PS for 9/21/89

Shame on *Fortune* Magazine

Fortune Magazine's cover story on "The CEO's Second Wife" is proof of what George Gilder wrote in his landmark book *Men and Marriage*, namely, that "the only undeniable winners in the sexual revolution are powerful men. Under a regime of sexual liberation, some men can fulfill the paramount dream of most men everywhere; they can have the nubile years of more than one young woman."

The *Fortune* article presents a long succession of CEOs of major corporations who divorced their wives after a marriage of several decades and married a flashy, trim babe who helps him spend his money consorting with the other rich and powerful. The article conveniently includes a list of names and ages of some 50 CEOs and their second (or third or fourth) wives.

Don't get the idea that *Fortune's* article is unbiased reporting. On the contrary, the article reeks with the editorial message that in the '80s "divorce is fully respectable," and the CEO "with the old, nice, matronly wife is looked down on. He's seen as not keeping up appearances. Why can't he do better for himself?"

Nowhere does the article ask the question if the CEO didn't live up to his marriage contract, why should anybody believe his word on anything else? Nowhere does the article criticize the untrustworthiness of a man who treats his wife like his automobile, i.e., when he tires of her, he trades her in for a younger model. No, instead, *Fortune* justifies the practice of powerful CEOs indulging their desires with "trophy wives." It's one of the perks of success, like a company jet.

Fortune even helps the faithless husband to salve his conscience by predicting that he may become more considerate to his employees. Sometimes, *Fortune* says in extra large type, dumping his wife and marrying a younger woman "even results in his becoming a more considerate manager."

The *Fortune* writers apparently had no difficulty interviewing a long series of second wives and photographing them in their expensive clothes as they teach another woman's husband how to "build a new life" without children. Some of the second wives even revealed how they connived to get the married CEO to succumb to their wiles.

But, funny thing, *Fortune* didn't interview or print a picture of the most famous of all the second wives, Leona Helmsley. She's the classic example of the dynamic second wife *Fortune* spells out the essential requirements: thin, expensively gowned, and with her own career) who replaces a longtime first wife (Harry Helmsley dumped his first wife after 33 years of marriage).

Leona Helmsley is the only second wife who ever made the cover of *Newsweek* or *Time*. When she did, *Newsweek* put her face under a banner headline that read "Rhymes With Rich."

Back in the early days of the women's liberation movement, the early 1970s, a New York University professor named Warren T. Farrell provided the ideological rationale for why men should support women's lib. In a speech to the American Political Science Association, he argued that it was not enough that mean should be able to abandon or divorce their wives; they already could do that.

Farrell, who became a favorite speaker of feminist groups, argued for a society in which a husband should not be saddled with any "guilt feelings" when he leaves his wife after she has given him her best years. *Fortune* has done Professor Farrell one better by telling the up and coming CEO that he not only doesn't have to feel guilty; taking a second wife as a "trophy" is the "in" thing to do.

In his essay on the consequences of such a social system, George Gilder accurately says that the rich and powerful man who does this "is no less effectively a polygamist than if he had maintained a harem." Our easy divorce laws, adopted under pressure from the women's liberation movement during the 1970s, have enabled one spouse – without the consent of the other – to say "I divorce thee" three times and then be free to live with a new partner (just as Islamic law allows).

The first and obvious victims of this system are the cast-off wives who grow old alone when their husbands leave and remarry. Between the ages of 35 and 65, there are 50 percent more divorced or separated women than divorced or separated men, because the middle-aged and older women do not marry young men.

Gilder says that "a society is essentially an organism," and we cannot simply expel a few million women from the fabric of families, remarry their husbands to younger women, and quietly return to our business as if nothing had happened. "What has happened," he says, "is a major rupture in the social system, felt everywhere."