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THE TWO-CLASS AMERICAN SOCIETY

Is the traditional family an anachronism in the 1980s? That seems to be the assumption of television and radio talk shows, lecture platforms, lifestyle sections of metropolitan newspapers, magazines, the theater and movies, public opinion surveys, and all the channels that report socio-cultural trends. This dreary message is beamed at the public, overtly and subliminally, in a thousand ways every week.

The economic side of this message is that all wives will soon be out of the home and in the paid labor force, and that this trend is not only an economic "necessity" but a social good. We are told incessantly that a single-earner couple cannot support a family, that mothers "have to work" in order to support their families, and that the wife in the home is as extinct as the dodo bird.

What is presumptuously called "the women's movement" has supposedly "liberated" women from the menial drudgery of housework and given women new opportunities for careers in the paid labor force, especially in nontraditional (formerly all-male) occupations (from astronaut to coal miner).

The social side of this message is that "sexual liberation" has permanently changed moral attitudes, made any sexual activity socially acceptable, and redefined the "family" to include any group of persons living together even if not related by blood, marriage or adoption. "Alternate lifestyles" are now supposedly okay, including serial marriage (frequent changing of partners through multiple divorces), cohabitation without marriage, and homosexual and lesbian couples.

Premarital sex among teenagers is asserted to be a permanent fact of life. We are not supposed to be judgmental about this but instead make it free from guilt and pregnancy by contraceptives and abortion clinics without parental knowledge or consent.

Everybody, we are told, will probably be divorced at some time in their life. "Single parenthood" is the modern-style family. Divorce-on-demand must be made available to any spouse without the consent of the other. Abortion-on-demand should be available to

any woman without the consent of the other spouse (or the parent of the minor).

Taxpayers are supposed to pay the horrendous financial costs of all these policies, including child-care for mothers who prefer to be in the paid labor force, separate housing and generous money payments to teenagers who have illegitimate babies, tax-paid abortions, and a variety of costly benefits to divorced wives whose husbands have been allowed to evade their support obligations.

We each have the freedom to choose our own values and goals. But the frequency and intensity (often combined with ridicule and sarcasm) with which media spokespersons try to thrust these anti-family attitudes down our throats indicates their emotional demand for social acceptance of these changes in values. They seem determined to make those who live by traditional moral standards the ones who are out of step with the times.

These anti-family attitudes have established themselves as dominant in the fantasy world of communications, but they have not succeeded in the real world. Despite persistent hammering through news and entertainment, the majority of Americans have rejected the whole line. In this other unreported portion of our society, people believe in the work ethic, and they resent paying high taxes for handouts.

In this other unreported section of our society, people consider marriage a lifetime commitment, in sickness and in health, for richer and for poorer. They look upon marriage as the beginning of a new family in which children will bear their father's name and are entitled to sacrificial nurturing by a full-time mother.

America has become a two-class society. The class division has nothing whatsoever to do with level of income or education or job status or talent or sex or race or color or advantage/disadvantage of birth. It has everything to do with whether or not you have a commitment (1) to moral values (i.e., respect for God, church/synagogue, and the Ten Commandments), (2) to family values (i.e., marital fidelity, mothercare of children, and parental rights in education, (3) to the work ethic (i.e., hard work, thrift, savings, and the right to enjoy the fruits of one's labor and improve one's economic lot in life).

The Americans who share these traditional commitments have almost no voice in the channels of communication today. But these Americans exist, and the more the media claim they are obsolete, the more the media lose credibility. That's one reason why Ronald Reagan, who personifies traditional commitments, is so popular with the American people.