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AUTHOR Glossop, Robert
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ABSTRACT

When looking at current data on families, it is important to examine many of the assumptions held concerning families. While families do share common needs and aspirations, it is unwise to invoke an image of the family which assumes that all families fulfill tasks in the same way. Practitioners in the fields of education and the social services too often find themselves struggling with the unintended consequences of a static and monolithic image of the family. It is possible to discern a pattern from among the interwoven economic, social, and demographic changes in society. In contrast to traditional patterns of home economics in which members of a family achieved material well-being and security because of their membership in a family, today, economic well-being is achieved in spite of family responsibilities. If a place is to be made for families in the future, a critical assessment is needed of (1) patterns of economic development that require high rates of geographical mobility, (2) patterns of income distribution that severely marginalize anyone who is not active in the labor force, and (3) patterns of work and employment that are insensitive to the family responsibilities of employees. (PCB)

PERSPECTIVES

THE VANIER INSTITUTE OF THE FAMILY / L'INSTITUT VANIER DE LA FAMILLE

120 Holland, Ottawa, Canada K1Y 0X6 (613) 722-4007

"RENEWED FOCUS ON THE CHANGING FAMILY AND ITS CHALLENGES"

Robert Glossop, Ph.D.
Coordinator of Programs
Vanier Institute of the Family

Keynote address to the First Annual Unified Family Courts and Conciliation Services National Conference - Hamilton, Ontario, March 29 - April 1, 1987.

Honourable Judges, Distinguished Representatives of the Court, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It was once customary to think of families as the foundation of society. Yet, today what we hear most about is divorce, family violence with women being beaten and kids abused and abducted and old people subjected to physical and emotional abuse. And, family appears all too often to be less a solid cornerstone of society and more a major cost or liability.

Still, Canadians do, as was recently reconfirmed in Maclean's Decima poll,[1] accord more significance to their family relationships than they do to any other aspect of their lives be it their jobs, their incomes, their religious affiliations or their political convictions.

And, for better or worse, the majority of Canadian marriages do last for a lifetime and this is likely to remain true for the forseeable future.

Much of the factual information about today's families is not new to you. You know as well, if not better than I, the extent of divorce in Canada today. In comparative terms, Canada's divorce rate is a moderate one relative to other industrialized societies. Moderate or not, there has been, since 1969, a 500% increase in the divorce rate.[2] About 10% of Canadian adults who have ever been married have experienced divorce[3] and, unless something almost unimaginable happens, we can anticipate that a figure in excess of 40% of marriages entered into today will end in divorce.[4] You have got a much better chance of staying married if you live in the Atlantic Provinces, or (depending upon your perspective) you have got a better chance of divorcing if you live in the western provinces.[5] Each year, a little more than 1% (1.2% to be exact) of all husband-wife households are dissolved. In 1981, that per centage was equivalent to 68,000 divorces, 1/2 of which involved dependent children such that on an annual basis, approximately 1/4 of a million Canadians, adults and children, are involved in the process of divorce.[6] No more than 1 in 20 divorce applications are contested[7] and it would be inaccurate to assess the state of Canadian family life in terms of the hostility one often associates with these most disturbing cases.

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Divorce is one of the reasons that account for the incidence of lone-parent families. The lone-parent family form is growing fastest among all other kinds of households. About 11 1/2% of Canada's families are lone-parent families today.[8] Approximately, 40% of children will live, for some period of time in a single-parent family before they are 18 years old. At the same time, it is true that single-parenting is not a new social or cultural phenomenon. In fact, there are today proportionately fewer single-parent families in Canada than there were in the 1930's and 1940's or, indeed, at any time prior to 1941.[9] Of course, in these earlier decades, single-parent families were the result of the death of one of the spouses, the death of women in childbirth and the death of men through natural causes and in war. Still, I think it is important to remember that more than 1/3 of today's single-parent families are led by widows and widowers.[10] What is curious is the way that we have somehow forgotten that we have always had a sizeable number of single-parent families in our society. Most of us tend to think of this family form as one of the unique characteristics of the 1970's. In the past, lone-parents and their children remained largely invisible, supported by the families of origin to which they most frequently returned after the loss of a mate. Today, on the other hand, it is more common for the lone-parent (who is more likely to be separated or divorced rather than widowed) to seek to preserve independence from parents and in-laws often by finding employment or by relying upon the provisions of the State which are only begrudgingly sustained by the taxpayer.

Before leaving, for the time being, the topic of lone-parenting, I should point out that there is no epidemic of adolescent pregnancy. On the contrary, both the rates of pregnancy and the rates of fertility of teenage women have declined in the past twenty years.[11] The erroneous perception that there is an epidemic of teenage pregnancy comes from the fact that there has been a tremendous decrease in the number of shot-gun marriages and a dramatic decrease in the number of young women who give their babies up for adoption with close to 90% of unmarried teenage mothers now choosing to keep their babies.

Although the rates of remarriage have been showing a slight decline in the recent past, it is still the case that the most likely consequence of divorce is marriage with roughly 75% of divorced persons choosing to marry again - this rate is higher for men than for women.[12] It has recently been confirmed that in Canada, as in the United States, a somewhat greater proportion of second marriages will end in divorce than first marriages.[13]

Along with remarriage comes the reality of the so-called blended or recombined family such that today it is no longer as important to ask an adult how many children he or she has as it is to ask a child how many parents he or she has; a teacher does, after all, need to know how many residences a pupil has and what the surnames of his or her brothers and sisters might be.

Women and men have taken control over their reproduction more effectively and with greater consequence than at any previous time in history. Very shortly after the turn of the century (only a little more than a decade from now), more Canadians will die every day than will be born. Canadians like the peoples of all industrialized nations, have decided to have fewer children than are necessary to replace themselves.[14] Unless there is a tremendous increase in the rates of immigration (something in the range of four times the present rates according to the best guesses I have heard), the population of Canada will begin to grow smaller and it will do so at a dramatic rate.

We seem quick to jump to the conclusion that the reason why adults choose increasingly to have no children or to have only 1 1/2, according to Statistics Canada, is related to how expensive kids are today. And, indeed, today's child (your basic, generic, no-name, no frills kid) does cost well in excess of 100,000 dollars to maintain for eighteen years.[15] Clearly, these are costs that should not be underestimated when separation and divorce require us to invoke some 'calculus of fairness', no matter how perverse and artificial it must be. Still, the suggestion that people no longer choose to have kids simply because of the expenses involved is unconvincing. In relative terms, children do not cost any more than they did thirty-five years ago at a time when adults were so prolific that we now face the challenge of not knowing how we are going to cope with a baby boom generation that is not likely to age gracefully as the first generation of elderly Yuppies. Back then, you could have shocked my father by 'costing' me at $16,000, the average cost of a modest home, as effectively as today's 100,000 dollar child is equated with the cost of the average home in Canada (anywhere other than Toronto at any rate). In fact, because the real purchasing power of Canadian families has doubled in the past 30 years[16] while kids cost roughly the same in proportional terms, it could be argued that kids cost half as much as they did then. What is ultimately more telling is that today we seem to apply this financial calculus to just about everything as though we make our decisions about whether or not to have kids on the basis of cost-benefit analyses and long-range planning scenarios. To put the $100,000 child in some kind of perspective, you might like to know that your average sized pet dog will cost you $6,000 over eleven years and a larger dog costs about 9 cents an hour.[17] While the child costs $100,000, you and I will cost, at an absolute minimum, $300,000 to keep alive for the next eighteen years so, form one point of view, kids seem to be jolly good value for money.

Some of these observations call into question our taken-for-granted assumptions. While the depth of female poverty is today more profound, it is not necessarily the case that more women are poor because they are without male partners. Single-parent families are not a phenomenon of the seventies and eighties but their isolation and vulnerability is. Not all single-parent families are the products of separation and divorce. We cannot explain the dramatic drop in child-bearing simply by reference to the financial costs of raising kids.

It comes as no surprise that taken-for-granted assumptions can mislead us. I borrow a story from Dr. Lois Wilson, past Moderator of the United Church of Canada, that concerns a 65 year old man who was being examined for the first time by his new doctor. As is the custom, the doctor started by taking some notes about the man's medical and family history.

"Tell me," asks the Doctor, "how old was your father when he died?"

"Did I say my father had died?" responds the patient.

"No, you didn't," says the doctor. "I'm terribly sorry. I suppose I just took it for granted. How old is your father then?"

"He's 85 and he is, I'm glad to say, in excellent health."

"Excellent," replies the doctor. "Perhaps, you can tell me how old your grandfather was when he died."

"Did I say my grandfather had died?"

"No, I guess you didn't. Once again, I just took it for granted. Well, then, how old is your grandfather?"

"He's 105 and, as a matter of fact, he's just been married for the second time."

"I'm amazed and impressed," says the doctor. "But you must tell me: "Why would a man of his age want to get married again?"

"Did I say he wanted to get married?"

We can no longer assume, we can no longer take-it-for-granted that it makes sense to speak of THE FAMILY, ITS needs, ITS strengths, ITS weaknesses. The diversity of contemporary family forms cannot be denied. Even Reader's Digest, hardly an avant garde or radical publication, came some years ago to describe today's family as:

Mom, Dad and 1.7 kids;

A couple with three kids: one his, one hers and one theirs;

A 26 year old single secretary and her daughter;

A couple sharing everything but a marriage licence;

A divorced women and her stepdaughter;

A retired couple raising their grandchild, the son of their unmarried teenage daughter.

It is now customary for researchers, service providers, teachers and other professionals to declare their interest in families. The plural designation serves to acknowledge and respect the patently evident diversity of family forms. Today, it is what families do, more than what they look like, that provides us with a basis from which to acknowledge that single-wage-earning families, dual wage-earning families, blended families, extended and three-generation families (which seem to be reappearing somewhat) are all variations on a common familial theme.

Regardless of form, families share common needs and seek to fulfill common aspirations and societal expectations. There are multiple and complexly interwoven dimensions of family living that include: economic needs and obligations; emotional commitments and expectations; distributions of power, property and economic leverage; customary practices regarding residence; legal rights and responsibilities; rules pertaining to affective expression, sexuality and procreation; and, expectations with regard to cross-generational responsibilities for the socialization of the young, the personality development of adults and the material and social support of the elderly.

But, as Margrit Eichler warns us, we cannot invoke a monolithic image of the family which would have us believe that all families fulfill these tasks in the same ways.[18] Recent decades of social and family change involving, among other trends, high rates of separation and divorce and remarriage make it, for instance, impossible to safely assume that the adults who take on primary financial and legal responsibilities for a child would also necessarily assume responsibility for the emotional, social, linguistic or social development of that child. Emotional support may be provided to one another by an adult and a child who do not live together. The socialization of children is now frequently a responsibility of adults who are biologically unrelated to those children. When we see a family enjoying an afternoon in a park, one cannot know (as perhaps we once did) that: the children are biologically related to one another; whether or not they live together and, if so, for how many days a week; whether or not the adults are married, used to be married, are living together or are simply friends.

Too often, in the fields of education and social service delivery (and perhaps, as well with regard to the law), we find ourselves struggling with the unintended consequences of the static and monolithic image of family. Such an image may seem to serve well the needs of professionals, policy-makers and bureaucrats for policies and programs that can be applied on a wide scale with apparently predictable and generalizeable outcomes. Yet, these objectives cannot be met by programs that fail to take account of the diversity of family structures. Housing policy can no longer be predicated upon a taken-for-granted image of the so-called 'traditional' nuclear family of two adults, one of whom is active in the labour force, and two children. This classic image depicts, in fact, the living circumstances of only a small minority of the population at any one time. What family is it that one has in mind when one speaks of a family policy? Although infinitely more complex, it makes more sense to speak of policies for families. School boards have only recently and reluctantly acknowledged that there are now very few parents who can attend a parent-teacher interview during the day and that if single-parents are to avail themselves of such an opportunity some kind of chilcare might be necessary.

I would ask you whether or not it is any longer reasonable to speak of a singular and all inclusive Family Law or are you now forced to think more in terms of Laws for Families recognizing that, in fact, the legal statuses of individuals are differentiated according to the different kinds of families in which they live: a single-parent assumes a different legal identity than does a parent in a two-parent household in terms of the provisions of public law; taxation provisions treat single wage-earning family members and dual wage-earning family members differently; the divorced family has a different relationship to public law, private law and, potentially at least, to criminal law than does an in tact family.

Once again, following Eichler's recognition that the different dimensions of family living will be lived differently in different kinds of families, that the responsibilities will be divided differently, how can we best ensure that proprietary notions of custody do not confuse the simple designation of residence with all other social, material, educational and emotional aspects of any particular family? Why should there be any presumption whatsoever in favour of maternal, paternal or joint custody, options each of which have, as you know only too well, their advocates? I am just no longer certain that we can fashion general responses to the needs of families when each has its own particular way of being.

One of the most curious assumptions we tend to take for granted about family is that THE family is some kind of static, rigid and fixed foundation of society. Each generation has spoken of the 'traditional' family yet the traditions referred to have varied immensely historically and cross-culturally. In contrast to this static or ahistorical image of family life, families are, in fact, the embodiments of change; each has its own history and biography. Families mature, grow old and die, the places of one generation are assumed by the members of another.

If we pay attention to all the little, mundane and, yes, silly rituals, celebrations and traditions unique to our families, we see that they serve to acknowledge the processes of change, maturation and growth. These rituals and family traditions illustrate the curious fact that a family is never the same from one day to the next and, yet, it is still the same family. Birthdays, anniversaries, tooth fairies, Bar Mitzvahs, piano recitals, graduations, driver's licences - all these are acknowledgments of change. Each family demarcates the passage of time by embroidering these rituals and making them their own. These family traditions, then, become the stuff of memories, the memories of our times together and of our membership in a family. The same box of Christmas decorations gets brought out year after year. A year has passed but the box occasions in us recollections of past Christmases and serves to reconfirm that our lives are lives lived with others, that our experiences are shared and important to others and are part of the lives of others. The photograph albums are pulled out by the kids on a rainy day. "Was that really what I looked like? It can't be. I couldn't have been so small." And the parent responds, "Of course that's you. Haven't you grown big? Still, your my little 'pumpkin,' 'munchkin,' 'kiddo,' or whatever other names of affection each family uses to affirm its special relationships.

Before I become too maudlin, let me return to the central point of this emphasis on families as change. Each family has its own history. Of course, if this were not the case, the dilemmas you confront on a daily basis in your responsibilities to administer the law, would be far less dramatic, severe and troubling. For it is the family's history that cannot be dissolved. The marriage which we can make null is but a promise from which grows the experience of family and even if one chooses to deny the promise, one cannot deny the fruits of its labours nor the responsibilities and obligations that the promise has engendered.

It is, in large measure, our inability to distinguish adequately between marriage and family that has made it difficult to respond appropriately to the needs of different kinds of families: to respond to the needs of lone-parent families, to appreciate the uniqueness of blended families, to understand the growing tensions between single wage-earning families and dual wage-earning families. And, to understand that even after separation and divorce a

family's history continues to evolve. For better or worse, families are forever. The significance of this distinction between marriage and family is underscored by the fact that by the end of this century, more than 1/3 of Canada's households will not be based on a legally married husband and wife.[19]

The proliferation of different family forms has led some to lament the decline of family and the erosion of family values. Yet, it is wise to remember that the tradition from which these different family forms are said to depart was a very short tradition indeed. It is taken-for-granted that the traditional family was composed of two parents, a male breadwinner who worked for wages to bring home the bacon and his wife who remained at home to cook it as well as devote herself full-time to the care and nurturance of their children. This image of family life was rather firmly reinforced in the popular culture through the stereotypes presented to us in **Father Knows Best** and remembered nostalgically in **Happy Days**. The image has been displaced today as it is the dual wage-earning family, that has become the statistical norm. Television, always apace with the times, provides us with the role models of the Huxtables and Keatons in **The Cosby Show** and **Family Ties**. The professional careers of these dual-career couples seldom seem to take much time but certainly do provide them with sufficient resources to shield them from the harsher and frenetic schedules of the majority of dual wage-earning couples.

Going back to the Father Knows Best Image for a moment, we need to recognize that it invokes what is, in essence, a model of Victorian upper middle-class family life as some kind of historical constant. The reality is that that particular form of family structure and functioning was prevalent for only a brief period of history (50 to 75 years at the most) and was confined to a specific period in the evolution of industrial societies. As a model of family life, it served more as an aspiration than as a description of reality for the vast majority of the population.[20] Not until after the Second World War did such a life appear attainable for the working classes for whom participation in the economy (either in agricultural settings or industrial factories or in the precursor to the modern service industries which saw many women outside of the labour force engaged in providing room and board, laundry, sewing and informal child care) had been a constant necessity.

Contrary to popular belief, the trend toward increased labour force participation by women did not begin in the late sixties or seventies but dates back to the 1950's when the 'extra' earnings of women were required to pay for the college educations for their children, such educations having become, in the post-war years, a much sought-after commodity.[21] In the 50's, it was mothers of adolescents who began to return to the labour force, often on a temporary or sporadic basis. What is truly notable today is the proportion of YOUNG women with children who work in the paid labour force. Over the past thirty years, their numbers have doubled such that by 1984, 65.1% of married women between the ages of 25 and 34 were employed.[22] Between 1976 and 1984, the proportion of women with children under the age of three who were holding jobs, rose from 32% to 52%; 57% of those with children between the ages of 3 to 5 were similarily holding jobs and 64% with children between the ages of 6 to 15 are active in the labour force.[23] The bottom line is that it is now the majority of mothers with dependent children who hold jobs, either on a full or part-time basis. The so-called 'traditional' single wage-earning family is now outnumbered.

Women are in the labour force to stay for a number of reasons. We are not witnessing a transitory or temporary phenomenon and fears that women will be pushed out of the labour force in order to reduce levels of male employment are naive not to mention unjust.

First, there has been, over the past years, an erosion of what was once called the "family wage". This idea, once strongly defended by the labour movement but now badly out of favour, was based on the assumption that the average industrial wage paid to employees (specifically to male employees) should be sufficient to support financially a number of dependent children and a financially-dependent spouse whose primary social responsibility was the care and upbringing of children. It was upon this assumption that men, for a restricted number of years, could assert that "No wife of mine will ever have to get a job". And, it was upon this foundation of the "family wage" that the model of the single breadwinner nuclear family and all of the aspirations and sex roles associated with it evolved. Yet, today, the average wage paid to a male employee is no longer sufficient to meet the financial needs of an equal number of dependents as was the case during the 1950's and early 1960's. Accordingly, statistics reveal that the average purchasing power of Canadian families has been maintained only by virtue of the dramatic rise in the number of dual wage-earning and multiple-earner families.[24] The average real incomes of Canadian families have remained static since 1976 and this despite the fact that, over this same period of time, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of dual wage-earning families.[25] Today, according to the National Council of Welfare, the number of low-income families (now over 900,000) would rise by 62% if these couples could not rely on the incomes of wives.[26] Already, one child in 5 (1,114,000) is growing up in poverty in Canada today.[27] For many families, two incomes have become necessary simply to make ends meet. Obviously, the consequences of this economic trend for those families who cannot depend on two incomes are severe. As you know, single mothers and their children are 4 times more likely to be poor than are families with two parents; six in ten female headed single-parent families live below the poverty line.[28] The female single-parent cannot, by definition, rely on the financial contribution of a spouse and, as well, she suffers from the generally disadvantaged economic status of women who earn, on average 64¢ on the dollar, insufficient and/or defaulted upon support payments and a lack of vocational and training opportunities and job experience and inadequate support for the care of their children.

Furthermore, we must recognize that in the context of modern economies that are addicted to growth in the rates of production and consumption there is a systemic need for individuals to increase their appetites as consumers. The purchasing power of families is regarded by economists as a major 'engine of economic growth and development'. Thus, economists and politicians remind us, on a monthly basis, of the number of housing starts and the levels of consumer confidence because of the importance of such factors for the 'health' of the lumber industry, the automobile industry and the commercial sectors of the economy. Contrary to popular belief that holds that stable families are the backbone of a strong economy, separation and divorce have been, for the past twenty years, a boon to the economy. They are, after all, one of the main reasons for what economists call household formation and when two households replace one household, we will consume an extra sofa, living room suite, microwave oven and what have you - at least until remarriage creates from this consumption the inventory for garage sales. Indeed, from a strictly

economic point of view, one would now have to fear the re-emergence of stable families and the collapse of what Bohannan has labelled the 'divorce industry.' For as he reminds us:

> Lawyers, therapists, and detectives all hang on the fringe of collapsed families, providing services and usually making a profit. All kinds of businesses also profit from divorce: from landlords who provide a location for a second household to greeting card companies, from real estate agents who sell houses that would not be on the market without divorces to automobile manufacturers and oil companies and airlines that provide transportation between the two new households. Public servants like judges and bailiffs and social workers (and I must add as well family researchers) and clerks in the public service and welfare offices are kept busy.[29]

If one assumes the modest figure of $500 for the legal fees and disbursements for each spouse in every divorce, Canadians paid some 500 million dollars in legal costs alone for divorces during the 1970's.[30]

Without doubt, the economic factors that have led me to suggest that the commitment of women to the labour force is, what the economists call, a serious commitment have been complemented and reinforced by significant changes in the expectations and aspirations of men and women, especially those of young men and women. Attitude surveys and opinion polls reveal that our youth maintain, perhaps surprisingly, very traditional values with regard to marriage and children. The vast majority of young people report that they expect to marry - most believe they will marry only once - and that they will bear and raise a number of children. However, young women also indicate that they do not expect that their family commitments and childcare responsibilities will necessarily occasion a significant interruption of their occupational careers. Furthermore, in what amounts to a 180 degree reversal in the so-called traditional male attitudes, young men indicate that they are not prepared to assume responsibility for a financially-dependent spouse over any prolonged period of time.[31] Similarly, there have been dramatic shifts in the attitudes of mature men and women with regard to the desireability of female employment.

There is one final reason that I will cite that helps us to understand why both men and women must now commit themselves to the labour force. The modern State has, it seems, an ever-expanding appetite for tax dollars. Our system of taxation is based primarily upon (and, in fact, has been growing increasingly dependent upon) the taxation of personal income in contrast to other possible systems of taxation that could be based on wealth, consumption or production. The State's need for an increasingly broad tax base is nothing more nor less than a need for more people with incomes to tax, a need, in short, for more employees. Not surprisingly, it is this particular fact, cynical though it may be, that proves far more convincing than all the sociological and ethical arguments one can muster when one speaks with those politicians, policy-makers and citizens who naively assume that the world would be a better place if women would just return to their kitchens. After all, it quickly becomes apparent to them that whatever problems they might now have with deficits would pale in comparison to the shortfalls they would experience if they could not rely on the taxes collected from employed women.

There is a logic, a pattern, that we can discern from among these interwoven economic, social and demographic changes. It is a logic that convinces us that each individual adult is and must be responsible for his or her own financial well-being. In contrast to traditional patterns of home economics in which the members of a family achieved whatever degree of material well-being and security BECAUSE OF their membership in a family, today, one's economic well-being is achieved IN SPITE OF family responsibilities and commitments. We are today employed as individuals, not as family members. There is a stigma attached to those who bring their family concerns into the workplace too obviously or too frequently and it is, by and large, women who suffer the consequences of these attitudes today. Personnel managers have, I have been told, begun to quantify the decline in productivity on the part of female workers at 3:30 p.m. when their preoccupations shift from those of the job to questions like: "Is there anything out of the freezer for dinner?" and "How am I going to collect the kids from daycare in time if this meeting goes on much longer?"

If it is the father who is called by the school nurse too frequently to come and collect a sick child, it is a pretty sound indication that he is not on the Yuppie fast track to success. Believe it or not, secretarial schools still advise their graduates to hide their marriage plans recognizing that candour in this regard might well jeopardize their chances for labour force entry.

Today, one's identity - one's sense of self and one's sense of personal significance - is no longer a function of membership in elementary structures of kinship. Industrially-based societies have been organized around the central place they accord to employment. In our industrial context, the once central and integrating role of kinship relations is remembered only dimly through the metaphors of kinship as they are taken over by commercial and employment-related interests which speak on behalf of their 'family of companies' each of which employs the 'brothers' and 'sisters' of the labour movement. As Mary Ann Glendon suggests:

> ... an individual's wealth and social status is decreasingly determined by his family and increasingly fixed by his occupation, or (in a negative way) by his dependency relationship with government.[32]

And, we, then, understand, along with her why it is that she can claim that:

> ... in law and in fact it is now easier to get rid of a spouse than an employee.[33]

I think it was James Ramey who once remarked:

> For the first time, the family is no longer the basic unit of society, having been replaced by the individual.

We have succeeded, perhaps all too well, in what Philip Slater once called our 'pursuit of loneliness'. And, yet, most people, most members of families still refuse to think of their family commitments and obligations as superfluous; for them, families are the most important things in their lives. At least that is what they say even if their behaviours do not always testify to such commitment.

Ironically, now that we have managed to create an economy and a society in which families are no longer central, the idea of family is being rediscovered in the 1980's. In fact, we have been told that the gauntlet has been thrown down and that a 'war over the family' is now being waged with economists, academics, feminists, so-called 'Real' women, bureaucrats, political rightists and leftists encamped on the battlefield. In 1983, Letty Cottin Pogrebin went so far as to suggest that:

> ... it seems safe to say that what civil rights and Vietnam were to the Sixties, and women's rights and the environment were to the Seventies, family issues have become to the Eighties.[34]

It is not merely coincidental that the significance of family is being rediscovered at a time when industrial economies throughout the Western world have been experiencing serious contraction, the so-called 'crisis of the Welfare State'. Until quite recently, we had allowed ourselves to believe that the 'modern' family had evolved into a specialized unit of emotional and psychological commitment sustained principally by love, affection and the prospect of good sex. We naively forgot that families have always been and are still economically significant. The relationships of men and women have always been based in part on economic interdependence and too often on dependence and exploitation. As two wages become increasingly required to sustain a family, this relationship becomes more obvious but it was always there. Child care, whether it is done for wages or apparently for free is an economically productive and vital form of work that sustains a society. We are kidding ourselves if we think we can get out of the present 'childcare crisis' cheaply. You can pay men enough to support financially dependent wives to care for children, you can pay women enough to support house husbands, you can pay friends, relatives or professionals to care for children but you can not escape from the necessity of this most vital investment.

Again, our appreciation of the economic significance of family grows gradually as we come slowly to the obvious realization that it costs more to live as individuals than it does as members of families. A $40,000 annual income supports one household quite well; that same income is far from sufficient to support two households. Accordingly, the research of Glynnis Walker seems to demonstrate that 3/4 of second wives are employed in comparison to 60% of ex-spouses and that the majority of those second wives say they hold jobs in order to help their husbands pay his support payments to his first family.[35]

Finally, after years of relative neglect, the modern state has begun to rediscover the family as a potential agent of health promotion, provider of care for the aged, sick and disabled, as the principal loci of attitudinal and behavioural change and as the first source of economic and financial security for its members.

Regrettably, there is all too often a romanticized and unrealistic image of the family that permeates these suggestions that it is the family that will deliver us from the contradictions of the modern welfare State. Who, one must ask, is at home any longer to care for the sick and the old? When 50% of the population changes residence once every five years[36] such that we have actually come to believe that a phone call is the next best thing to being there, how can we provide any genuine support to the dispersed members of our families and communities? Is it todays' childless couples who will be supported in their old age by family?

If, indeed, we are to make a place for families in the future, we will have to devote ourselves to a fundamental and likely critical assessment of patterns of economic development that require such high rates of geographical mobility, of patterns of income distribution that severely marginalize anyone who is not active in the labour force, and of our patterns of work and employment that are, by and large, insensitive to the family responsibilities of employees.

The family has a future. We will not likely return to a singular notion of family as the diversity and pluralism of family forms will continue. The real question we face is whether or not, as a society, we are willing to commit ourselves to creating the circumstances in which the commitments people choose (sometimes over and over again) to make to one another can flourish. If we do not, I fear that the idea of family will simply be used as a convenient apology for the withdrawal of formal services and supports to families at a time when the increased pressures and expectations placed upon families would simply aggravate the already too common characteristic of families to deny the integrity of their individual members. Or, the idea of family will be appropriated by this group or that and used to further what are essentially ideologically-driven political objectives that have little if anything to do with the quality of the relationships between men, women and children in our society.

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