P.S. to the NEWS
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Social Security Proposals

The Social Security Administration made headlines recently when it admitted that it has failed to credit between $3.4 and $6.9 billion in taxes to the proper wage earners' accounts. However, the really big news about Social Security was not this redundant evidence of bureaucratic incompetence, but the radical proposals the Administration made in a new 323-page report published under the misleading title "Social Security and the Changing Roles of Men and Women."

Buried amidst irrelevant rhetoric about how American society is changing (because of the high divorce rate and an increasing number of women in the labor force), this report launches a radical campaign to punish the tranditional family in which the husband is the provider and the wife is a fulltime homemaker and mother.

The report offers several options for a major reorganization of Social Security. All the options are designed to discriminate against the single-income family where the wife is a fulltime homemaker and the husband is the sole wage earner. Under the new proposals, these one-income couples will either be cut 15 percent in retirement benefits or charged double in payroll taxes.

Option #1, called the "earnings sharing" plan, would divide the total annual earnings of a married couple each year, and then credit half to each spouse no matter which one earned it. That sounds "equal," but the net result would be less cash. Option #2, called the "double-decker" plan, would provide a flat-rate benefit regardless of marital status or employment, and a second tier of benefits payable only to those who worked in covered employment.

Option #3 would require a working husband in a one-income couple to pay a second full Social Security tax on the assumed value of his wife's work in the home. This would amount to a new tax on one-income couples of about $1,000 a year (depending on which formula was used). The report concedes that most couples "would get no

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greater benefits than they would get under present law."

The Social Security report is a masterpiece of semantic trickery in trying to conceal its detrimental effect on the traditional family. The text describes the cash cuts like this: "reductions are provided in other areas." You must study the statistical tables to discover that "providing" reductions means slashing the cash benefits, and that the sole "other area" is the traditional family.

Here is the cash difference. A one-income couple whose Social Security benefits would be $288 under the present system wuld be cut to $244. A one-income couple that would receive $528 monthly under the present system would be cut to $464. A one-income couple that would receive $648 under the present system would be cut to $544.

The report throughout tries to downgrade the homemaker by a skillful use of the belittling word "dependency," as though it were demeaning and suspect. The report states frankly that its objective is "to eliminate dependency as a factor in entitlement to Social Security spouse's benefits."

The report tries to entice wives into supporting the changes by proclaiming that a wife "should have equal social security protection in her own right rather than as a dependent" of her husband. Few women would fall for the bait of having Social Security "in her own right" if they knew it would mean a cut in retirement benefits of up to $100 a month.

The report slyly implies that the new proposals have something to do with the elimination of sex discrimination. They clearly do not. The Supreme Court, in several important cases of the last few years, has made Social Security sex neutral. The report admits that the very minor gender-based distinctions still in Social Security "are very technical and have limited applicability."

Of course, it is easy to see why the Social Security Administration wants to induce all wives to get out of the home and join the labor force. They would then have to pay more Social Security taxes. But the women who have been doing their job as fulltime wives and mothers should not have to pay the costs of the many defects in the system. (end)