Clinton Panders To The Feminists Again

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President Clinton has just proved again why the feminists, during all those embarrassing months last year, continued to defend behavior that no sane woman would tolerate in a public official, a boss or a husband. He is willing to support their most outrageous ideology wrapped in costly big-government legislative proposals.

The feminists' latest demand is for wage control, but it's not just ordinary socialist-style wage control. Wage control with a feminist twist means getting government apparatchiks in the bureaucracy or the judiciary to raise the pay of women while freezing the pay of men and hiring 1000 federal "staff inspectors" to "train" employers to acquiesce.

Clinton started off by parroting the tiresome feminist slogan that women "get paid only 75 percent for the same kind of work" that men do. "The average woman has to work," he whined, "an extra 17 weeks a year to earn what a similarly qualified man in the same kind of job makes."

Having prevaricated on national television about what the meaning of "is" is, he found no problem in hedging the truth with three weasel phrases in the same sentence: "average," "similarly qualified," and "kind of job."

The pay of the average American women includes millions of women like me who spent 25 years raising my children without any personal cash income and therefore will never reach the pay level of similarly qualified men. The pay gap in America is not between men and women at all, but between married women and other women and men who spend their lifetimes in the workforce.

That's primarily the result of a voluntary domestic division of labor, not workforce discrimination by a conspiracy of male chauvinists. Women who remain single and childless, spend their college years more productively, stay in the labor force, and work long hours earn about as much as men.

Married men with children earn the most, while married women with children earn the least. As the number of children increases, a married man works more hours in the workforce and a married woman works fewer hours, and there will never be male-female pay parity so long as most women spend part of their lives caring for their children.

"Similarly qualified" is usually measured by the number of years in college without recognizing the significant pay differential produced by different degrees. A degree in education or women's studies simply doesn't earn the same pay as a degree in engineering or science, yet more women persist in choosing the former and more men the latter.

"Kind of job" obscures the fact that the feminists are not actually seeking equal pay for equal work, which has been the law of the land since the Equal Pay Act of 1963. They want equal pay based on some bureaucrat's subjective evaluation of "kind of job" or its "worth" or "value."

Americans don't believe in the Marxist notion of equal pay for everyone; we believe in equal pay for equal work. People who work more hours, or work at more difficult, unpleasant or risky jobs, earn more and they should, yet government statistics are based on 35 hours as the work week even though many (especially men) work far longer hours and men suffer 90 percent of occupational fatalities.

To carry out their assault on men in blue-collar jobs, the feminists use the code words "comparable worth" or "pay equity." The feminists invented the imaginary "glass ceiling" in order to intimidate employers into promoting women into executive and professional jobs.

Comparable worth is the concept of comparing the worth (not work) of groups of women with groups of men and, therefore, doesn't reveal anything at all about justice to the individual. To use an analogy, if I tell you that women are only 90 percent as tall as men, you still will not have the slightest idea how tall I am.

The concept of comparable worth is that some commissar (or might we say commi-czarina) of wages should use the power of government to make the wages of groups of jobs held traditionally by women (such as office clerks) equal to the wages of groups of jobs held traditionally by men (such as prison guards). Which jobs get raises and how much, and which get pay cuts and how much, would be within the subjective and arbitrary discretion of the bureaucrats making the decisions.

The comparable worth notion assumes that people are (or should be) paid what they are "worth." But almost everyone thinks he is worth more than he is being paid.

Each of us is paid a compromise between what we think we're worth and what someone is willing to pay. Those millions of decisions add up to what we call the free market economy.

Why are football and baseball players paid more than the President? Lawyers more than ministers? Rock stars more than musicians in major symphony orchestras? Should government decide what they are worth?

If it were really true that businesses pay women less than men for the same work, then cost-conscious bosses would hire only or mostly women. Since that doesn't happen, there must be other factors.

The proper role of government is to provide equal opportunity, not preferential treatment based on warped social theory, especially when that theory is so demonstrably false.