



All in the family; Government needs to defend families

Thursday, June 4, 2009

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As the authors of a new study on family breakdown in Canada suggested yesterday, in any rational society the state would have a vested interest in promoting traditional, legally married, two-parent families.

In *Private Choices, Public Costs: How failing families cost us all*, Rebecca Walberg and Andrea Mrozek of the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, add to a growing body of literature that has reached exactly the same conclusion.

That is that on average, children living in traditional, two-parent families, where the parents are legally married, fare better in life in every conceivable outcome, compared to children who come from single-parent or common-law marriage homes.

And further, that when marriages break down, it's the women and children who are most likely to end up in poverty.

Indeed, "marriage breakdown" today essentially means absentee fathers.

Walberg and Mrozek estimate the cost of family breakdown to taxpayers at \$7 billion annually and argue if we could cut that rate in half, society would save almost \$2 billion a year.

They use \$2 billion, rather than half of \$7 billion, or \$3.5 billion, to account for the fact that even if the family breakdown rate was cut in half, many of those still-intact families would remain below the poverty line.

In other words, the authors are being very conservative about the potential cost savings.

Further, as they note, lower crime and school drop out rates among the young, less drug abuse and fewer unwanted pregnancies would result from lowering the rate of family breakdown.

Walberg and Mrozek argue our falling marriage rate (in 1961, 92% of all Canadian families were headed by married couples, compared with only 69% today) isn't a neutral statistic, but a negative one.

What's interesting is that you almost never hear this painfully obvious point being made by governments themselves these days.

In other words that while, yes, there are many wonderful single parents and, yes, many couples are trapped in unhappy marriages, on the whole, it is far better for society to have more families headed by married parents, than fewer.

Why? Because the children in those families are far more likely to grow up to be well-adjusted, law-abiding and productive citizens, who will carry those values forward into the families they create for themselves.

Similarly, in the absence of strong families, the reverse is also true -- there will never be enough public money to adequately cope with the aftermath of family breakdown and all the problems it creates.

As Walberg and Mrozek observe: "There is evidence that long-term reliance on welfare has detrimental effects on individuals and society. Take England, for example, where decades of family breakdown and poor social policy have led to children being raised in homes where they've never seen a functioning marriage, or a working adult."

Actually, you don't have to go to England. You can find that in the giant urban housing ghettos of Toronto or any other big city, where the problem isn't so much family breakdown as that "families" never form, because none of the adults know what a functioning family is.

And contrary to what your modern liberal politician will tell you, the kids who are the products of these non-families, don't need more basketball courts to help them grow up right.

They need fathers who stick around.

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