Feminist Whines Lead Down a Dead-End Road

by Phyllis Schlajly *March 9, 2005*

Despite five weeks of public mea culpas by Harvard President Lawrence Summers, what one Harvard professor called "a firestorm" continues to percolate on Ivy League campuses and in the national media. A Harvard Crimson poll reported that 52 percent of Harvard professors now disapprove of Mr. Summers, and the presidents of Princeton, Stanford and MIT have chimed in with op-ed criticisms.

Now that Summers has released the text of his January 14 speech, we can see that he presented three very rational hypotheses to explain why there are fewer women than men in science and engineering academia: (1) "the high-powered job hypothesis" (the concept that women voluntarily reject the 80-hour-week and job-intensity that top careers require), (2) "different availability of aptitude at the high end," and (3) "different socialization and patterns of discrimination" (the favorite feminist explanation for all sex differences).

The outburst by feminist professors simply confirms the stereotype not only that they are too emotional to handle intellectual or scientific debate, but that they seek to forbid any research that might produce facts they don't want the public to know.

When MIT Professor Nancy Hopkins rushed from the room, claiming her "heart was pounding" and her "breath was shallow," she reminded us of Miss Pittipat Hamilton in "Gone With the Wind" calling for her smelling salts before she swooned. We expect more willingness to discuss unpopular views from female professors who want to be taken seriously.

Perhaps it's a coincidence, but the national media have climbed on this gender controversy to help market the latest feminist assault against homemakers, Judith Warner's "Perfect Madness: Motherhood in the Age of Anxiety." She calls "the general culture of motherhood in America oppressive" and asserts that women are locked into a "cult" that worships the goddess of perfect motherhood.

Forty years ago, Betty Friedan's book "The Feminine Mystique" appealed to the pampered suburban housewife by claiming she suffered from "the problem that has no name." Judith Warner tries to initiate a similar movement by labeling women's plight the "mommy mystique" or, inelegantly, "this mess."

Whereas Friedan's book initiated a drive to move mothers out of the home, Warner's book hopes to start a drive for the taxpayers to help women "living Mommy Track lives" to "get a life of their own." Both books are a tiresome litany of complaints about life's daily challenges in the lifestyles that women have freely chosen.

Sylvia Hewlett's book "Creating a Life," which received unprecedented free publicity several years ago, recorded the complaints of successful professional and business women who were unhappy because they were childless. Judith Warner's book "Madness" is filled with the whines of educated upper middle-class women who did become mothers but surprise, surprise, discovered that babies require a lot of care.

It's all society's fault, according to the authors. If only the government were caring enough to provide taxpayer-paid high-quality daycare and preschool, employer-paid maternity and parental leave, and taxpayer/employer-paid health care for all full- and part time workers, mothers could get out of the "mess" or at least shift the cleanup burden onto the backs of society.

All these big-government liberals are spreading the lie that American women are massively discriminated against and victims of a "nationwide epidemic" of stress, anxiety, frustrations, and depression. Both Warner and Hewlett want socialist Europe to be our model.

These whiners should get a reality check by reading Dr. Warren Farrell's new book "Why Men Earn More: The Startling Truth Behind the Pay Gap and What Women Can Do About It."

This well-documented book is the total answer to the feminist complaint that women make only 77 cents for every dollar a man makes (the figure used by John Kerry in his campaign last year). If this were true, then businesses could become much more profitable by hiring mostly women.

Equal pay for equal work has been the law of the land since 1963, and a big federal bureaucracy enforces the law. The average pay of all women tells us nothing about equity for individuals.

Dr. Farrell provides massive documentation to prove that men earn more than women because men work more hours per week, take more hazardous jobs, work at less desirable locations and under less pleasant working conditions, and take more technical training. That should be obvious to all but the ideologues who major in women's studies and then complain because engineers make more money after graduation.

Dr. Farrell sets forth 25 ways women can earn higher pay, sometimes even equal pay with men without incurring the same drawbacks of the job. But there are trade-offs, and more and more women are happily trading career advancement for more family time.

Whether a woman chooses home or the workplace, or the "work-life balance" that Warner claims is illusory, victimhood is a dead-end road to a discontent which the government cannot cure.