FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 / (618) 462-5415

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MOTHERHOOD WITHOUT MARRIAGE

Is it advantageous for children to have the benefit of two parents -- or is one parent enough and the other only a physical necessity for the brief time it takes to get a new human life conceived and born? Conversely, is a child disadvantaged if he lacks the love, care, guidance, and role-model of one of his two parents?

In the past generation, our government has spent hundreds of billions of dollars to help disadvantaged children to get a headstart in life, an education, special training, financial help, etc. Disadvantaged is always defined in economic terms, and the proposed remedy always requires the spending of taxpayers' funds by federal bureaucrats.

But how about the disadvantage of being deprived of a parent?

The Census Bureau reports that one child out of five in the United States is now growing up without two parents in the home. Nearly half of all the babies born today will spend a signficant portion of their childhood years without one parent. In nine out of ten cases, the missing parent is the father.

The change over the last ten years is dramatic. The number of so-called one-parent families has doubled from 3.3 million in 1970 to 6.3 million in 1981. At least two-thirds of the fathers who have left home do not support their own children after they depart, and an indulgent government has let them get by with their irresponsibility.

While the high divorce rate that leaves wives to raise their children alone is the major cause of the rise in single-parent homes, the second reason is the decision of unwed mothers to keep and raise their children.

Over the last several years, the lifestyle section of liberal metropolitan newspapers have been giving this choice respectability. One typical example was a New York Times Style-section feature article entitled "When Motherhood Doesn't Mean Marriage." Its enthusiastic advocacy journalism was matched by its advocacy photography showing happy youngsters with adoring unwed mothers.

Who are these mothers who receive such favorable publicity in America's most

prestigious newspaper? They are "self-sufficient women in their 30's who are choosing to become unwed mothers, to combine careers with child rearing in a home where there is no father and no serious talk of marriage." Some absent fathers are men with whom the mothers had temporary affairs; some are men of casual sexual encounters.

According to Dr. Phima Engelstein, a psychiatry professor who has researched unmarried mothers, "these are women who want to be in full control of their babies, these babies are theirs alone." The advocates of this lifestyle use the same rhetoric as the abortionists: "it's our bodies and our choice."

One of the unmarried mothers, a successful professional woman, described her attitude: "We certainly don't need men for economic support. We know how to make our own decisions. I feel I'm better off not having to hassle out decisions regarding the kid. I'd rather make them myself." When the baby's father asked if it was his, she told him "I don't feel it's really your business."

The lifestyle sections of metropolitan newspapers used to be be dominated by news of engagements and marriages. That's now considered hopelessly old-fashioned; ambitious journalists who want to get ahead don't write about such obsolete "stereotypes" as a man and woman woman making a lifetime commitment to each other and starting a new family under a common name. Times have changed.

Indeed they have. Those pages in most daily newspapers have been replaced by enthusiastic reportage of all kinds of anti-family aberrations. Every lifestyle is reported as fashionable and fun except lifetime marriage.

At the Commission on International Woman's Year conference in Houston in 1977 (the $5 million federally-funded consciousness-raising session which set the agenda of the so-called women's liberation movement), a popular button worn by many delegates said: "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle." Translated, that means "men are irrelevant." The women who have decided to have babies without marriage are the personification of that slogan.

After 10 to 15 years of pursuing their careers alone, these liberated women have decided that total fulfillment also includes motherhood, but without men. They are too selfish to share their total control and decision-making over the fruit of their "own body." So they deliberately bring children into the world who will be permanently disadvantaged by never knowing the love and care of a father.