from Phyllis Schlafly

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Murphy Brown and Dan Quayle

The firestorm over Vice President Dan Quayle's speech about morals, the Los Angeles riots, and Murphy Brown proves that he touched a tender nerve. The feminists and their friends in the media elite, who are accustomed to setting the national agenda for discussion, are livid that Quayle was able to skewer one of their most radical dogmas with a 20-second soundbite.

Vice President Quayle was exactly right to say that the Murphy Brown television episode had the effect of "mocking the importance of fathers" when it showed a glamorous and successful career woman deliberately choosing to become a single mom. Why is anyone surprised?

For 20 years, the feminists have been preaching the dogma that women can be completely independent and self-sufficient without a man, that women don't need to be married or have a baby to be fu1filled, and that wives don't need to be supported by their husbands. To the feminist ideologues, men are irrelevant and unnecessary except as sperm donors.

At the tax-funded International Women's Year Conference held in Houston in November 1977, the event which defined modern feminism, the most popular button worn by the thousands of attendees read: "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle." The Murphy Brown episode simply dramatized that slogan.

So what, if a husband and father is nowhere to be seen! She doesn't need one! And feminists feel attacked if anyone suggests that she does need one.

Newspapers all over the country rushed into print with feature stories on their 1ocal "Murphy Browns." The Chicago Tribune ran a profile and pictures of fortysomething Chicago career women who have had babies without any husband in sight.

Rita McLennon showed off her four-year-old daughter conceived by artificial insemination. "I was about to turn 40 and didn't want to go through life with no prospect of having a child," she said.

Cathy Thompson, an administrator at the University of Chicago who proudly displayed her young son for the cameras, said she was driven by a strong feeling "that she wanted a child at that time in her life." "It's easier without a man," said Kathy Helms, a graphic designer; "I don't have to pick up the socks and the dirty underwear."

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, in 1990 there were 530,000 women in the United States with children who had never been married, and whose income was in excess of $30,000. That figure is nearly three times what it was a decade earlier.

The feminists think this shows progress and liberation for women, and that's why they are so angry at Dan Quayle for, in effect, saying "Not!" The traditionalists, on the other hand, think that millions of fatherless children are a social ill of national magnitude and enormous unhappy consequences, because not having a father is a much bigger handicap than being poor.

The other group trembling in rage is those who want to drag everyone who dares to label any behavior as "wrong." Extra-marital sex and its unhealthy, expensive consequences? That's just an alternative lifestyle! Burning down Los Angeles? Don't blame the rioters; it's Ronald Reagan's fault because he didn't give enough taxpayer handouts to the poor.

In his San Francisco speech, Dan Quayle called for a public discussion of the fact that some "things are wrong." He said, "It's time to talk again about family, hard work, integrity and personal responsibility." He is right.

Britain's new Education Secretary, John Patten, recently made this same point even more strongly. In the British journal, The Spectator of April 18, Patten identified the cause of the sharp increase in crime.

Patten said, "It is, to me, self-evident that we are born with a sense of good and evi1. It is also self-evident that as we grow up each individual chooses whether to be good or bad. Fear of eternal damnation was a message reinforced through attendance at church every week. The loss of that fear has meant a critical motive has been lost to young people when they decide whether to try to be good. citizens or to be criminals."

Patten added, “Dwindling belief in redemption and damnation has led to loss of fear of the eternal consequences of goodness and badness. It has had a profound effect on personal morality -- especially on criminality.”

Patten cal1ed on society, and especially on churches and parents, to reaffirm the concept that “evil exists, not endemically in the corridors of power, but individually; that responsibilities are as important as rights; and that there are no excuses for crime.”

It is clear that the young hoodlums who torched Los Angeles and killed innocent people are not restrained by respect for other people's persons or property, or even by fear of police or prison. The various forces that have secularized America, redefined the family, and liberated our society from “Victorian values” have nothing to substitute for a fear of eternal damnation as a punishment for evil acts.