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JOB PREFERENCE

The unemployment rate has climbed to nearly nine percent, the highest since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The plain fact is that there are not enough jobs to go around. However, the economic hardship of unemployment does not fall equally on everyone out of a job. Those with children to support are hurt. the most

The role of the Federal Government **in** employment today is spelled out in several **laws,** especially the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972. This law prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of race, religion, or sex.

In the hands of the Federal bureaucrats, however, this has been interpreted to require job preference for certain minorities, including employed women; in order to achieve arbitrary race and

..l...l..l. vll.1.1c.L nu.Lu.::;, instead of the Federal Government prohibiting job discrimination, it has been requiring job discrim ination on the basis of race or sex.

This practice unjustly discriminates against the person who is trying to support a family. When the principal wage earner of a family **unit** is bumped from a job, the end result is that many more persons are hurt, especially children. More people go on welfare, which in turn increases the taxes that all of us must pay. Who gets the job preference may be the difference between putting one person on welfare or ten.

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The question is, if there are not enough jobs to go around, who should get the job preference when qualifications are roughly equal? Should the preference be given on the basis of race or sex? Or should it not rather be given to that person, regardless of race, religion, or sex, who is supporting a family? In a period of high unemployment, it is unjust for job preference (for reasons of race or sex) to be given to a second wage-earner in a f mily over another family which has no wage-earner at all.

There is one obvious solution, and Congress should act im mediately. Congress should amend the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 to authorize employers to give job preference in hiring and promotions, and retentions during layoffs, to fue spouse designated as the Principal Wage Earner in each family.

Each married couple could itself decide which spouse is to be designated as the Principal Wage Earner, and this decision would be registered with the Social Security Administration for employers to verify. Only one spouse per family could be so designated. Where there is only one parent, he or she would obviously be the Principal Wage Earner.

This plan would be wholly voluntary, it could be put into effect immediately, and it has the logic of simple justice. It will distribute the available jobs in the most equitable manner. It will be fair to all races and both sexes. It will reduce the welfare burden and save taxes. It will safeguard the dignity and economic independence of the family unit.

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