United Nations Treaty On Women

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Rumblings are leaking out of Washington that Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Joseph Biden (D-DE) and the Clinton holdovers in the State Department are conspiring to resuscitate the long-moribund United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). A hearing was scheduled for May 15 and then postponed, but the State Department has placed it on a list of acceptable treaties.

CEDAW is not acceptable, and George W. Bush's entire constituency is up in arms against it. It was signed by President Jimmy Carter in 1980 and Bill Clinton made an attempt to get it ratified in 1996, but no one rallied to support it except the Clintonista feminists.

The notion is downright ridiculous that American women (the most fortunate class of people who ever lived) should submit to a treaty that dictates uniform rules for 130 other nations (all of which treat women worse than the United States). But the whining feminists induce some men to do foolish things, and endorsing this terrible treaty is one of the most foolish.

Ratification of CEDAW would be craven kowtowing to the radical feminists, exceeded only by the treaty's unlimited capacity for legal mischief. It would be a massive interference with U.S. laws as well as with our federal-state balance of powers.

Even Edmund S. Muskie, when he was Secretary of State, admitted that this treaty applies "to private organizations and areas of personal conduct not covered by U.S. law." His memo said that the treaty completely fails to take into account "the division of authority between the state and federal governments in the United States."

Article 1 purports to abolish discrimination against women "in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." "Other fields"? Private relationships should be none of our government's business, much less the business of the United Nations.

Article 2 reiterates that the treaty would "eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise," including "customs and practices" as well as all "public institutions." This would include mandating the longtime feminist goal of a gender-neutral military.

Article 3 would require us to pass new federal laws not only in political but also in "social, economic and cultural fields." Article 5 would require us "to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women" and to give assurances that we are following United Nations dictates about "family education."

Article 10 would make it a federal responsibility to ensure "the elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education . . . by the revision of textbooks and . . . teaching methods." The UN would be authorized to revise our textbooks to conform to feminist ideology and semantics.

Article 11 would chain us to the feminist goal that wages should be paid on subjective notions of "equal value" (i.e., the discredited notion of "comparable worth") rather than on objective standards of equal work. It would also require another long-time feminist goal, a federal "network of child-care facilities."

Article 16 would require us to allow women "to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children." This is feminist jargon to lock the United States into a perpetual treaty obligation to allow abortions at any time for any reason.

On the other hand, this language would not protect Chinese women victimized by their government's policy of forced abortions. China takes the position that it is not "responsible" for a woman to bear more than one child.

Article 16 also levels a broadside attack on states' rights. It would obligate the federal government to take over all family law, including marriage, divorce, child custody, and property.

To monitor U.S. "progress" (i.e., compliance) under this treaty, Article 17 sets up a committee of "23 experts." No doubt that means "experts" in feminist ideology, such as Hillary Clinton, Barbara Boxer and Patricia Schroeder.

CEDAW's international "experts" have already issued negative reports about the practices of countries that were rash enough to ratify the treaty. They criticized Ireland for "promoting a stereotypical view of the role of women in the home and as mothers," Belarus for "such symbols as a Mother's Day," Slovenia because "less than 30 percent of children under three years of age were in formal day care," and recommended "the decrimininalization of prostitution in China."

CEDAW would clearly diminish the rights and benefits American women now enjoy, as well as give extraordinary powers over U.S. laws to busybody global bureaucrats. We hope President Bush will unsign it just as he unsigned the International Criminal Court Treaty.