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RELEASE: JUNE 19, 1984

CHILDREN ARE CRYING FOR MOMS AT HOME

Not so many mothers are at home in the afternoon any more. Those who are at home are usually "moms" to latch-key children, too. Confronted with the prospect of going home to an empty house, children will usually, if they can, gravitate to the home of a schoolmate whose mother is at home.

Indeed, so-called experts are now instructing latch-key children to do exactly that. In a latch-key course for 9-to-13-year-olds, pupils are given a multiple-choice question. "You are walking home alone from school and you think a man in a car is following you. What would you do? (A) Stand still and see what he does. (B) Walk quickly home and lock yourself in the house. (C) Walk to a neighbor's home and stay there. (D) Other." The correct answer is (C) because "if you go home and lock yourself in the house, you could be followed, and there might not be anyone there to help you."

Brenda Hunter, author of "Where Have All the Mothers Gone?", eloquently described her life as a latch-key child. "No matter how sunny the atmosphere outside, an empty house is always cold and dark and lonely. I always made a check under the bed and looked in the closets to make sure that no burglar had entered our home."

Many women have followed the siren call of feminists seeking fulfillment in the labor force, but have times really changed? We recently had our first grandchild, and I discovered that babies are the same in the 1980s as they were 30 years ago. They are just as demanding as they always were; and elementary schoolchildren are just as hungry as ever for love and emotional security.

The liberated lifestyles which encourage wives and mothers to do their own thing have left children to bear burdens of loneliness, depression, and the empty home. Latch-key children are crying out for the love of moms who will subordinate their own career ambitions and desire for material things to the well-being of their children.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census recently published some interesting figures which cast light on changing socio-economic trends and provide evidence that millions of mothers still accord a higher priority to giving mother-care to their children than to material

things. It is a special study called "Earnings in 1981 of Married-Couple Families."

This report provides statistics on the intact family where a husband and wife are living together, which is the big majority of the American people. There are 49.6 million married couples (99 million Americans). The study does not cover the situation of the single-parent family.

Considering only the 42.2 million married couples where at least one spouse is employed, the Census Bureau figures show a vast difference in standard of living between one-paycheck families (husband-breadwinner and wife-homemaker) and two-paycheck families. In the 14 million traditional families in which the husband is employed but the wife is not, the average earnings are $22,300.

But in the 26.3 million families where both the husband and wife are in the paid labor force, the average earnings are $28,560, and that figure shoots up to $34,560 if both spouses are employed full time. These figures show that married couples where the wife is a full-time homemaker are living at a significantly lower income level.

The disparity in standard of living is probably even greater than these figures indicate, since full-time homemakers often have more children than women who are in the labor force.

The national media and feminist spokespersons put forth an incessant drumbeat to persuade Americans that, in this day and age, mothers "must work," and that the government "should" facilitate that lifestyle by providing child-care facilities. The Census Bureau report shows, however, that 14 million mothers have rejected that notion and chosen the traditional role of motherhood even though it means living at a lower income level.

Millions of wives today are economizing and stretching every dollar in order to feed and clothe their families on the husband's single income so that their children can have something more precious than money can buy: the emotional security of a mom at home. That's the kind of dedication to the role of motherhood that should be encouraged, not discouraged, by our tax laws and social legislation.

Yet, the Federal income tax law gives preferential treatment amounting to several thousand dollars a year to the wife who chooses the paid job instead of the role of motherhood. That's why the first step in addressing the problems of latch-key children is to give the full-time wife equality in the income tax law with the wife in the paid labor force.