Women, Feminist Majority Foundation, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, American Women in Radio and TV, American Association of University Women, Business and Professional Women's Association, Zero Population Growth, Greenpeace, People for the American Way Action Fund, and Wages for Housework Campaign.

Individual endorsers include Gloria Steinem, Senators Carol Moseley-Braun and Patty Murray, Patricia Schroeder, Rep. Nita Lowey, Ellen Malcolm of Emily's List, Mary Dent Crisp, and John Anderson, president of the World Federalist Association.

The political persuasion of the endorsing organizations and individuals is obvious, but they are a useful conduit to spread liberal propaganda to thousands of women voters.