President Clinton Is Embarrassed

by Phyllis Schlafly December 26, 1996

It's difficult to embarrass President Clinton. He isn't embarrassed by the Paula Jones lawsuit, or the illegal Indonesian and Korean campaign donations, or the misuse of FBI files, or the criminal convictions of his closest friends.

But we've finally found something that he admits is "an embarrassment." It's his failure to persuade the U.S. Senate to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

He called a special news conference last week to proclaim his mea culpas in the presence of Hillary Rodham Clinton and a half dozen other feminist activists. He hung his head, saying that, although 130 other nations have ratified this treaty, the United States hasn't, and "there is no excuse for this situation to continue."

Pressure from the whining feminists may have been one reason why Clinton went public with this demand. Another reason was probably to deflect criticism from his Oval Office meeting two days earlier with General Chi Haotian, China's ruthless Defense Minister best known for crushing the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests.

Do you suppose that Clinton discussed his shame about U.S. failure to ratify this treaty with General Chi? Unlikely. Nor is it likely that Clinton registered disapproval of China's treatment of women or its policies of forced abortions and sterilization (even though China is a signatory to this treaty).

American women are the most fortunate class of people on the face of the earth. A treaty to enforce uniform rules for us and 130 other nations, under the supervision of UN busybody bureaucrats, could only diminish the rights and benefits American women now enjoy.

Furthermore, ratification of the UN Treaty on Discrimination Against Women would be craven kowtowing to the radical feminists, exceeded only by its unlimited capacity for legal mischief. It would be a massive interference with U.S. laws as well as with our federal-state balance of powers.

Article 1 purports to abolish discrimination against women "in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." Private relationships should be none of our government's business, much less the business of the United Nations.

Article 2 reiterates that the treaty would "eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise," including "customs and practices." No human behavior is beyond the purview of this impudent UN document.

The treaty would mandate the longtime feminist goal of total sexual integration in the military. It would turn over to the United Nations all decisions about military personnel, including the assignment of women to ground combat.

Article 3 would require us to pass new federal laws not only in political but also in "social, economic and cultural fields." Article 5 would require us "to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women" and to give assurances that we are following UN dictates about "family education."

Article 10 would make it a federal responsibility to ensure "the elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education . . . by the revision of textbooks . . . and teaching methods." Unable to persuade Americans voluntarily to go along with their censorship attempts, the feminists are trying to get the UN to do this job for them.

Article 11 would chain us to the feminist goal that wages should be paid on subjective notions of "equal value" rather than on objective standards of equal work. It would also require the federal government to establish "a network of child-care facilities."

Article 16 would require us to allow women "to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children." In feminist theory, this means that the United States would have to allow abortions at any time for any reason.

On the other hand, this language does not protect Chinese women victimized by their government's policy of forced abortions. China takes the position that it is not "responsible" for a woman to bear more than one child.

Article 16 also levels a broadside attack on states' rights. It would obligate the federal government to take over all family law, including marriage, divorce, child custody, and property.

To monitor the "progress" made under this treaty, Article 17 sets up a Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women consisting of 23 "experts." No doubt that means "experts" in feminist ideology, probably as certified by Hillary Rodham Clinton and/or Bella Abzug.

The State Department memo that explains the treaty, which was written by the late Edmund S. Muskie, candidly admits that it applies "to private organizations and areas of personal conduct not covered by U.S. law." It also admits that the treaty completely fails to take into account "the division of authority between the state and federal governments in the United States."

President Jimmy Carter signed this terrible treaty in 1980, and ever since the Senate has had the good judgment to refuse to ratify it. We trust the Senate will retain its sanity on this issue, despite Mr. Clinton's embarrassment.