

Status of Women Study

Women's rights are extremely important, but I take exception to the equivocation of those people who try to make this a political football. Women's rights, among all well-meaning men, have had a very important and enshrined place since the beginning of our Judaeo-Christian history, if not since men came down out of the trees. My grandfather was a gentleman and my grandmother did not in any way feel she was a slave. She was one of the happiest women in the world because she thought that upon her fell the onerous job of keeping the family together, teaching us our basic morals and providing a safe and comfortable home.

Grandfather, like so many other pioneers in this country, was out busily buying furs from the Indians, paddling his canoe and hunting for the buffalo, moose and elk which would provide food for the table. In terms of present-day society it might appear that this was a simplified society—but I believe the basic rules still apply. Someone must bring home the bacon, someone must cook the bacon and raise the babies if the human race is to survive. I do not accept responsibility for some of the onerous tasks which have fallen to women throughout the centuries because the Almighty ordained that the female of the species should have the babies.

An hon. Member: They are different.

Mr. Bigg: They are different, and they are built for it. We are not.

An hon. Member: Explain.

Mr. Bigg: In the 20 minutes at my disposal I shall not go into biology other than to say that mothers are provided with an extra layer of fat under their epidermis. This kept them warm through the centuries in the caves while pregnant and while waiting for father to come home. They are not equipped with the type of biceps or other muscles men have which enable them to leap over stumps or hurl a spear. I do not think that leaping over stumps and hurling spears should be done in time of war, but it was very essential in primitive society not too many years ago when this ability was of prime importance.

Women have not changed, particularly in one very basic respect. They look for the good hunter, the good man to bring home the bacon. Before we rush into some sort of an omnibus bill which will guarantee women all the money in the world, all the bacon, I think we should see what we are doing in respect of the male who has full responsibility at present under our laws for supporting not only the child of the marriage, be it his or not, but the wife for so long as she is his legal spouse. It may be that in some of the states of the United States the law is different, but so far as I know, unless the spouse is crippled no such responsibility under our law evolves upon women.

I ask the women's liberation leaders: Do you want our laws changed so that from this time onward women will be responsible equally for the upkeep of the unemployed husband, the inadequate husband, the poorly dressed husband, the lazy husband or the sick husband? That is

[Mr. Bigg.]

what equality means. I do not believe you can legislate equality. Certainly it cannot be legislated in respect of marriage. There is only one kind of marriage. Perhaps I should pass this information on to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) whose marriage is only a week old. If he or any other man is looking for a 50-50 marriage, that marriage is doomed to utter failure—because there is only one way a marriage between human beings will work, and that is if it is a 90-10 marriage working both ways. Unless the male spends 90 per cent of his time trying to please the little woman, and unless the woman spends 90 per cent of her time trying to please the ornery male, the marriage will fail.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bigg: We cannot legislate equality. We can only have a series of pious hopes. Now I shall start with mine. I should like to see most of the laws in a democratic legislature such as ours passed equally, but I agree with the last speaker that housewives generally are not classified as labourers. Their rewards are not in the form of money. They do not receive pensions, in a great many cases. They are dedicated women. They are the backbone of the nation. If you look over our history you will find that women, often unpaid and unrewarded, have in fact given us leadership—at least by their influence—in the highest and most important fields of life.

● (5:40 p.m.)

I hope I will not bore hon. members if I remind them of people such as Nelson's mother kissing the young midshipman goodbye, he standing proudly in his uniform. I have no doubt that respect for his mother, honouring his father and mother, led to his victory in the great battle of Trafalgar. The result could have been predicted. With such men and women, the human race has little to fear. It was no statute of Westminster that made Nelson; but I venture to say that it was the statute handed down by Moses to "honour thy father and thy mother" that contributed to his greatness.

It may well be that if we got back to those basic principles, instead of whining about Women's Lib, we would be better off. I would say that if some women from Women's Lib did their duty and honoured their fathers and their mothers they would receive a great deal more respect from their children. You cannot expect children to give up marijuana if the parents will not give up the afternoon cocktail. You cannot expect morality in school and hard work if your only reason for existence is to have bigger and better abortions so you can spend more time in the beauty parlour.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bigg: I told you this is dangerous ground. The Unemployment Insurance Act is a piece of social legislation offering us social justice. Social justice is an attempt to equalize incomes of those who want to work. The Unemployment Insurance Act starts out the right way; it tries to give some security to people who work. What is wrong with the act is that we give insurance to people