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THE FAMILY AND ECONOMIC POLICIES

Reporters are forever making a distinction between "economic" issues and "social" issues in an attempt to drive a wedge between the several branches of the coalition that elected Ronald Reagan in '80 and '84. They write as though his attention to economic or social issues is mutually exclusive, as though he must necessarily alienate the social-issue groups if he turns his attention to economic issues.

This dichotomy is as phony as the "gender gap" hoax that consumed the attention of reporters for so much of 1984 (until it ballooned into the Ferraro phenomenon, and then burst like a bubble on November 6).

The fact is that the number-one social issue IS economics. The ability of a man to earn an after-tax wage sufficient to support his family, and to allow his wife to give mother-care to their children, is the most important social/family/moral issue of all.

When you travel around the rest of the world, you can better appreciate what Americans take for granted in the United States. The greatest achievements of the American private enterprise system are the single-family dwelling and the ability of the average working man to give his wife a better quality of life in the home, instead of laboring from dawn to dusk in field or factory.

In many foreign countries, the women till the fields and carry the firewood and water like beasts of burden. They do most of the hard work that is done, while the men reserve their energies for hunting, fishing, and fighting.

In a recent speech, Congressman Jack Kemp, the leading advocate of low-tax policies in the 1980s, discussed economics as a family issue. He reminded his audience that, when "economics" first developed as a distinct discipline about the 4th century B.C., the name came from two Greek words, "oikos nomos," which mean "the law or custom of the home."

Aristotle wrote that, to have a happy life in this world, one must possess two things. First, he has to acquire moral characteristics or virtues, and second, he has to have some material possessions.

Our Declaration of Independence did not say that government exists to secure the natural right of "happiness" but rather "the pursuit of happiness." As Kemp says, government's role is "to establish conditions allowing people to develop their best qualities and maximize their potential to strive for happiness."

In the years prior to the Reagan Administration, the greatest single impediment to family vitality was the decline in economic opportunity. More government spending to help the needy produced only more inflation, more unemployment, and more taxes.

While single taxpayers pay proportionately the same tax in 1984 as they did in 1960, the avg. tax paid by a couple with two children is about 43% higher. The avg. tax paid by a couple with four children is about 223% higher.

Jack Kemp's new tax proposal is designed to remedy the financial discrimination against families in the income tax code. His plan would double the personal exemption from $1,000 to $2,000, increase the standard non-itemized deduction, and exclude 20% of the first $40,000 of earned income from taxation.

The Kemp plan would remove nearly a million and a half working poor from the tax rolls. No one below the poverty line would pay Federal income taxes. Most taxpayers would be able to file a one-page tax form.

Kemp states so well that "resources come from people, not simply from the hand of nature." That sticky black stuff oozed out of the ground in Biblical days, but it wasn't a natural resource until modern man discovered how to use oil as a useful product.

The income tax system in the United States has become so oppressive and so complicated that many people divert as much as they can into the underground (unreported) economy, and the wealthy spend their energies seeking tax shelters. The former is unfair to those who do pay their taxes. The latter is unfruitful and hits hardest on those who would benefit by job creation and plant expansion.

The liberals are trying to adopt the word "family," but they talk as though Uncle Sam were your father and mother. There's a big difference between pro-family policies and paternalism.

Americans want to live in freedom and enjoy the fruits of their labor; they don't want to live the life of a plantation slave. Kemp's low-tax plan is the way to economic growth and prosperity for the maximum number of people.