Stealing Candy from the Baby

A look at the 3rd wave of feminism to value caregiving labor

by Beverley Smith
STEALING CANDY
FROM THE BABY

- a look at the international third wave of feminism to value unpaid caregiving labor

complete with timeline to 2002

by
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This book is dedicated to kids. We do it all for them. Mothers and fathers would drive through blizzards for their child but they may chose different vehicles for the journey. Let them. Governments should value all children equally.

It is dedicated to caregivers, male and female who buck the system, who dare to do what their heart calls them to do, and to those who flounder in anger not able to do what their heart tells them. Let us all agree to fight for the right to parent the way we each feel is best for the child.

This book is dedicated to caregivers of the elderly, the sick, the handicapped or the dying who got the job for which they did not apply and who do it, heroically, daily. Government must value their huge selfless contribution to the household and to the national economy.

And this book is dedicated to lawmakers who can make a fairer system for all the groups above. We rely on those who make our laws to make fair ones.
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ABSTRACT

It is the argument of this paper that the Canadian government has not yet achieved its goals of women’s equality, elimination of child poverty and optimal national productivity due to an oversight in social policy that neglects the unpaid caregiving sector. The care of the sick, elderly, handicapped, dying and the young has been historically a female role and as women have moved into paid labor, this role has been devalued creating barriers both to those who try to juggle career and family and to those who for a time prioritize the caregiving side, with serious financial and social penalties.

Arguments are noted from sociology, health, economics and feminist theory to support the claim that recognition of the care sector is a vital step to achieving equality and ‘best interests’ goals.

The present justification for one-sided support of the care sector, focusing only on paid care is analyzed for its lapses in logic, its negatives stereotyping of the unpaid role and its motivations which may undermine the goals it seeks to achieve.
INTRODUCTION

It has been odd to be part of a movement which defended a traditional role and to be seen as a radical for doing so. Often we have been misjudged as outdated when in fact we had moved past the obvious conclusion women were equal to men in the career world, to its next step—that women are equal to men even if not in the career world.

I was raised in a family where women were equal. My father wanted me to go as far in education as I possibly could and applauded any success I had there. I took equality for granted. I sang right along with “I am woman, I am strong’ lyrics and just assumed women could have any career they wanted. What surprised me was inequality if I chose to do my work in the home. It seemed and still seems the final frontier.

In that fight, I have at times felt lonely. I was not of course. When I started asking government in 1976 for financial recognition for taking care of my kids in the home, to match tax breaks moms using daycare got, I was not arguing that daycare was inferior, only that home care was as good. And I was not even aware that in 1970 a Royal Commission had already recommended what I was asking for. But it was a struggle fraught with obstacles. Mothers (or fathers) who did caregiving in the home occasionally did speak out in letters to the editor but they were seen as oddities, as throwbacks and even in the seventies the suggestion women could be in the home immediately made a few ownen feel guilty for missing their kids and the views polarized. The media started to pit women against each other—pro and against daycare. I remember one Toronto talk show conversation I had from Calgary where the host was actually mocked me, misinterpreting my views for laughter effect “You mean you think women should be PAID to STAYy home?” she intoned. “You really think you're WORKING?”

Each woman working in the home is in many ways alone and too busy with small children to fly to national meetings or even research academic presentations.

Out of this dilemma came several women who were more aggressive. I just wrote letters. But they organized small groups, researched laws and entered the official system. One group became a registered charity. One joined an already existing national women’s group to infiltrate career women and show the care side also had merit. One group launched a court challenge and to raise funds for this held countless bakesales, auctions, and fundraisers. Slowly the grassroots were speaking and it was very touching to watch. But it didn’t work. The court case fizzled when a discrimination in the law was admitted but there was no money to launch the next logical step of appealing to a higher level court. Several key women burnt out, gave up or just quietly moved on.

Others struggled on, with rallies, petitions. One group even had a petition based to send a clean diaper to Ottawa to bring their attention to those who raise children. Ottawa
apparently dispensed with these diapers because it only apparently logs in papers of petition.

I looked back to other liberation movements – should I tie myself to a telephone pole? Should we hold a mock parliament as early feminists did? What would it take to get the state to value our work in the home?

As I started to read early feminists’ writings I recognized a few trends – the embarrassment of family at what ‘mom’ was doing, the loneliness of the struggle. Olive Schreiner had said in 1911 “It is the swimmer who first leaps into the frozen stream who is cut sharpest by the ice. It is the men or women who first reads the path which the bulk of humanity will ultimately follow, who must find themselves at last in solitudes where the silence is deadly” I was no ground-breaker. National polls had showed overwhelming public desire for more financial options for those raising children. But even in 2002 Macleans magazine referred to my ‘lonely’ campaign.

I would like to thank the many women who have moved the fight forward by their tireless lobbying, their brilliant organizing, their patient encouraging. I thank Maria Abbott and Barbara Little of the BC Voice of Women, and Catherine Edwards of PEI. I thank Diane Hoskins of Ottawa who is marking her third decade of the struggle as I am. I thank those who had the guts to form organizations – Evelyn Dresscher of Mother are Women, Brenda Ringdahl and Teresa del Frari of Kids First. I thank immensely Carol Lees who brought the movement to the national stage with one rebellious refusal to sign a census form, which catapulted the state into a reassessment of unpaid labor.

I thank those whose health has suffered, whose marriages have suffered and whose finances have certainly suffered in this long struggle. I remember with great sadness two outstanding fighters who have passed away too early, without seeing this issue resolved – Lorraine Young in the Northwest Territories, Mary Ellen Pohl in Calgary.

I thank the men who have had the courage to recognize the movement as an equality movement and who have been proud of the women they knew who did such work. MP Guy Saint-Julien and MP Paul Szabo, Tim Hopkyns in Edmonton who as a new age tag-team parent opened our eyes to dadhood in a new light. Bucking the tide of being misunderstood they have carried on. And I thank academics who have noticed the care ethic, the value of parent-child bonding, the health of children who are well-adjusted and in particular I think of Dr. Elliott Barker of the Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. I thank economists like Marilyn Waring, Isabella Bakker, Ken Boessenkool not because they endorsed me or ever heard of what I do, but because their unbiased work helped us support what we believe.

I thank our country actually because though I complain about its tax laws relentlessly, I am proud I live in a country that allows this complaint. I thank my country that it has from time to time listened to these ideas, a media climate that has often worked without
bias and a democratic legal ideal in our constitution which one day will take us to the
goal of equality.

I thank my family, often my severest critics, but also those who helped me sophisticate my
ideas and be more conciliatory as well as more open to the views of youth.

We are not there yet. But this is a movement that is simply fair. It has to succeed because
it is an equality movement. We carry the torch of the vision across the plains of history
and one day we will arrive.

CHAPTER ONE - SHOCK

The second-wave of feminism is being reassessed in the year 2002 not because of gains
made, which are now taken for granted, but for an undercurrent of something lost. The
mainstream feminist organizations of the 1970s are having trouble attracting membership
now or funding. AS US Census study of 2002 found that the number of mothers working
outside the home had actually leveled and was dropping. In 1998 the per cent was 59% of
all new mothers but it dropped to 55%. The feminist wave had shifted, and then shifted
again.

Some are quick to say feminism itself was wrong, that women became too stridently
vocal. There is an ‘anti-feminist backlash’, the vaunting of traditional roles and
domesticity. I am not part of that group. I am a feminist, but I define the term carefully.
I am not anti-male. I am pro-equality. Academic women’s studies classes have identified
with Camille Paglia, Katie Roiphe and other US feminists, a new trend in the movement,
what has been called the ‘third wave’ of feminism. It is about choices.

What is going on?

Overwhelming research of the last two decades has a clue to the answer. One might
simply say that people don’t like to be pushed. They didn’t like being forced to be home
in the kitchen, barefoot and pregnant. But they also don’t want to be forced to be away
from the kitchen, chained to the office desk. What women want mystified Freud, since
women do not agree. But that is no surprise really. Men don’t agree. Why should
women? The resolution may be that women want choice.

Government policies were painfully slow to shift even into the first wave of feminism.
Winning the vote was hard. The Persons Case in Canada took several appeals and even
one to the highest court outside the land, the Privy Council in England, before women
were declared persons. (1929)

The second wave of feminism also was up against serious obstacles, glass ceilings,
traditions of male-only clubs, even language that had a male preference – mailman,
policeman. Those who fought those causes were scorched in the flames but the struggle
was ultimately successful. Women now outnumber men at universities, even in the
faculties of medicine and law. Pay equity is well on its way and most professions simply ignore gender in the pay scale. Battle won? Well not quite. But close.

Governments across the industrialized world slowly shifted gears and listened to the voices of women. Councils, ministries, departments, advisors were set up for women’s issues. The UN had summits on women. And programs were set in place for what were called ‘incentives’ for women to enter formerly all male domains. Reverse discrimination, hiring favoritism for women, quotas even, became official policy to correct historical injustice. It was called ‘affirmative action’ and it worked. Women lawyers, judges, even at the Supreme Court, women astronauts, engineers, bank presidents, heads of corporations were still a minority but they were now seen as signs of progress, role models much feted. Tokenism? No. Ultimately the career aspirations of any woman for any career were to be respected. And government enabled even encouraged this shift. But there was a problem.

The ‘affirmative action’ move did not just nudge business and corporations to hire women; it also nudged women to try to get hired. In Canada it gently or not so gently nudged women out of the home by reducing the spousal allowance for those who stayed there, in comparative terms to minimum wage. State policy shifted to endorse the argument that women need daycare so they can have their careers so it funded daycare costs but no costs outside daycare.

The goal of women’s lobby groups was for women to be equal to men in all walks of life, with no glitch in the income due to functions like pregnancy and maternity. And for those women who chose the full-time career path there were many many perks. Not only salary and job promotions, titles and honors, but also pensions, unemployment insurance partly paid for by the employer, paid holidays, paid child care, and media status.

Government policy prided itself on ‘incentives’ to paid labor, such as a tax policy that penalized the single income family over the dual income family. It rewarded with ever increasing benefits the use of daycare, covering larger and larger costs and for older and older children, meanwhile withdrawing more and more benefits for parents at home. It wiped out the child dependent deduction and family allowance completely, focusing its programs, as it said, on those who needed them- but it kept rewarding the rich. There were those who even argued that women at home should lose their spousal allowance completely. It was like building a fire under the home to smoke out the women who were still there.

And that became a problem. Because the second wave had vaunted choice and liberation yet it was advocating forceful policies to restrict choice. My way or the highway. Ultimately women revolted. And men revolted too.

The issue shifted. It was no longer about women getting pay for roles men used to have. It was about valuing all roles men and women used to have, and giving choice about doing them. The underdog now was not women struggling up the pay ladder. The
underdog now was a woman or man daring to be in the home. The traditional had become the new rebel. Ironically. And federal policy was not yet aware of the shift.

The problem came to a head however in an odd way. It was not because women in the home complained. Women in the home had been complaining in small numbers for years and they were easy to ignore. “Take a valium” they were told or they’d get a form letter reply from an MP “Thanks for writing. Please feel free to write again anytime”.

What brought attention to the issue were the reasons women (or men) were home. The needs of those requiring their care became apparent. Kids cried out in the way kids can.

It turned out that those needing care – the young, the sick, the handicapped, the elderly, the dying – had not gone away. With better medicine, the handicapped were now living longer, as were the dying. If anything the care needs were increasing not decreasing.

When people were discouraged from being home to take care of their kids, many by polls indicated they were reducing the number of children they planned, or not having any. And as birth rates dropped in industrialized nations, the proportion of grey heads soared, and with it, their caregiving needs.

One day it reached critical mass one supposes. For suddenly governments started to notice that yes indeed something was amiss.

It may have been the high price of medical care as stressed our women consulted doctors for depression and anxiety as they tried to juggle paid career the state valued, and caregiving responsibilities the state did not.

It may have been the drop in productivity on the paid job as workers called in sick, left on the dot of closing and were unavailable for overtime, weekends or trips, because they simply said enough is enough in what the job can ask of me.

It may have been the national polls favoring some federal recognition of the balancing act, some tax breaks, some financial help, some status for pity sake, for the hundreds of hours it takes to provide care to someone who can’t fend for himself.

It may have simply been the tide of people voting with their feet, opting out of the mold of downtown office core and into the home-based office, telecommuting, or the parents who cleverly figured out ways to operate a home daycare to be with their kids, who tag-team parented off-shifting each other so the kids always had parental care. It may have been the rise in homeschooling. But eventually the state noticed its whole tax picture was changing The self-employed were scaring the state. Were they paying enough tax? Were they dodging somehow?
Maybe it was when our health care costs skyrocketed as we institutionalized all our sick and then realized that would break our budget so we sent them home earlier and earlier to now-empty houses and they found they could not cope there alone.

We hurt the handicapped but we ignored their pleas from those who could make pleas.
We hurt the elderly but they had been ignored for years anyway.
We hurt the dying but that was not a big risk because dead men tell no tales.
But the state erred when it hurt the young.

Children do not need money as much as attention as any baby will let you know quite vehemently. And babies that feel they are not getting enough attention become toddlers who are feisty or seriously withdraw, and preteens who are balky. The children told us something was amiss when diagnosis for behavioral disorders skyrocketed, when youth criminality from bullying to schoolyard shootings forced us to pay attention. The children told us when obesity and lack of exercise made us realize what we had sacrificed when we gave up time playing with them. And when they started sniffing glue, opting out of society, it gave us pause.

It may have been the feistiness of youth for each generation does indeed reject some of the parental value system. Daughters and sons of 1960s feminists believed the slogans about choice very literally and said “hey if I can do anything, what if I want to be home with my kids?” An irritating question the second-wavers had not thought of.

Second-wavers rushed in valiantly to say that this too was anticipated, that they could incorporate it also into their master plan that all people work outside the home. They would just ensure better more comprehensive substitute care for kids.

They suggested care of the young really is so crucial that it should be done by professionals in institutions. They said daycare should be universal and free and 24 hours a day so all parents could have ‘access’ to it. They maintained that early childhood ‘education’ was offered in such institutions and apparently nowhere else.

And again, governments responded for a time. Hand over the cheque book and the state was footing the bill for huge children’s programs, agendas, interventions of myriad types, not one dollar of which went to parents or kids, but billions of which went to institutions which said they’d provide for the kids.

But parents by now had shifted also. Polls showed overwhelming support for valuing the caregiving side of life, for the money following the person needing the care, not going just to the institution. It became obvious that the issue was not unpaid labor in terms of who does the dishes. It was more fundamental than that. This was about that part of an economy that we depend on, that we take for granted, the free care of those who can’t manage on their own.

Why did we not hear about this sooner? Because those who were hurt most by the law shift were the disenfranchised. Children have no political rights. Older teens and young adults paying school fees and higher tuitions at post-secondary were often powerless to
object. Some might say we even stole from them the right to gain an education debt-free and we robbed from them freedoms of the next several decades of their lives as they tried to repay crippling debt. We gave scholarships to salve our consciences, but we did not give them to the poor, but to the high academic, those who had enough time to study because they were not working two part-time jobs to pay the rent, i.e. those who were already rich. To the poor we gave loans, heavy debted –loans.

Those with money and power were benefiting from the current system. The disenfranchised often were so left out of the loop that they did not even get the few tax benefits they were entitled to because they were required to file a tax return to get them, even if they paid no tax, and not all of them knew that. Tax policy became one of defensiveness of the status–quo. Let’s not alienate those who already get benefits. So those without benefits were challenged to figure out solutions that still gave the winners what they already got. An impossible task.

The problem was not just happening in Canada. It had distinct parallels in all industrialized nations since none was fully addressing caregiving. A few made proposals to benefit kids but these were conditional benefits, often made so very few qualified. Everyone wants the reputation for generosity and everyone wants to buy it cheap.

But kids let us know this was not working. Where choice of care was denied, anger seethed. Child anger. Parental anger. Human rights anger.

Somehow it must be possible for men and women to have a full range of options about all of life – not just abortion and sexual orientation but also how to raise one’s child.

This third wave of feminism was hitting critical mass. It was a wave for the disenfranchised. The baby calling out at last so it was no longer easy to steal its candy.

**The cost of raising a child**

How much does it cost to raise a child? The estimates of costs from birth to age 18 or 19 come in at between $153,000 (1998) and $160,000 (1999). The Social Planning Concil of Metro Toronto estimated that the cost in 1996 was $94,500 for raising a child from birth to age 18. In 1987 dollars/ The projected costs of a child born in 1994 who turns 18 in 2012 are around $176,420 for the poor and $346,908 for the rich. Let’s face it nearly no one has that money up front. Nearly no one can ‘afford’ to have children without the state giving a considerable help, with health, education, and hopefully with nutrition and even housing.

It does in fact come down to money. Follow the money as the saying goes. Where the state puts its money shows what it values. And present tax systems reveal what the state really thinks of traditional women’s work.
It costs a lot to raise a child. Some would have us believe that the ‘cost of child care’ is just the daycare fee, ignoring costs when the child is back at home munching hot dogs and outgrowing shoes. But there are more costs than evening care costs. Taking care of a child all day long also has costs. Kids First parent organization in 2000 estimated that the direct in-home costs to take care of a child 8-10 hours a day 250 days a year increased the family’s costs $4600 just for food, utility and maintenance costs.

In the US the Department of Agriculture’s Family Economics Research Group revealed 1996 projections for the cost of a two parent family with two children at 3 income levels. In 1995 US dollars the family earning $21,000 per year would spend $5490 to raise 2 children per year. If they earned $44,800 they would spend $7610 to raise the children. If they earned $84,800 they would spend $11,320 to raise the children. Projected to 2012 these costs would be $15,800 per year for low income, $21,300 for middle income and $30,680 for high income. The total cost in 1994 of raising a child to age 18 in the US was estimated at $176,420 for a low income family, $238,840 for a middle income family and $346,908 for a high income family.

Not only are there new bills, but usually there is less money coming in to pay the bills with. A 1993 report commissioned by the Departments of Justice and Status of Women revealed that if a woman takes even a two year break from paid career there is a $15,000 loss of income. A five year break can result in a loss of $50,000 and a 15 year break enough to see one child to the early teen years can cost the household a loss of $94,000 of the caregiver’s income.

It is true that daycare costs a lot. It is also true that home care probably costs at least as much. Formal child care according to Maureen Baker in “Families: Changing Trends in Canada” 1996 has estimated that daycare alone can cost $40,000. Douthitt and Fedyk 1990 studied how families in Ontario spend their money as they raise two children. The study found that such families spend 18% of their gross income to raise their kids, while in Quebec they spend about 15% of their income. They have to make ends meet somehow and both single and dual income families had several strategies. These also are ‘costs’ of raising a child and they include working longer at the paid job, not using hired help, not using labor-saving products that cost more, eating out less, spending less on recreation, spending less on adult clothing, spending less on gifts and having a lower float of emergency savings. In fact childless couples are able to save 29% of their income but those with children can only save 17%. A study by Statistics Canada July 18, 2002 has found that the typical low income family in 1999 had only $300 in savings to protect it against unexpected financial hardships. Some families had less than $6,000 in assets that could be liquidated in case of emergency. So families are making huge sacrifices and many operate very close to the bone in the child-rearing years. All families incur costs raising children.

There is the joke of the seniors’ couple about to have their first baby because they waited till they could afford it. The irony is that in terms of physical health of the child, it is best to have younger not middle-aged parents and yet the younger parents are the ones who
can least afford kids. Some have suggested a family allowance package that is higher when the expenses of kids are greatest, even possibly salaries adjusted for the high-cost years with diminishing salaries for seniors. It is an idea resisted of course by those without children. Most people like the perks of a huge salary at the last stage of a career as a reward for a job well done.

But the peak spending years for kids are when the kids are from 0-25, with the costs actually increasing as the child ages. Kids eat more as they get older, and they need more clothes that are bigger and cost more. School tuition increases as kids get older and any federal program to subsidize costs of parenting that gives most for babies and less for older kids is out of whack. It should work in the reverse. The rationale often given for the reverse order – more money when the baby is young – is that the parent is most likely to be unable to earn money when the child is young. And yet that is not quite a fair the state by pressuring parents to leave their kids and get paid jobs by adjusting this funding package, has a social ‘agenda’ which may not be reasonable under human rights law about lifestyle.

What happens is that as a child gets into teen years, and costs increase while federal financial help drops, it is easier for parents to feel the ‘burden’ of supporting this child as overwhelming and a few have fallen victim to the temptation to simply kick the child out of the home. Street kids not educated enough for a paid job and too young for many other responsibilities often then try to qualify for welfare so they can continue school. This cost is of course higher for the state and it is in the interest of everyone that support for teens is given before there be such dire situations.

The cost of educating a child in the school system has also been estimated also. The 2002 figure is $6993 average with a tally of $5263 in PEI ranging to $7580 in Ontario. Clearly also the cost to raise a child is mostly NOT the education cost. Feeding, clothing and housing are the big ones and the family not the state pays those.

At the least one might expect a neutral federal policy that had equal funding for all ages of children. At the best, one might expect a federal policy that gave more funding as the child’s costs increased and that let parents choose how to use this financial help – to pay the costs or to subsidize opportunity cost from lost salary while caring for the child or to pay for daycare and other courses for kids. But currently there is little help for any level of child-rearing in Canada And benefits there are, usually are most for the youngest kids.

**CHAPTER TWO – FEMINISM**

-**EARLY FEMINISM**

Early feminists wanted recognition for themselves the way they were. They wanted the right to vote. It surprised me to discover that many of them did not want to escape kids—they wanted help with their housework so they could spend more time with the children. They wanted to have an opportunity to use their minds but that did not mean always away
from kids. Raising children itself challenges adults to develop their minds. Amelia Bloomer said in “On Housekeeping: Woman’s Burdens”

Why cannot the cooking and washing and sewing be all attended to in a cooperative establishment and thus relieve women and mothers particularly of the heavy burdens their fourfold labors now impose upon them, and give them time for self-improvement and the care and culture of their children?

I discovered that for many early feminists the enemy was not the home. The enemy was lack of recognition for work in the home.

Selma James said the housewife is the determinant of the position of all other women and is indispensable to economic production. Margaret Benston argued that what women do in the home is to create useful products and services (pre-market economy) and their work has economic value.

Sarah Hale, the writer of “Mary Had a Little Lamb”, way back in 1785, was a feminist in that she considered that homemaking was a real profession and deserved dignity. Charlotte Perkins Gilman in 1898 said the labor of women in the home enables women to produce more wealth. Theodora Youmans in 1915 of the Women’s Suffrage Association responding to a criticism that women in the home ‘don’t work’ reacted this way “The assumption that women however hard they work in the household do not support themselves but are supported by their husbands, that they earn nothing and own nothing—that assumption upon which all our property laws are based is so abominable that I cannot find words to express my opinion of it”

In 1881 Susan B. Anthony was at least 120 years ahead of her time when she wrote “Woman has been the great unpaid laborer of the world.”

Canada was I am proud to say, among the first to recognize women’s rights, in some areas. The vote for women was won here in 1918, though not by native women until 1960. The same right was won in Britain in 1918, in the US in 1919, but not in France till 1946. Equal rights for women were won in Britain in 1975, in Canada in 1977, in France in 1983 but not yet in the US.

-2nd Wave

But this first wave of feminism did not actually get women into the male paid labor world any better than before. It took the second wave to do that. Germaine Greer and Betty Friedan identified a restlessness among women, a frustration with lack of access to higher education and professional designations. The struggle to get those rights was tricky. It meant women could move out of the unpaid care sector but it also left a gap in who would fill their places. There was no problem for single women whose caregiving responsibilities were fewer. This battle for equality has been highly successful with young women. Economist Stephen Easton of Simon Fraser University has found April 24, 2002
that women now outnumber men on many Canadian university campuses. For every 100 men enrolled there are 120 women.

But as soon as a woman had caregiving responsibilities, the equality started to disintegrate. It was just assumed if there were a child, a sick relative, an aging parent, that the woman would be home to take care of those needs, and the career would be on the back burner. The second wave was aware of this dilemma – and its solution was for women to get the state to pay for their caregiving responsibilities by a third party. Few dared to say women in the home were doing valuable work and deserved recognition there. The thrust was for equality in the paid labor force, in the male paradigm.

The argument for women’s financial independence was an equality argument, but it focused on earning money of one’s own outside the home. There was no concept that half of the household income already was deserved by the caregiver there. Many felt women can’t trust men to share income. So the move to liberate women was shifted to liberate them from the home for that location was associated with an assumption of male oppression and domination and financial dependency of women.

Sadly I feel women were tricked. Working outside the home has real benefits if you are highly skilled and highly paid, but for many women the image of a briefcase is not the paid career image. More appropriate is the mop or the fast food outlet cap. Glamorizing being out there in the paid labor force rang a bit untrue. It also had a few sinister associations. Why was a woman worth more to the state out there than caring for the kids at home? Was this something the state actually benefited from? I discovered that. Marx and Engels wanted all women out of the home and earning money in industry. They advocated socialization of household labor. More tax dollars flow to the state today after all, if all men and women pay tax. But there is a cost-benefit problem. Even by 1900 it became evident. Women forced out of the home stopped having babies. Even Marx and Engels had to adjust their policy to make some allowance for maternity benefits. But the socialist view of women’s correct role, outside the home, continued in many places. In 1981 Mao’s communist government wanted all women in the paid labor force, possibly for less noble reasons according to some feminists in the west. Nurseries were collectivized and those women who were home with children were despised as ‘family women’

There was in the second wave of feminism a strong current of general distaste for the at-home role. Ellen Malos argued that if women got money for work in the home that would only encourage them to stay there and men would use this as a way to mkeep women down. Juliet Mitchell said that family structure is incompatible with equality of the sexes and housework and child-rearing have no economic value.

Shulamith Finestone, writer of The Dialectic of Sex” said women are oppressed if they do housework and should just get out of the house. She dismissed giving birth as a cowlke activity.. Jean Gardiner in 1972 aruged that housewives earncause male domination by serving them in the home. Joan K. Peters ‘When Mothers Work: Loving our Children
without Sacrificing Ourselves” made the common argument of the time that women can’t preserve their own identities unless they are employed outside the home.
Betty Friedan 1963 in “The Feminine Mystique” argued that young mothers were dissatisfied with being home with children. Hannah Gavron in 1965 called her book “The Captive Wife”

There was a criticism of housework as mindless, a criticism of being a cook and launderer for a man, as being victim of oppression and a criticism of taking care of children as not very worthwhile. Germaine Greer said that bringing up children is not a real occupation because children come up the same, brought or not. Second-wave feminists knew caregiving still had to be done, but it demanded national programs of substitutes for these caregiving tasks, so women could earn money. Selma James in 1969 argued for free 24 hour childcare provided by the state so women could earn money.

Women in the home were seen by some as consumers not contributors and as parasites on the economy if they were in the home. These arguments, one can clearly see, are opposite of what some of the early feminists had said. Some might even say the second wave had become anti-feminist because it isolated one role as second class, and that was the traditional role of women.

The antifeminist backlash

By the 1990s the daughters of the sixties and seventies feminists were now adult and they apparently were seeing things differently. Like myself they took for granted the equality of women with men. But some felt that the movement had gone too far with its slogans of ‘A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle’. Men’s groups were starting to claim they were being discriminated against in child custody settlements and legal assumptions that a mother’s care surpassed that of a day. There were women and men who felt that feminism had degraded into ‘male-bashing”

Diane Passnow, VP of Focus on the Family in the September 2000 magazine wrote “The Feminist Mistake” According to a 1998 Time/CNN survey only ¼ of US women identified themselves as feminist and many blamed the movement for their long work hours.

Though the second wave had said the oppressed woman was one who was forced to be home when she longed to work outside the home but her husband wouldn’t let her, women were now indicating another type of oppression – women who would prefer to be home with the kids but whose finances wouldn’t let them.

A 1992 survey for Homemakers Magazine found that 66% of women said they have little or nothing to do with feminism
A 1989 Time CNN poll found that 33% of women called themselves feminist and 58% did not. 77% of women surveyed said the women’s movement has made life better, 94%
said it has helped women become more independent and yet 76% said they paid little or no attention to the movement now.

A 1992 British Cosmopolitan survey of female students found that 75% said they were ambitious but only 38% said they were feminists.

In a 1989 article in Saturday Night, Charlotte Gray noted that feminism was “The New F-Word”. She suggested that women who had championed women’s issues had been defeated recently electorally (Lucie Pepein, Marion Dewar, Lynn McDonald, Maude Barlowe) and suggested that the largest feminist group in Canada, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women “is now the pariah group in Ottawa”

**Feminism started to break up into segments.**

Naomi Wolf in 1992 “Fire with Fire” note two currents of recent feminism- the victims and the powerful. Victim feminists feel superior to men because only women can give birth, but view women as powerless in a moneyed society. Power feminists want women to acquire money and express their opinions.

Susan Alice Watkins 1992 in “Feminism for Beginners” divided the movement into radical feminists, socialist feminists and liberal feminists. The radicals consider men the enemy and fight against rape, pornography and male violence. The socialist feminists ally with all oppressed groups including oppressed men to fight class exploitation. The liberal feminists lobby government for equal rights legislation.

The feminist movement was struggling to survive. If oppressive men had written the scenario to divide and conquer they could not have scripted it better. Women were, yet again, fighting amongst themselves. In the struggle, caregiving was placed on a back burner – the more crying issues seemed to be pay equity, maternity leave for those who earn money, discrimination against lesbian women, discrimination against immigrant women – all in the paid work force.

Some in the second wave thought suggested we could take care of unpaid caregiving labor and housework adequately if we just made men help out more. Nancy Folbrek in 1992 said one option is for men to be made to do more unpaid work and one nation at least considered legislating this. But this was hardly a recognition of the value of unpaid work. It was more like considering the tasks still ornery and obnoxious, but forcing people to take turns doing them, like taking out the garbage.

But the public was not following along with predictions of the second wave feminists, at least not completely. In the ideal world of the second wave it was assumed that modern couples would be dual income. However an October 25,2000 study by the US Census Bureau found that the number of dual-income families, even after 30 years of openness to that lifestyle, is still only 51% of families, meaning 49% are still not dual income. Is that a bad thing? Maybe it is what the people want.

-3RD WAVE
The second wave got women vital rights to equality, but it still assumed that only men’s work was of value. The liberation was just that now women could do it. Feminists of the 1970s sometimes assumed it was necessary to choose career or family and that it was not possible to ‘have it all’. Some urged sacrificing marriage or if not that, at least not buying into parenthood because it was children that caused the dilemma of poverty and balance. The expression that a couple was ‘childless’ was changed to an endorsement, that they were ‘child-free’

And yet over the next few decades it became evident that many women wanted to have kids anyway. And worse still, as the nightmare for some feminists of the 60s, many women wanted to be with their kids at home for a while and were righteously indignant that this option was denied if they indeed were free to choose.

And to the surprise of some, it was becoming evident that it was possible to ‘have it all’, though not necessarily all at once. The two most prominent women in the US were at one time stay-at-home moms. Sandra Day O’Connor, Supreme Court Justice and Madeline Albright, Secretary of State were proof women need not permanently sacrifice career at a very high level, just because they had children and spent time with them.

Ultimately, second-wave feminists themselves admitted the shift. Betty Friedan in 1998 Beyond Gender; The New Politics of Work and Familty” suggested that women’s liberation should not be won at the expense of men and that feminism had made a mistake when it ignored motherhood.

Judy Rebick, former president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women has written in Elmstreet Magazine Sept 2001 that “valuing unpaid work is the key to achieving equality for women and countering the savage arket-obsessed society we are becoming” In a paper on the Internet she has said “I think that the struggle for equality in the home has come to the fore” noting that this issue in the earlier stages of feminism has put many families under ‘terrible stress’

Feminist writer Dorris Lessing noted in 1998 her dispoeasure at the ‘unthinking and automatic rubbishing of men”. Fay Weldon, author of “Down Among the Women’ in May 1998 observed in Harper’s Magazine that feminism had gone too far and the pendulum “needs nudging back to a more moderate position”. Rosalin Coward, long time feminist wrote in the Sunday Times 1999 that she is concerned that boys are being led to believe men are all patriarchal oppressors. “Around me I saw fathers who were very hands-on and trying just as hard as women to work and be good parents”

And an odd thing was happening. Not only feminist scholars were noticing the shift but so were economists, sociologists, medical doctors, even demographers. In 1996 New Zealand economist Marilyn Waring published her groundbreaking work “If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economics” In it she notes “When I see a woan holding her child I know I am watching a woman at work.” Waring said women’s unpaid labor should be made part of national economic statistics and the system of national accounts.
The caregiving part of life was coming into its own. Ann Barr Snitow, feminist scholar noted at a conference in 1990 that the view of motherhood has shifted recently to ‘pronatalism’ She wrote ‘The feminist hope of breaking the iron bond between mother and child seems gone. We have embraced nurturance”

International Women’s Day celebrations for March 8th 2001 admitted this new focus. The celebrations included in Great Britain a march for mothers, in Ghana a play about domestic workers, in Ireland a petition for a law for an annual paid holiday for women, in Mexico a strike to do no housework for one day, in Spain a two hour general strike to demand a social wage for women working in the home, and in Sweden demonstrating for financial support for parents who want to stay at home and raise their children.

In the US, the world’s largest feminist group the National Organization for Women (NOW) has in its official statement”NOW actively supports full rights for homemakers and recognition for the economic value of the vital service they perform for family and society. We also support legislation and programs reflecting the reality of marriage as an equal economic partnership.”

But these were just words. Women were still woefully underrepresented in governments to legislate for these changes. Dr. Carolyn Bennett, Liberal MP in Canada has observed March 2, 2002 that the current representation of women in Parliament at 21% is not good enough and requests that work be done to encourage more women to run for politics till that number is at least 30%.

The commercial world was noticing the shift also. An increasing number of high-profile women who broke the corporate glass ceiling spoke out in favor of taking time with family. Sue Barnes CEO of Pepsico stepped down from her position in 1995. Massachusetts governor Jan Swift gave birth to twins in 2001 and pulled out of the gubernatorial race, citing her ill husband and her new children as priorities. Karen Hughes, 45, advisor to US president George W. Bush in April 2002 pulled out of her role to move back to Texas saying “I want my son to know where his home is. I want to see my stepdaughter and granddaughter”. Some would consider such a sideshift from career a failure of feminism, certainly of second-wave feminism. But the third wave does not see it as a failure. It is a step forward – to value all roles, not just paid roles. If only tax policy was as tolerant and supportive of all options.

CHAPTER 3 – FORCED DEPENDENCY- an affront to the independent spirit

The state took long enough to shift policy to value women in paid labor, and it has not yet adjusted to the new wave. Sadly one need look no further than census forms or tax forms to uncover stereotypes that degrade unpaid caregiving. One such form in Saskatchewan said’ If you have been a housewife all your life, indicate’ Never worked”. This phraseology so incensed one Saskatchewan homemaker, Carol Lees in 1991 that she
demonstrated at parliament and risked a jail sentence for refusing to fill out the form with such a statement.

In 2002 there is little improvement. The Canadian census continues to ask ‘actual hours worked last week’ assuming only paid work is ‘work’. Occupation has been asked on the census form since 1871 and ‘homemaker’ is still not an occupation category. Availability for ‘work’ has been asked since 1976 and those who are busy raising small children are lumped together with people sleeping off last night’s party in the local park. Unpaid labor activity has been surveyed in some long forms (not everybody’s form) since 1996 but there are only 3 categories mentioned- unpaid housework, caring for children, unpaid care to seniors and they are noted only briefly.

One of the state’s stereotypes is that the ‘modern’ woman works outside the home and has her young children in daycare. Hollywood is often not just a reflection of practice but a role model for it, and Hollywood still glamorizes mostly the mother with a paid career. Movies often show a stock scene of mother urging child to finish breakfast to catch the bus or so she can drive him to school as she goes to paid work These movie images are somewhat out of touch with reality, not just because a lot of mothers don’t use daycare, but because a lot of mothers don’t go out to paid work but do it from home. A sizeable number don’t have paid work at all.

The numbers of women actually in dual income families has peaked and is now quite stable at about 61% of husband-wife families according to Women in Canada 2000 by Statistics Canada. And there is no ‘modern’ way to define parenting since over 1/3 of women define it at least for a while as full-time hands on presence with the child, without other personal source of income. It’s all ‘modern’.

interdependency and dependency

In early societies women cooked and men hunted. If the men found no food, women also provided the food by berries and home-made breads, syrups, vegetables as they were able. These were interdependent roles, everybody working for the good of the group. The concept of one ‘depending’ on the other was logical but only because everybody depended on everybody else. Nobody was just living off another. However when the male role became a paid role, where cash replaced goods and men brought home cash, the accounting of this shifted. Where money was deemed the main way to participate in society by making purchases, the only role valued by those who planned such economies was the role that produced money. In that way traditional economics began to only notice the exchange of money. Work was what produced money or was likely to. Services were valued only in terms of money paid for them. This type of economics has frustrated economists like Marilyn Waring in New Zealand, Isabella Bakker in York University Canada and Mary Mellor in the UK for it is slanted – it ignores half of the ‘work’ done- it ignores traditional women’s work.
If you went through your life with blinders on, you would not expect to take in the whole field of vision and traditional economics has in effect put blinders on how we plan budgets. It ignores much of the actual work done in the nation, takes it for granted, and by ignoring it devalues it and starts to discourage it. That is where a problem enters for if all adults are pressured to only work in the paid sector, all traditional caregiving roles will become nearly impossible to continue. And that would create a very skewed society indeed. We have come to that impasse more or less.

In traditional economics, the principle of tax is that the state wants a piece of the action on any profit or any expectation of profit. So we tax income and we tax businesses that make a profit and we even tax scholarships because kids are expected to one day make a profit because they got them. We only allow deductions if they are part of the pursuit of profit, business deductions on the way to the money pursuit. So you can deduct travel to a hotel for business, but not for pleasure. We can deduct union dues, legal expenses, membership fees in a profession, and expenses in our artistic profession. In this type of economics, a concept of work done without profit, work done which actually involves a personal cost and has no expectation of profit, confuses the situation. It does not ‘compute’. And work done that saves money it outside the realm also. The state is not sure what to do with the concept but some have even vaguely suggested it should extra tax people who save money by unpaid caregiving at home.

Vaguely over the years there has been a grudging admission that some of what a person does is not for profit, but that was allowable only in essence to keep the person alive so he could then go out and make profit. So some ‘personal expenses’ were allowed. These are kind of embarrassments to the regrettable admission that after all these earners are not robotic so they occasionally need to be fed. The personal deduction was not a recognition that the unpaid part of life had value. It only had value in relation to its moving the adult closer to earning. The same bias continues actually in terms of child-rearing which is not considered worthy of financial support unless it is done by earners, or maternity benefits which also are not available for maternity per se, but only for mothers who earn money. The argument for child care as ‘necessary for work’ buys into the rationale of traditional economics – that only work for pay really matters and caregiving is a kind of hurdle to get over to reach the grand earning goal.

forced dependency

In tax law being a ‘dependent’ is a vast category which includes those with mental and physical infirmity and those who are financially supported by the taxpayer. The term ‘dependent’ connotes not only a helplessness and a lack of pulling one’s own weight, but also a kind of sloth or laziness. The term however is a vestige of economies designed in the male paradigm where only money mattered since in colloquial speech of course a person ‘depends’ on another emotionally even if not financially. A baby depends on the mother to feed it. A husband depends on the wife to take care of the sick child while he is at paid work. A senior may depend on an adult child to make sure his medication dose is correct. So the irony is that the person who is ‘dependent’ financially may be the one
who is depended on emotionally. The term therefore is not completely accurate or logical. Even early feminists had noticed this irony:

The economic dependence of women is perhaps the greatest injustice that has been done to us, and has worked the greatest injury to the race – Nellie McClung

1883 – Lillie Devereux Blake “Women’s Place Today” – Even where a woman does all the work of a family, rising early and late taking rest, cooking and washing, cleaning and mending, and performing all sorts of housework, her husband will talk of ‘supporting her’.

1915 – Theodora Youmans, Woman’s Suffrage Association
The assumption that women however hard they work in the household do not support themselves but are supported by their husbands, that they earn nothing and own nothing – that assumption upon which all our property laws are based is so abominable that I cannot find words to express my opinion of it.

There have over the years been many currents to value such unpaid work and correct the notion of ‘dependency’ but none has had teeth to it. There have been international covenants signed as well as national ones. But these were promoses not kept, so far at least.

Take for instance the Royal Commission the Status of Women in 1970. It said ‘our aim is neither to require women to enter the labour market nor to compel them to stay home with their children. They should receive the help they need to make a choice possible” It suggested income sharing and a correction of the tax ignorance of husbands and wives as a partnership. The commission viewed marriage as interdependent not dependent.

“The wife, who works at home as a housekeeper, far from being a dependant, performs essential services worth at least as much to her husband as the cost of the food, shelter and clothing that he provides for her…
Married women usually make a major contribution to the family through the provision of housekeeping and child care services These services have an economic value. They represent an income in kind that is just as valuable as cash income”

The Commission suggested child rearing expenses be universally supported.

“Any compensation for the cost of caring for a dependant should not be contingent on the mother being in the paid labor force, because these services have to be provided whether the mother works in the home or outside… The solution we recommend is to provide substantial cash allowance for dependant children”

However these brave words 32 years later have still not been enacted. We still tax households assuming a nonearner is a helpless dependant.
In the US people can declare how they would like to be taxed. Some choose taxation on individual income, while others choose to be taxed as sharing income. In Quebec in 2002 partners can declare which type of legal relationships they want. Some prefer all their property to be considered shared (community of property), some declare none is shared (separation of property) and some share only that which was acquired during the marriage (Partnership of aquisitions) But most provinces follow the lead of the federal government, and assume spouses without income ‘depend’ on earners one-sidedly.

Oddly enough, Canada does assume income splitting and ‘interdependency’ in a few areas, those very areas in fact where it will not cost the state money to make that assumption. For instance spouses can make RRSP contributions for each other. That does not mean a married man can have double the RRSP contribution limit if he also contributes for his wife. It means he can use his limit and divide it up so she can have some. It does not cost the state to provide this benefit. The couple can transfer unused personal credits, can transfer charitable and medical donation tax credits, can make tax-free transfers of capital assets between parties, can transfer age credit, pension income credit, disability tax credit and tuition and education tax credit but they don’t get double credit, just a transfer of the one.

And the state assumes income-sharing when to do so saves the state money. For instance when it is returning benefits to households, it returns less to person A because of person B’s income. If the state for instance based child tax credit on the individual income of the chief caregiver of the child, the benefit paid to the unpaid or low-paid caregiver would be much larger than the current benefit. The current one takes into account the other spouse’s income and reduces the deduction accordingly. Is this fair? In a tax climate of every individual noted for individual income, it is not. In a climate aware of the individual value of women’s unpaid work, freeing women up to have financial autonomy and independence, it is not.

The GST credit, the Child tax Benefit credit also are both reduced based for a parent based on income of the other parent. Many say this allows no options- the spouse in the home as not only assumed to be dependant; she is forced to be. She is not permitted individual financial recognition for her caregiving work, even in programs for caregiving such as ‘child care’, and her benefits are reduced depending on earnings of a third party.

In Canada a woman may be very sure of her individual rights and financial autonomy, even adamant about it, having her own bank account in a marriage, having the bank account and the mortgage in both spouses’ names and even retaining her maiden name but if she chooses to take care of her own children in the home she has no choice but to be viewed as having lost her autonomy and even her value. And as long as she stays married that is true.

However - the contribution of the caregiving spouse to the family’s wellbeing has been admitted in divorce courts, and has entitled the woman to half of the family assets, noting that the unpaid labor has maintained the family, saved costs, and has enabled the paid worker to be assured his family was well nurtured even in his absence, so he could take
on longer job commitments and travel without guilt. However this admission of interdependency has not been made for marriage—only for divorce.

spousal deduction/spousal credit

If the couple is still married, her value is still seen as not only minor, but as less than that of any other full adult. A single adult has a personal tax deduction of 7412 in 2001, but the spouse who is taking care of children is only worth a deduction of 6294. She is not even a full adult apparently. The theory of that seems to be that the two live more cheaply as a couple than they would as individuals so they don’t need as many tax breaks. It used to be said jokingly that ‘two can live as cheaply as one’. But that is only true if only one eats. It is not even true that two can live as cheaply as one and a half. Couples tend to move to more expensive accommodation and once there are children there are needs for larger accommodation also. The idea two live more cheaply together than they did separately is not the universal experience, at all.

What is more striking however is that in Canada’s tax law, the ‘spousal deduction’ is not to recognize caregiving of the young or any work in fact. It is given just for the existence of a spouse and for all the tax department cares she could be lying in vegetative state. The amount of this deduction is often compared to the basic personal deduction, which is for basic costs incurred in living even if one is single. The spousal deduction, theoretically is to offset the basic costs of the second person, and many feel those costs are logically the same as the costs of the first person. Yet the spousal deduction federally has never been as high as the basic personal.

In 1988 the basic personal was $1020 while spousal was $1044. In 1999 the basic personal was $7131 while the spousal was $6055. In 2000 the basic personal was $7231 while the spousal was $6140. In 2001 the basic personal was $7412 and the personal was $6294. Why are they not equal?

The spousal deduction has been around a while. It was created in 1918 for employees with wives or spouses who had no income. It rose with the cost of living. In 1987 it was worth $3666 on the federal income tax form. In 1988 it was converted to a nonrefundable credit so those who did not earn enough to pay tax would not get the benefit—it only helped reduce your tax if you paid tax. Over time some have even suggested rather than raising the benefit more in tune with minimum wage, or at least to equal the basic personal deduction, that it should be eliminated completely because it served to keep women dependent on men. However that logic, that taking any money away from the woman at all would help her is very odd. For most women it was the only recognition they got. Yes it was too little and yes the term ‘dependent’ was inaccurate but a solution that would work to correct problems would be to increase it and recognize the relationship as mutual and interdependent. Removing the benefit entirely would only exacerbate feminization of poverty.
Some provinces have at least tried to correct this unfair situation. Alberta has an equal deduction, personal and spousal of $12,900. Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and Quebec have also moved to equalizing the deductions. But the federal government has not.

How much is the spousal deduction? Is it adequate compared to other things, say minimum wage? In 1997 it was $5380 which is for a 40 hour work week $2.58 an hour. At the time the minimum wage was $5 an hour or $10,400 per year so spouses were considered even at that rate, half-humans. Given that caregivers of the young put in much more than a 40 hour work week, for instance 7 AM to 7PM 7 days a week, a work week of over 80 hours, the per hour rate is more like $1.26 or one quarter of minimum wage. Even at the amount of $7412 for a 52 weeks of 40 hours of labor, that still only comes to $3.56 which is half minimum wage. For an 80 hour week, it is ¼ minimum wage.

After that spousal deduction, the single earner is taxed as if he is still single. As one tax commentator has said in Ontario, the tax department apparently assumes that the wife is kept in the basement, fed bread and water and can live on only $6214 a year, while the man must pay tax on the rest of his income as if she did not exist. A single earner making $75,000 pays $13,597 in tax. A married earner with an unsalaried wife and two kids, who earns $75,000 pays in tax $12,294. The married earner apparently can provide for all the needs of the other three people in his family for $1303 for the year. That works out to, well let’s see, about $434 each for the year or $1.19 a day. For food, clothing, shelter, education..everything. It just means that our tax policy penalizes nonearning spouses or children. Their dependency is lumped together and their costs and contributions are ignored.

In Canada since we tax based on the individual but return some benefits based on the family, there is a basic inconsistency that is confusing for taxpayers. There is also what some have called a penalty for being married. Two single individuals can claim two principal residences but if they are married they can only claim one. Child care deductions are worth more if taken off the income of the higher earning spouse but they are required to be taken off the lower-earning spouse. That means that a single woman may benefit more if she is not married than if she is. These penalties for marital status may in fact be violations of Charter rights to not discriminate on the basis of marital status.

There are other areas of problem. Some deductions are counted directly off the payable tax – RRSP contributions (the rich can make more than the poor can), daycare costs (those with money are more likely to be able to use them than those who have no income), and business investment loss. There is a rebate for those who have little income and yet have to pay the Goods and Services Tax. Teens often can get this rebate. However homemakers cannot.

The public is not unaware of this penalty. It has had to adjust massively to it – and one way it has adapted is to have more women in paid labor. That however was the intent of
the policy. It was a policy with a built-in social agenda. But the state, which hoped to gain tax dollars in this way, has noted an unpredicted side-effect. The drop in the birth rate is very likely directly related to the fact the state makes it nearly impossible to afford to have kids and be with them so people are having fewer kids.

Other countries allow income-splitting. Canada does not. A single-rate tax would eliminate this problem since taxation would have what is called ‘horizontal equity’. The tax a given household pays would be the same regardless of how the money was earned. If two people earned $30,000 each, or two people earned $40,000 and $20,000 or two people earned $60,000 and zero, the total tax of these couples is identical because after all they all have only $60,000 to work with and a dollar earned is a dollar taxed.

But Canada does not use that tax policy. It cares how the money was earned not who it stretches over. So by 2002 figures, calculated by Heather Gore-Hickman, C.A. in the province of BC on a household income of $60,000 the family earning 30 and 30 would pay 6276 in federal tax, the family earning 36,000 and 24,000 would pay 6569 in federal tax, the family earning 50,000 and 10,000 would pay 7959 in federal tax and the family that had the poor judgment to be a single earner family earning 60,000 pays 8783 in federal tax. The single-earner family pays 42% MORE tax on the same basic household income. Fair? Many believe it is not fair.

In fact so many believe this is not fair that there has been a move in Alberta to flatten the tax rate for all income levels. This ‘single rate tax’ is one way to address the problem because if the tax rate for instance is 17% on every dollar earned, it does not matter how the money was earned. The earners in all the above categories would pay the same tax because the total income to be taxed is the same.

The Action Democratique Party of Quebec which recently won 3 by-elections in June 2002 in Quebec also endorses a single rate tax for that province. The discrepancy between the taxation of the single and dual income families is often raised as if there were two categories. In fact one can see that all couples pay a penalty along a graduated line, depending on how far apart their incomes are from being equal (30,000 and 30,000 in our example). So the penalty is paid by most couples. This means the majority of voters are being penalized but it also means that the tax department is very reluctant to change the present situation since it risks losing considerable revenue. One tax official pointed out that he did not want to create ‘winners and losers’ in any adjustment – and apparently he was afraid of alienating the present winners. Others have countered simply that the present situation already has winners and losers and that the challenge is to ensure winners and winners.

Those who benefit from a lower tax rate are reluctant to object. As the saying goes, ‘Nobody with four aces argues for a new deal’. Currently the rich have several options the poor simply don’t have. ‘They can make establish special savings called’ family trusts’, they can incorporate their professions and pay a spouse to be nominally a secretary for them, they can pay lower corporate tax than if they were individuals, they can deduct trips and meals if they are businesses than ordinary employees cannot deduct.
The media was aware of these tax differences but did not notice the fact that all couples are affected. Certainly the number of dual income families has increased, from 39% of couples in 1971 to 61% in 1992. But that means that over one-third of all couples still are single income families, despite the mounting pressure to move women out of the home. The number of single income families has stayed at about the 1/3 mark since 1988. Eliminating the tax bias against the ‘single income ‘family was the catch-all phrase to address the problem but actually it was a tax bias against any couples with unequal incomes. The issue however raised public ire. In the spring of 1999 there was a vote in the House of Commons to eliminate this tax penalty, and all members of all opposition parties favored the bill, an overwhelming condemnation of an unfair policy – but the ruling party voted to retain the present policy and, having the majority, won.

The state continued to assume that the single income family already was rich. In a reply to an official UN complaint about this tax discrepancy, the Canadian government attempted to justify the penalty for the single income family saying it wanted to avoid the scenario of the ‘wealthy banker’s wife’. The myth the single income family was rich was just that- a myth. The Canadian Council on Social Development in 1996 found that many single income families actually live below the poverty line even, just to have one parent with the children for a few years.

There are admittedly some single earner couples are wealthy, just as there are some very wealthy dual-career couples. One very telling evidence that the nonearning spouse may have real value comes in the salary and job placement of the employed spouse. What is being noticed is that the spouse at home is freer to handle the family crises, enabling the earner to take on travel and bigger responsibility without sacrificing mental health. So many companies find that it is the single income family that moves ahead on the corporate ladder. The spouse at home can do more entertaining. The spouse at home can appear at more public functions. The argument should not be made, I don’t think, that it is better to have a spouse at home, but it must be admitted that it often does not hurt. In 1956 William W. H Whyte wrote “The Organization Man’ saying that a wife at home was an island of tranquility to liberate the husband’s total energy for his paid job.” An article in Saturday Night magazine in 2001 entitled ‘What’s A Wife Worth?’ noticed that many corporations which hire CEOs now also require the spouse to do a lot of entertaining and public appearances and in recognition of this, some are even paying the spouse a salary. Linda Stroh of Loyola University noted in her 1996 article “The Dual Earner Daddy Penalty in Salary Progression” that salaries of managers with wives at home increased by 70% over 5 years while those with employed wives rose only 59%.

The point is – a state policy that assumes the dual earning family is poor and the single earner family is rich is not accurate. It all depends. More commonly the reverse is true since, after all, two salaries are more than one.

To return to horizontal equity would be easy. One would simply have to tax the household based on total household income, and not worry about who earned what within
Household-based taxation is allowed in many nations but not in Canada. Yet ironically again, if one does not tax the household but only individuals, that must be based on the assumption of the individual financial status of each person, and therefore om the assumption people do not share income. If that is true, then fine, let us assume people do not share income. Every person for herself. But the state is not consistent in that assumption. This inconsistent flexibility in tax policy always benefits the state and penalizes the taxpayer. The Carter Commission in the 1960s felt it so unfair it recommended taxation based on the family in the first place. The Carter Commission was ignored.

Another striking principle of traditional economics is in how it treats not earning money. The assumption is made that nonearners are lazy and should be encouraged to earn money. The classification of people not earning money full-time is vast – those who earn part-time because they can’t find full-time work and those who earn only part-time because they have heavy responsibilities taking care of someone else unpaid, those who have no paid income because they are lazy and those who have no paid income because they are handicapped or sick. Unfortunately in traditional economics all of these are equally bad – they are evidence a person is not up to snuff and not playing along Traditional economics creates ‘incentives’ for all of these to get a full-time paid job. These incentives can be both the carrot of training programs, some tax breaks if you have a paid job, and the stick – deliberately low rates of social benefits if you have no income. The state is not embarrassed to treat differently those with money and those without – it prides itself on it. These are considered ‘incentives’ to paid labor and ‘disincentives’ to being without income.

In fact this mood of discouraging in any way aiding the nonincomed role carries to the point where benefits are actually clawed back for the poor if the poor are getting specific help for their situation. For instance if one partner in a couple is disabled, the disability payment is viewed as income and is seen as a good reason to reduce social benefits for the couple to live on. The national child benefit is a financial help to the poor raising children but it is also seen as income so those who are poorest, the ones on welfare, have their welfare payments reduced in many provinces because hey they already are getting money for the child. In this way the poor become penalized for their own poverty because help given them is taxed back.

And consistent with a policy of disincentives to not earning money, the state has a strong desire to keep any benefit payments low. It may be reasonable to keep unemployment less attractive than earning money, for the single healthy citizen with no caregiving responsibilities, but a policy to keep at subsistence level the very poor with young children seems heartless.

And in addition in many cases, the benefit is not even readily accessible. If the benefit is a refundable tax credit’ for instance, to get it you have to actually fill out a tax form and ask for it – and the very poor often don’t fill out tax forms because they know they do not earn enough to pay tax.
Tax policy rides a fine line, according to one trustee in bankruptcy, between trying to be very simple and trying to make fine tune to be fair. The tax code has shifted between these two goals periodically. Between 1972 and 1982 there were 10 tax brackets but in 1982 these were reduced to 3, for simplicity. Some in the 1990s and 2002 recommend only one bracket, again for simplicity. The single rate tax is suggested to ensure that every earner pays a single rate of tax on income – say 17%. The problem, according to critics of the move, is that now the rich instead of paying 47% only have to pay 17% (too little) while the poor who used to only have to pay 13% now have to pay 17% (too much) So they argue for adjustments, for fairness, which reduces simplicity.

The formula for child tax benefit calculation now in use for instance, is a math formula taking into consideration at least 8 factors, well beyond the calculation level of most taxpayers but more seriously beyond the ability of most taxpayers to comprehend. So those who feel the present tax system is not fair can often be put down by the tax department with a condescending tone of “This is all too hard for you to understand so just go home and forget about it.” Sadly, this excuse in its various guises is too commonly given to those who might object, since the tax code as I was told has taken decades to arrange and occupies hundreds of pages. Basically they are saying ‘Don’t mess with us. We know what works’. And for the ordinary taxpayer the only real gut feeling reaction is “but it’s not fair”.

There has to enough simplicity of the policy for people to not get the impression they are being walked over with math as a con.

The problem with having tax policy that is complex is that it becomes very costly to change it. The forms for it are set up. The hierarchies of the civil service are adapted to it. There is then a huge inertia to changing anything so the first reaction to any lobby for change of policy is resistance to change itself.

It takes a lot of work to turn around a vast ocean liner and one that has been headed for years towards male-oriented goals only is hard to redirect to include also traditionally female labor. Some lobbyists working at minor changes in the law for instance, ones who have made one Supreme Court challenge to change a small aspect of child care expense law have found it takes years. One lawyer who started the case, between starting the legal action and having it heard by the Supreme Court, had married and had two children. The time factor is a crucial one because lobbyists come and go and the state can simply outwait them. Most parents of young children are shocked at thir tax treatment but feel powerless to address it because they are so busy with the children. As the children grow their focus turns to teens and then young adults and the interest in assistance for early childhood shifts. The state can sit back and wait for any given lobbyist then to burn out or give up. And many have.

Oddly enough though, administration of tax policies that are complicated is also expensive. If there are eligibility criteria for getting a benefit, there have to be inspections. If there are conditions on a deduction, there has to be processing of forms. When family allowance was brought in one of its key features was universality, argued
partly because it is simply less expensive for the state to administer such a benefit. The fact it is also fairer is more important of course, but the state also considers cost and its own inconvenience. But once an inconvenient and costly program is in place, it is also costly to change it. There is a saying that all changes cause stress, even changes for the better. Sadly, all changes also cost money at first, though they in the end will often save money. Short-term thinkers only look at today’s cost.

Another way of looking at this was suggested to me by an engineer. In any business you price an item keeping in mind its cost of production and the costs of getting it to the store to sell it. The transportation cost is accounted for as a ‘transaction cost’. And one could think of parents as the administrators of health service delivery and child-rearing service delivery. The cost of operating a family has in it a ‘transaction cost’ related to what the state requires in terms of care.

There is another intriguing policy of national taxation which is of interest to the caregiving movement. The odd idea has been suggested by some that if a person does unpaid caregiving in the home, since no one is being paid for that work, the state actually is losing out on its piece of the action, the family is benefiting unfairly and the family with a spouse in the home should pay extra tax. This argument is used in essence to justify the tax inequity against the single-income family. But the argument is flawed in the first place because there is no actual cash to tax. It assumes that for homebased care there is a net financial gain that is taxable when in fact there is always a loss - groceries, diapers, toys, medicine are not bought at profit and this is not even counting the loss incurred of salary sacrifice.

But there is also a logical reason to not overtax the single income family and it is this – if you can’t deduct losses from an activity, you can’t tax it either. A business is taxed on money it makes but it also then can deduct losses it incurs. But the two go together. If you don’t allow one, you can’t allow the other. In the purest example of this, take gambling. You don’t have to pay taxes on money won by gambling and the main reason, is that the state won’t let you deduct losses from gambling. The same could then be true of households. We all incur losses not gains by running a household. We can’t be taxed on gains operating a house because we are not allowed to deduct losses there.

The third point in this area is simply that to tax the poor, to tax those who by sweat of their brow work rather than for cash, is a completely repulsive suggestion. It is like breaking someone’s legs, handing him crutches and then making him pay a tax because he gets an extra help ordinary walkers don’t get when walking.

There is one additional point to make on this topic. If the state believes it is fair to tax on money not spent, in essence money ‘saved’ as an undeserved and unfair benefit as this suggestion to tax homemakers suggests, then to be consistent and look at the larger picture, it could also notice that one-third of the GDP of Canada is in fact unpaid labor. Statistics Canada tells us that 1/3 of the gross domestic product is money the state has saved and derived benefit from by not spending but still getting the service – and it should tax the one who got the benefit there too. And the one who got the benefit there is
the state itself. To tax money not spent would be admitting that the state had unfairly benefited by a vast sum of money and the one owed would be the group that made this benefit possible—i.e. unpaid workers. So it would be admitting it owed unpaid caregiving labor a financial recognition. That is what I have been asking for—so the argument to penalize homemakers actually logically implies supporting them. Any policy that taxed homemakers as if they were a pampered group, would have to also tax the state as a pampered group.

New Zealand economist Marilyn Waring was the first to dramatically raise public attention to the issue of skewed economics with her books about women’s work. UK economist Mary Mellor has continued this struggle with her 2002 paper’s suggesting a new type of accounting system emphasizing useful work even if unpaid, not just salaried employment.

negative and inaccurate stereotypes

Views about the caregiving role have seesawed back and forth in history, from a gushing admiration to contempt and back again. Part of the negative judgment was due to gender. In 1880 the laws of the Dominion of Canada said “No woman or lunatic shall vote”. Susan B. Anthony said in 1881 “Woman has never been thought of other than a piece of property, to be disposed of at the will and pleasure of men”.

But part of it was the caregiving itself. It was a role that even when praised was the only role allowed, keeping women in a cage, though as one politician said, it was a gilded cage. Martin Luther said “Women should remain at home, sit still, keep house and bear and bring up children’. Alfred, Lord Tennyson said “God made the woman for the use of man and for the good and increase of the world”. Friedrich Nietzsche said “Everything in woman has a solution—it is called pregnancy”.

I grew up in the 1950s and 1960s. At that time of TV role models in “I Love Lucy” and “Father Knows Best” the father was portrayed as the head of the house, but what many forget is—the woman was also very strong. She was temperamental, feisty, even bossy and many joke themes of the era were about how the woman was a shopaholic, how she ‘wore the pants in the family’, how she had a whim of iron. The irony of her position led to a clever balancing act. Some men did keep money out of the hands of their wives and denied her the right even to drive a car. They wanted to be in control outside the kitchen though she was allowed that territory. Other men, like my father, treated their wives as equals, encouraged their interests, trusted their judgment, and took joy in providing for their comfort. On any street it was, as it always has been I suppose, not uniform how women at home actually were treated. But some did feel oppressed.

I grew up when the putdowns of housewives were subtle. There was a poem I vaguely recall from the radio about a woman driver “She signals left and turns right. Don’t pull over—she just might”. We all laughed but my sister and I were also figuring out our future roles. Were we expected to be bad drivers? Was that part of growing up female?
A medical student has told me that in psychiatry there is a phenomenon called ‘learned incompetence’. A society can discourage people from succeeding in certain roles because those roles don’t match expected personalities. At that I guess I was a raging success – I don’t much like driving, especially on long trips. And my generation and that of my mother usually, if you watch couples drive away, has the male driving.

I became concerned however when I noticed that even in the areas at which women were expected to blossom, cooking, taking care of children, women were still turning to men for the ultimate expertise. The renowned chefs of the world were, are usually still are, male. The expert on medical care of a small child was usually a man. Dr. Spock, Dr. Freud, Dr. Bloom. It was as if even in our area we weren’t very good.

I became concerned when I realized that a way to insult an idea about which you had some practical experience and anecdotal evidence was to call it an ‘old wives’ tale’. That discounted its credibility immediately. What about that made it dumb – the association of age? The association of a wife believing it? There was even an expression that someone who got stuck with an onerous task that all wanted to avoid was ‘left holding the baby’. Yet these putdowns to traditional roles of mothering and caregiving existed at the same time as flowery Mother’s Day cards and religious reminders that ‘the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world’.

In the sixties feminist writers viewed the homemaker as a bored and frustrated clever mind trapped, barefoot and pregnant, in the kitchen. She was not able to get an education into the professions though she was smart. She was not able to have financial independence, sign cheques, have a credit card in her own name or make any financial decisions without her husband’s permission. She was forced to have a large family and birth control was not encouraged. And though many women were not at all in that situation, enough were that the image resonated.

I myself experienced some of the financial dehumanizing and maybe the shock of it hit home to me because my upbringing just expected equality, and because as a school teacher in the 1970s I had had respect. But how well I remember trying to write a cheque in 1980 in an Ottawa store and the clerk telling me she could not accept it because when she asked me where I worked I told her I was home with the kids. How well I remember the time in a Calgary drugstore I was making a purchase by credit card and the clerk refused it because the name on the card was my husband’s. All of our bank accounts, mortgage and credit cards are held jointly and I had been using his card for years but suddenly policy changed and I needed a note from him, or my own card. How well I remember sitting outside the loans officer’s cubicle at our bank, not allowed to go in to negotiate a loan until my husband arrived. How well I remember sitting with my 3 daughters and one son, all young adults, talking to advisors in a federal department, when suddenly my son spoke up and all eyes turned giving him, as one of my daughters later said ‘instant credibility’.

A lab technician told me how often she had seen it that a woman went in to see the doctor and came out being told she was just a worrier while a man went in with the same
symptoms and came out with a prescription. We may have laughed at the phenomena, when a woman took her car to get it repaired and the estimate was twice what it was if a man took the car in. But it was a hollow laugh.

Women were right to object, to claim equality. And they did. Birth control became readily available in the form of the pill so women could choose when and if to bear children. Dower rights to farms and property were passed enabling women to have financial equality especially after death or divorce though these were slow coming (see timeline). Education facilities and businesses through some pressure and lobbying eventually opened their doors to women also. And slowly equality was officially attained and the old obstacles were eroding. But a problem had arisen.

The movement to gain equality had ignored those men who had all along given their wives respect and equality in the home and the many families which actually had the wife handle the money. The right to choices about having children by pendulum swing, came to view any pregnancy as a failure. Women were embarrassed to be pregnant as if they had as one friend said ‘oopsed’.

The right to abort as a decision about a woman’s own body was a legitimate right won. But easy abortion, to very young girls without parents being informed, murkied the issue. Was pregnancy an inconvenience, or as one girl said, a piece of fluff to get rid of? Somehow in the discussion, the joy of having a baby had been ignored. Doctors and ethicists struggled with the fine line between rushing an abortion to decrease stress of waiting, and not rushing it so there was chance for careful reassessment. The British government announced July 7, 2002 that it will allow a pilot program to have the abortion pill RU 486 available not just in hospitals but also in clinics, though a prescription by two doctors is still required.

**single mothers**

The view of the mother then shifted again. Anyone who had actually kept the baby, not aborting it, was seen as choosing her fate, making her bed and lying in it. Social support for the costs of feeding and housing and clothing this child were minimal as family allowance and child dependant deductions were eventually eliminated completely. If you had a baby you and your spouse/partner felt quite on your own. And if there was no spouse or partner, you felt the full impact of what society really feels about caregiving. Single mothers on welfare were petri dishes for the purefied version of how we value parenting, and they were often mistrusted. Even leaders on the political right who promoted valuing mothers in the home in 2001, reserved a contempt for single mothers at home. There was an assumption apparently that they would just get pregnant to escape having to ‘work’.

And we got the concept of the ‘high risk’ mother, which often meant simply a mother in poverty. Government studies such as the National Longitudinal Survey on Children and Youth, Zero to Six: The Basis for School Readiness, May 1997, Readiness to Learn 1998
focus on how children are being raised today. “At risk” is a curious expression. Are we ‘at risk’ from them or are they ‘at risk’ from us or are they ‘at risk’ from social forces? If poverty is the problem, and it is, it is too easy to hint the mother is irresponsible and putting the child ‘at risk’. It may be our social policy that keeps her in poverty. Some single mothers have bristled at the suggestion that because of lack of a man nearby they are to be scrutinized more carefully as putting their children at risk.

The assumption that today there are a lot more single parents than there used to be is an interesting one. The National Archives of Canada June 2002 has revealed that according to the 1901 census 12% of families with children aged 15 to 17 were headed by a single parent in 1901 and in that year 7-10% of children were in blended families meaning living with one stepparent. What has changed is the reason for being single or alone- in 1901 it was often due to death of the partner while in 2002 it is more likely due to divorce. The stigma of having lost the male due to death may however be much less socially than the stigma of never having married or of a marriage ending in divorce. Certainly contempt for single mothers is a surprise and seems a throwback to an ancient prejudice that women need men around and if there is a man lacking, the woman is somehow flawed.

If one considers that there are two parts to parenting — one is earning money to feed the child and the other is taking care of the child constantly, the two roles can rarely be done simultaneously. With two parents there was a choice about who did what and the choice became more open in the late 1990s where men were in greater numbers choosing to be the principal caregiver. The state’s role through history has shifted however. During the war if a husband was killed in action, the state helped the mother with the monetary end by way of a widow’s pension, so she could still be home with the kids. The two roles were filled, with the state doing the money role. In the year 2002 this has reversed. Where there is a parent missing, the state now does the child-rearing and pressures the parent of the child to get out and earn money.

This pressure is not only through funding daycare but not care in the home, but is also in the oddity of benefits. Workfare requires parents to do volunteer work away from the child to deserve welfare. And many provinces dealt with single parents on welfare by cutting back their benefits by the exact amount the state knew they were getting in child tax benefits, so in essence they were penalized for having children. As of November 2001 the BC government requires single mothers on welfare to return to paid work when the child is aged one year. Earlier the requirement did not kick in till the child was seven.

The negative stereotypes of parenthood were writ large for single mothers, especially those on welfare. And there was a kind of contempt for those with large families, especially if they were in poverty. Was it wrong for the state to help with the expenses of large families? Some seemed to feel any help only encouraged them and that the poor were irresponsible if they had babies. Justice minister Martin Cauchon has suggested however that government programs of milk for babies are not an encouragement to breed but that for many, having children is part of their culture. I applaud that view. All
children are of equal value in society. But sadly, not all children are given equal support by the state.

There was also a legal vestige of contempt for single mothers known as the ‘man in the house rule’ according to which if a single mother had a man living with her, she would lose benefits because it was assumed he was now the chief earner in the family. This assumption of financial dependency not only robbed women of autonomy but discouraged men from taking on commitments to such women.

marketing surveys

It has been a surprise then to see in the 1990s a shift to admiring babies again. Baby clubs have been set up in several large cities where new moms take their infants, in strollers, to the movies together. Magazines such as Martha Stewart’s ‘Baby’ and store chains such as ‘Baby Gap’ are gaining popularity as the daughters of feminists give birth after all, claiming in an odd twist of independent streak that this too is their right, if equality and free choice mean anything. Pregnancy is again ‘in’ with cable TV having a birth channel to follow couples through the experience. Though not all women want children, it has become socially acceptable again to admit you do.

It may be that big business is more in touch with current trends than the state is. The demographic of parents caring for children at home is sizeable enough now to be a market force, and insulting it does not pay. Crowfoot Ford car dealership in Calgary ran an ad in November 2001 with the caption ‘Just because I’m a stay-at-home moms doesn’t mean I have tons of time. Every minute is important. ‘ The ad argues for clear honest sales strategies and says “When it comes right down to it we all want to be treated the same. We all want respect”.

CHAPTER 4 - IS THIS FAIR? LEGAL ROUTES

The work of taking care of others is traditionally women’s work. Though we have come a long way baby to let women into the paid labor force, and deservedly, it is still socially assumed that if there is a baby, a sick child, an elderly relative, a woman not a man will have a keen interest in the details and will want to help out. Free. This is not even an error- usually women do want to help out, but their ability to do it is severely hampered lately by the other pressures on them especially the pressure to earn money.

Because this then is a gender related issue though, it enters a territory of legal rights and discrimination against women. Technically it is not a bias against women of course since
male caregivers are also treated poorly in tax law. But it is a discrimination against the role of caregiving, which is a traditionally female role. So many would argue that under the Charter of Rights this is discrimination under a category known as ‘analogous to gender’. Pregnancy is in that category.

In 1979 Bliss v. Attorney General of Canada a woman who was refused employment insurance benefits while home due to a pregnancy lost her case, because this was deemed not a case of gender bias – all pregnant women would have been treated the same. However the decision was ultimately reversed. Justice Dickson said that we must not disadvantage women who bear children and benefit society. Since only women get pregnant, the discrimination tended to affect women more than men, so it was ruled a violation on the grounds of being ‘analogous to gender’. Sexual abuse is in a similar category. Abuse is condemned whoever does it but since it tends to sometimes be based on gender, it is a violation of the Charter, ‘analogous to gender’.

Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms is an overarching document ensuring many basic freedoms and rights in our society. It is used as a benchmark against which to compare current and earlier laws and a framework for future ones – none can violate these basic freedoms, unless a special notice is asked for the exception, under what is called a ‘notwithstanding clause’. These are rare. The Charter is taken seriously. The Charter’s section 15 guarantees equality before and under the law, and in the view of PM Chretien also equal benefit of the law and equal benefit under the law.

Many feel however that Canada’s tax laws, child care laws, divorce laws, and labour laws that define ‘work’ to exclude caregiving work unfairly deny benefits to the unpaid care sector. These laws could be seen to violate the Charter which guarantees equal treatment for citizens, ‘equal benefit under the law’.

**Child bearing laws**

We live in an age of ironies. While some are anxious to abort, others are enduring incredible cost and inconvenience to conceive. Some adults are so anxious to have a baby that they want one even if they are infertile or single or gay. Singles have been able to adopt for some time. Now they also can get in vitro fertilization. Gay couples have lobbied for the right to legally adopt children. There is a passion for raising children that is challenging many of our old laws. Should we allow sperm donors? Should we allow womb rental? Should we allow payment for surrogate mothers? The American Academy of Pediatrics in a paper Feb 4, 2002 urged extending legal adoption rights to homosexual parents. Three US states already have entrenched same sex adoption laws while three outlaw these rights. In most of Canada and the US however the issue is decided on a case by case basis.

Due to recent research on cloning, the possibility has been raised in the medical community of one day cloning a human embryo. The Candian Institutes of Health Research are due to release new guidelines in the fall of 2002. Currently Canadian scientists can use leftover human embryos from fertility clinics and aborted fetal tissue to
do medical research but they are forbidden creating human embryos solely for research or cloning human embryos. A November 15, 2001 High Court in Britain ruled however found there is nothing in British law to stop scientists from trying to create people. Italian doctor Severino Antinori is seeking to clone a baby for an infertile couple though mainstream researchers have condemned this work.

Extending more parental and caregiving rights is before the legislators right now. A December 7, 2001 announcement by Quebec justice minister Paul Begin noted that there is a draft amendment to Quebec’s Civil Code to create a new status, civil union, for same-sex couples. These couples, as in Nova Scotia already, would have considerable rights. In Quebec they could split up home and possessions on dissolution of the relationship. They would however not have the right to adopt children. In Quebec a single gay male or lesbian can adopt a child but same-sex couples cannot.

And caregiving is getting more legal recognition. A Winnipeg woman pregnant with her second child was denied maternity benefits. A Winnipeg court decision April 2001 found that when maternity insurance benefits were denied because she had not put in 600 minimum paid hours in the preceding year this was a violation of the Charter. She had simply been home taking care of her first child. The judge, Roger Salhany noted that ‘when a mother works part time because of her unpaid parental responsibilities, she should not receive inferior employment insurance coverage’ This judgment however has not changed the federal policy officially – it hopefully will be a precedent however.

**Child care laws**

We already have laws that require supervision of children under a certain age or the parents can be charged with neglect or abandonment. Yet there are some technical problems if the state also is encouraging and pressuring parents to be away from their children at that age. Who then will tend the kids? And in legal terms it comes down – who can we blame if there are problems with the kids?

The state is reluctant to take on responsibility legally for the standard of care provided by every daycare worker in the country. If the state were ultimately the funder and the state established the rules, could not a person then sue the state if your child fell or got a cold or was left unsupervised for a few minutes? The potential for lawsuits is enormous, even large class-action suits if an outbreak of E-coli spreads or there is a case of child abuse at the institution. In other words, the state is caught between a rock and a hard place. If it is the one that forces people to use large institutional care of kids, then is it also willing to answer for all treatment there? It is probably not. The fiasco with residential school abuse has cost the state millions in settlement and it is understandably reluctant to again take on the legal responsibility for actions of people it is not actually monitoring.

The back-up plan then has been to somehow keep the parent as ultimately responsible wherever possible. A BC Supreme Court justice ruled March 2001 that a BC couple hosting a party of minors some of whom were drinking, were responsible for the ensuing
driving and driving activity of some who had attended the party and the resultant seious injury of one of the teens. The parents were named in a $2.5 million award, even though the parents were sleeping at the time of the accident. Under the BC Parent Responsibility Act a property owner who suffers vandalism by a child under 18 can sue the parents for up to $20,000. In Ontario parents can be sued for up to $10,000 and in Manitoba up to $7500. Yet if the parent is ultimately responsible, is the state allowing the parent to spend time doing this required supervision? If we are going to blame parents, did we give them adequate leeway and choices about child-rearing in the first place?

Justice La Forest has ruled “while acknowledging that parents bear responsibilities towards their children, it seems to me that they must enjoy correlative rights to exercise them” His finding was “rooted in the presumption that parents should make important decisions affecting their children both because parents are more likely to appreciate the best interests of their children and because the state is ill-equipped to make such decisions itself”

Yet do we give parents such rights and choices? Many feel we do not.

**Divorce laws**

The dissolution of a marriage presents some interesting legal problems for those who have spent time taking care of children. Do they get half of the marital property or were they all along less than half of the couple?

Divorce law has shifted points of view about that several times. Originally the woman was considered less than equal to the man and not entitled to ‘her half’ of any divorce settlement. An Alberta court case Murdoch v Murdoch in the 1960s confirmed that bias. However a public outcry ensued and ultimately the judgment was changed.

Divorce law then had a period of time where the woman was considered so equal to a man that she should be on her own earning money after divorce, and the two should as soon as possible return to their economic self-supporting nature of before a marriage. It was known as the ‘clean break’ principle. One judge, Justice J. Chouinard in 1975 Messier v Delage, Court of Appeal Quebec argued against long-term spousal support saying he rejected the implication ‘that one spouse can continue to be a drag on the other indefinitely or acquire a lifetime of idleness at the expense of the other’

But the paradigm shifted again once it became clear that hardship was ensuing for women forced to make it on their own, in middle age when their time at home with children had clearly put them far back on the employability ladder. In Ross v Ross (1984) a Manitoba judge suggested that women should be compensated for ‘systemic gender-based inequality’ since women have a harder time than men do, after divorce, in finding paid work. In Moge v Moge (1981) Justice L’Heureux-Dube noted the reality of the feminization of poverty and the “social forces disadvantaging women following divorce” So divorce law became more recognizant that it was not fair to force a woman to fend for
herself without some settlement that recognized the unpaid work she had already done. She was entitled to her ‘half’ of the assets upon divorce and sometimes to spousal support.

The courts have seesawed back and forth about who should help the ex-spouse. There has been a distinction made between two types of equality. There is formal equality, which is equality on paper and there is substantive equality, which is equality in practice, in the real world. Arguing in divorce for women to get jobs like men do is not resulting in equality because women who have been caregivers never do catch up in salary to men.

In a June 2001 case the Ontario Superior Court ruled that a stay-at-home dad had assumed and met appropriate financial, child-care and household obligations and had a right to share in the assets of his wife’s paid employment. It was ruled that his work in the home had helped his wife further her education and get the high-paid job.

The problem then became who should help the newly divorced spouse who was now behind financially because of career sacrifices while caregiving. She should get continuing financial support from the ex-spouse whose continued higher earnings may be due in part to her enabling of success? Justice Lamer in 1975 (Messier v.Delage) said the court should consider in any divorce settlement the wife’s potential earnings and then he added an interesting comment - that there should be transitional measures the responsibility of the government, not the former husband.

Under current 2001 Canadian family law a spouse, ex-spouse, shunned spouse or abandoned spouse is entitled to spousal support. The issue has been a thorny one. At one time the divorced man could deduct the spousal support/alimony from his own tax form, reducing his taxes. And the divorced recipient of the spousal support, usually the wife, had to declare these payments as income and pay tax on them. The irony of course then was that it was to the man’s financial advantage to divorce, and clearly it was very financially punitive on women to divorce. Currently the receiver still has to pay tax on the spousal support but the giver of it no longer can deduct it as a business-like expense. This ironically has removed the tax advantage for the man but has not corrected the penalty on the woman.

Some argued that spousal support itself was antiquated since it kept a woman in a state of financial dependency. But again, it could be argued, removing her from financial recognition is not a solution. It may be that the employed ex-spouse, usually the man, should not be penalized for the divorce in perpetuity, but surely someone has to recognize that the caregiving years were of financial value. Maybe the mechaism of financial recognition should have been during the marriage itself-so the spouse at home caring for children had independent financial recognition all along for that role, through the tax system.

child support
The issue of child support also has been controversial. One might first of all notice the term ‘support’ which in divorce law means financial support. This restriction however is serious since it ignores emotional support, psychological support and just being there to take care of the child. When divorce law pressures both parents to return to paid labor as soon as possible, and each to contribute to child ‘support’ the slant is glaring – only time earning money was considered evidence of parenting. It was all about cash.

From the point of view of a child, this was ludicrous but it continues to be the criterion of ‘support’. Many have argued instead that both parents should be not only given the privilege but also the responsibility of continuing to take part in parenting the child, even after separation and divorce – but that they can work out between them who does what. In a democracy it is not for the state to force both parents away.

In terms of the ‘best interests of the child’ too, which is the current standard for fairness of divorce legislation, it could be argued that having one parent leave the parental home is traumatic enough for a child. Hearing that now the other parent has to leave too, for large portions of each day is like knocking one leg out from under the child and then knocking out the other. What children of divorce need is as few other changes as possible. They should not have to move out of the parental home, change friends, change schools or materially change standard of living just because their parents don’t get along. And if their anchor has for some time been dad at home or mom at home, that also should not change. In that way the child has to adjust to only one shock – the more frequent absence of one parent.

In Ontario parents are not obliged to provide support for a child who is 16 years of age or older who has withdrawn from parental control. These teens, whether of marriage or divorce background, are caught between the cracks of government policy – they are too old to be forced to go home, their parents don’t have to support them financially, and yet they are too young to get good jobs and support themselves. Jeffery Wilson, editor of the Ontario Family Law Reporter in Dec 2001 has written that the law should be amended so every child has the right to support as long as the child has need.

Issues about child custody have centred on whether women are favored, as they used to be, and whether men were held hostage to fund the upbringing but then denied access, which they sometimes were. A move for more equal parenting access is well under way without conditions of money being tied to access. However when paying for the costs of raising a child is considered a ‘burden’ not a choice already made, there have been many loopholes for those required to pay child support to not do so.

Legal issues about pursuing nonpayers involve many problems of finding the absent parent, and deciding how to ensure the child gets the money – should you garnishee wages? What if he has no wages? Should this issue have to go through a long and costly court confrontation and if it did would there be hard feelings between the divorced parents that may erupt into violence?
These dilemmas might very easily be mitigated by a universal state funding for children that flows with the child. In that way there would be less vindictiveness from parents, less conditional games-playing for access, fewer punitive court pursuits and most important less child poverty. But the state has not yet legislated such guaranteed economic stability for our children. There are however small moves to less confrontational divorce. Under new ‘collaborative family laws’ in March 2002 in four western provinces, Ontario, NS and the North West Territories, separated ocouples resolve to negotiate rather than go to court.

Add to that discussion what constitutes adequate funding of a child. Within traditional marriage there is no intervention by the state beyond basic conditions of not neglecting the child. However once divorce happens, there is much more scrutiny of what is provided under child support. An Alberta court judge ruled Nov 22, 2001 that an Edmonton father must pay extra child support for his twin 16 year old sons who live with their mother to provide high speed Internet cable service as an ‘important learning tool’

If we do not accept social responsibility for some costs of rearing children we enter into personal and petty disputes amongst ourselves. Court disputes over which father should pay child support ensue when for instance the man who believed he was the biological father learns later he was not. According to a 1998 Suprène Court ruling step parents can be required to pay for a child if they assume a parenting role. In a March 2002 case a man who demanded a DNA test to confirm he was the father and learned he was not, refused to continue to pay child support but Quebec’s civil code obliged him to continue to pay it because he was named as the father on the birth certificate. Men’s rights groups are incensed that this financial obligation then falls at the whim of the mother filling out the form. The problem however is that child ‘support’ is seen then as a punishment, an evil obligation everybody tries to avoid. It should not be seen that way.

The focus lately is on pursuing the absent parent, garnisheeing wages, taking away hunting licenses or inflicting other small penalties. In Alberta parents who are more than 90 days and $1000 behind on child maintenance have had their gas company rebate garnisheed and redirected to their families. The average amount involved is $500. Some have suggested that a more secure system for children’s wellbeing would be a universal state funding per child. Then child support by ex-spouses would be less punitive, both in amount and emotionally.

After 5 years of study Former Justice minister Anne McLellan promised to change custody and access laws by May 2002. However the new justice minister Martin Cauchon has revealed Feb 18, 2002 that he may not revamp the Divorce Act after all. Fathers’ and grandparents’ groups had lobbied for a new concept of shared parenting, removing the automatic assumption that the mother should get custody of a child in its ‘tender years’

Charter arguments
Another way to approach a challenge to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is to note that Canada has signed many other treaties guaranteeing freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of language and the right to pursue the culture of one’s choice – and that denying parents time with their own children deprives them of the opportunity to expose their children to their culture, language and traditions, including religion.

It can be argued that pressuring people to be dual income parents using daycare, as current tax laws do, pressures people into a certain lifestyle which though a good lifestyle for some is not desired by all. The state has no right to favor one lifestyle over another. In 1999 a pivotal court case M v H ruled in terms of benefits for a same sex couple that had separated. The court noted that the state had no right to tilt the balance in personal lifestyle decisions. The decision of how to raise one’s children may well be analogous.

I Canada has signed several international documents that guaranteed rights inconsistently seem inconsistent with current practice. This inconsistency is something that others also have noticed and the mechanism to clarify whether current laws are fair is available – it is a request for the Supreme Court to review the laws in question. This request is called a request for a judicial reference. An ordinary citizen is not allowed to make such a request to the court- but the Attorney General can, if the issue is of national importance.

In January 2002 I requested the Attorney General Anne McLellan make such a Supreme Court reference application and I suspect she was actually seriously considering doing so since she referred the matter to the Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund to see what support they might find for it. However a cabinet shuffle ensued and she no longer was Minister of Justice and Attorney General, but the new Health Minister. I remade my request, to the new Attorney General, Martin Cauchon, in February 2002 and he refused the request. But public support for it is growing.

The case for caregivers is actually quite strong. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1981) states that the care of children qualifies as incapacity to do (paid) work. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 states that parents have the right to choose how their children will be cared for including the right to stay at home, to use child care services or to use a combination of staying home and child care services. The 1995 Platform for Action at Bejing acknowledged the social significance of maternity, motherhood and the role of parents in the family and in the upbringing of children. My application for a Supreme Court reference would simply have the Supreme Court compare our laws about caregiving with the Charter to see if there is an inconsistency. International covenants we have signed would be evidence of the inconsistency also and the court could clarify whether our laws are fair. I of course feel they are not. Refusing to even have the Court look at the issue seems sad to me. Yes it is costly to have such a review. But this is an issue of national importance, about a historically disadvantaged group. It is from what I can see, exactly the situation a Supreme Court reference was designed to address.
CHAPTER 5 – ECONOMICS OF THE NATION

It has been argued that we must keep all adults earning full-time in paid labor in order to get the most taxes possible from them, to pay down the debt and the deficit nationally and to increase national productivity. However this argument looks only at the short term. If nobody is encouraged to have children, we will be retiring with no new surge of taxpayers to maintain the tax base and no new surge of skilled workers to be productive after we’re gone. The national census of 2001 has revealed that the median age of the population in 1902 was 22.7. In 2001 it was 37.6 and by 2011 it is projected to be 41.0. That means more and more seniors will be being supported by fewer and fewer taxpayers which poses an immediate threat to the wellbeing of pension plans and seniors, but in the long term it poses a permanent threat to national productivity. Other nations are dealing with similar demographic problems but only the western industrialized nations, oddly enough. The most productive ones are the ones most likely to lose productivity. Because the third world continues to have a high birth rates, the median age in 2000 in the world was 26.5. In the US it was 35.5, in France 37.6, in Germany 40.1

Productivity is defined as amount of output per worker. It measures how efficiently an economy transforms its labor, capital and raw materials into goods and services. However it only measures the flow of money to pay for these goods and services. By 2001 figures Canada’s productivity has been falling recently while the US productivity growth has been more than double that of Canada. The US birth rate has also gone up recently.

The assumption has been that productivity increases if all adults have full-time paid jobs and goes down if adults have part-time jobs or are not currently at paid jobs. That argument is bizarre however, given that 40% of the GDP depends on the unpaid sector. If we force everyone into paid labor who will do the other work?

The expression ‘unpaid labor ‘ has its own irony. It is not just unpaid. It requires you to pay for the privilege of doing it. It is like having customers come to your place of business and you have to pay them. Unpaid labor generally creates not just a lack of salary but a deficit because savings have to be used to cover costs. Some would argue that the assumption women work for love, that grandma never has to buy groceries, operates in the extreme here when society not only assumes caregivers in the home are there, and that they work without pay, but it also assumes they have no costs. A 1980s study by Dr. Matilda White Riley in the US found that 22% of family caregivers quit paying jobs and gave up average earnings of $29,400 a year US to spend upward of 18 hours a day caring for family members. The salary sacrifice is in economic terms called ‘opportunity cost’ but federal budgets rarely even notice it.

The Canadian Research Institute produced a report May 20,2000 entitled “Women, Poverty and Canadian Public Policy in an era of Globalization”. It noted that women perform $234 to $374 bilion worth of unpaid labor a year and admitted that caring work is undervalued.
The issue has been raised of whether unpaid labor though is a benefit only to the family or to all of society. This matters because if all society benefits, then all society may have a responsibility to help support it.

How much does it benefit the ordinary citizen if the neighbor has a child? Surely the noise of the child may keep him awake nights and the child may tramp across his lawn. But the child later may be hire-able to mow his lawn or shovel his driveway so the kid has some use after all. When the child becomes adult though is when the benefit kicks in. Those who vaunt being ‘childless’ so passionately as a superior choice that they describe their lives as ‘childfree’ are correct- one should not assume having a child is superior or those who don’t have any are flawed. But those who don’t have children themselves benefit from their adult work and taxes. The neighbor’s kids is now building the hospital the neighbor gets care in and the road he takes to get there. The pension of the neighbor depends on the contributions of this kid.

But even at the paid job, there is a drop in productive ‘work’ if the paid worker is not able to concentrate fully, has to rush home quickly, is unable to work late or go to conferences, and that is on days when he or she puts in a full day. What about when a family crisis develop such as illness or emotional crisis even court appearance of a child, that requires the employee to not even be at the paid job? Studies of productivity of employees show that it is not necessarily all gain to force all adults into full-time paid labor.

Statistics Canada released a study July 5, 2002 showing that in 2001 7% of the total paid labor force in any given week was away from the paid job for sickness or family responsibilities. Absenteeism from the paid job in 2001 was 85.3 million days, up from 65.6 million in 1997. Was this time ‘lost’ to the economy? No. It was gained because if the person was rushing home to take care of a sick child, to take a troubled teen to a court hearing, to help an aging parent after a heart attack, this was time invested in a caring society. Yet in terms of ‘productivity’, it was lost. The Canadian Policy Resarch Network estimated in 2001 that absenteeism due to work-life conflict costs $3 billion Canadian per year. This problem is not going to disappear. It may be that with declining birth rate there will be less child-rearing absenteeism proportionally but with an aging population, there will be more elder care. An April 2001 IGM survey found that 55% of employees in the next 5 years would likely have to care for elders, while 31% expected they would be caring for children.

When the birth rate drops we also face a problem of disappearance gradually of skilled workers in any field. As the population ages, and those with the greatest experience retire there can be occasional gaps in the knowledge fund of a given company if too few young workers are taking up the slack. The Canadian Council on Social Development and the Columbia Foundation have released a study in August 2001 finding that due to an aging labor force in 5 years Canda could face serious labor and skill shortages. One way to addressing this is akin to how the state handled the pension crisis –make people earn money longer. A report by Toronto Dominion bank economists September 7, 2001
recommended that government raise the age at which pensions are paid. Some have suggested a retirement age of 67.

Economists are noticing that unpaid labor and paid labor break down very cleverly into the traditional female sector and traditional male sector and that the first of the set has usually been ignored. Professor Isabella Bakker of York University and Dr. Diane Elson of the University of Manchester have divided economies in 3 segments – public service economy, private sector commodity economy and the household and community care economy. In their 1998 study “Towards Engendering Budgets” they observe that ignoring unpaid labor in order to be ‘gender neutral’ has in fact made budgets gender blind. Women are hurt more than men are by such a supposed neutrality. They notice that when social spending has been cut, hospitals send patients home early, unemployed men are around the house more and the work in the unpaid sector has actually increased not decreased. They notice that when universality of pensions or family allowance was removed, the system forced women into economic dependency, denied them autonomy and led to more poverty. The UN System of National Accounts for many years defined unpaid labor as outside the gross national product and outside the production boundary – it was just ignored. Bakker and Elson note that the care economy sector is crucial to the well-being of the other two sectors.

Edmund Phelps of Columbia University has suggested that society has an interest not just in private productivity of wages, but also in social productivity anyway. He maintains that subsidies to help people make these contributions to social productivity, such as caregiving, are a wise investment and would cost the state much less than is the cost of poverty if caregiving is ignored.

Statistics Canada’s study of ‘total workload’ of March 13, 2001 defines unpaid work as work that could have been done by someone hired. It includes therefore babysitting, cooking, volunteering, housekeeping but not sleeping or eating. However the handicapped even need help eating, and babies need food to help them sleep. It is difficult to establish a good definition of work because the flow of cash obviously is not a sufficient definition.

Unpaid labor gets the token nod regularly kind of like the once a year Mother’s Day flower bouquet. It is nice but it’s just token. In 1992 for instance Statistics Canada assessed the value to the economy of unpaid labor at equivalent to 25 billion hours of unpaid work, equal to nearly 13 million full-time jobs. It was estimated that the financial value of unpaid work was more than 40% of the gross domestic product and that women perform 2/3 of this labor.

Canada has started to tally unpaid labor, as have many UN member nations. Time use studies such as one by the Department of Economics at St. Mary’s University parallel ones by the Social and Economic Research unit at the University of Essex. Duncan Ironmonger of the U of Melbourne is collaborating on a time use project. The Department of Economics U of Massachusetts did such a study in 1997. Time use surveys reveal startling amounts of time people put in for others, unpaid. But measuring
time use may also have inaccuracies. Dr. Nancy Folbre observed that there is a difference between care of children that is purchased and care provided by a family. “Time devoted to family care has important person-specific components with implications for human welfare and development”. She noted that conventional measures of market income underestimate the goods and services produced in families with a full-time homemaker. She observes that restricting a definition of ‘work’ to what you could pay someone else to do is inadequate since there are some activities such as sleeping, personal care and studying that are done for the self but that actually also ultimately help in relating to others.

Time use surveys do not solve the problem but they help understand it. You can count how many people fall off a cliff but that number itself does not explain or prevent future cliff falls. GP Atlantic of Nova Scotia has suggested we measure productivity using a measure called the Genuine Progress Index. It would factor in flow of money plus the economic value of unpaid housework and child care, costs of underemployment, the economic value of voluntary work, the natural capacity of forests, even the costs of crime.

The public is already getting concerned about the disappearance of unpaid laborers, forced out of their role due to pressure to earn money. An Ipsos Reid poll of April 2001 found that 83% of hose surveyed in Ontario worried there will not be enough care providers when they themselves are old.

The problem with recent analysis of unpaid labor is in the reporting itself. First it is divided by gender. Stats Canada in a March 2001 study found for instance that men work 7.5 hours a day, 4.1 paid while women work 7.8 hours a day, 2.5 paid. It is a question of problem definition however. Some believe that unpaid labor is drudge work, and the solution is simply to get men to carry this burden as much as women do. The statistics show how little men do of such work and then the solution proposed is usually to get them to do more. I do not agree with that definition of the problem.

In the first place, the unpaid labor category usually cites cooking, cleaning, laundry, child tending, usually female roles, and does not notice home repair, gardening, car repair, snow shoveling, which also are unpaid and which tend to be traditionally male. If we accounted for all the ‘work’ done around the house, the figures of men’s participation might in fact be much higher than is often reported.

But that being said, if we call the word a burden, the gender of who does it is irrelevant. We still have not valued the work. Cooking can teach children about nutrition, art and even creativity. Doing laundry and home cleaning can be a chance to teach children about safety, health and also artistry. Gardening can be an art form. These are chores for sure but if we only think of them as onerous, we risk thinking of them as pointless, which they are not.

But the other problem with such surveys of unpaid labor is that they consider caregiving the same as housework, hugging a child the same as dusting furniture. Yet the social
benefit difference is enormous. The care of a young child, a sick family member, a dying or handicapped person is not optional, is crucial to survival and vital to society itself.

Time Use Surveys are however revealing. Data from the 2000 General Social Survey released June 13, 2000 noted that high income Canadians spend less time preparing meals (40 minutes) than do those of low income (52 minutes). The rich spend 68 minutes a day caring for children while the poor spend 82 minutes. The rich spend 30 minutes a day doing housework while the poor spend 50. The rich read to or talk with a child 4 minutes a day while the poor read or talk to children 5 minutes a day. There are many possible problems with such studies including that this is self-reporting, that this does not tally simultaneous activities such as talking to a child while cooking dinner and that one can’t assume the tasks for the rich are not getting done- they may just be being hired out. However the point is that poverty does not reduce your unpaid labor- it increases it.

The demeaning of housework itself has been a gradual one. Like swings of a pendulum there have been historical movements to consider homemaking an art, or to debase it. In the 80s women were proud to say they were not ‘domestic’ and that they were bored in the home and did not know how to cook. Movies had as role models women, as in Sibling Rivalry, who said they did not cook – they just reheated. The gradual erosion of home economics classes in schools, based a mistaken assumption that they were sexist, could have been fixed by a gender inclusion since now men and women should both have some household skills. But alas, the education departments overreacted to criticism of ‘home ec’ and scrapped the courses. Now most young women actually do not know how to make a white sauce or sew in a zipper and most young men do not know how to from shop class, (it too is no longer compulsory) fix a leaking faucet or wire the garage.

The helplessness of operating a home is not a myth – it is real now and with the disappearance of the extended family there are few around who can help the young adults figure these skills out unless they took personal time to teach them earlier. But this lack of skill benefits the commercial market. Now if you want to have your roof shingled or your driveway paved or your lawn sodded you hire someone, money flows and the state gets part of the action in taxes. If you hold a big party you hire caterers or eat out or at least buy much of the food ready-made so restaurants benefit from our lack of skill. We have turned a sort of tide where ‘homemade’ became an insult of inferior quality and we only trusted professionals. And then as a decade or two passed and people could not actually recall ‘the cookies mom used to make’, there became a nostalgia for homemade. And Martha Stewart raised again the image of house beautiful and domestic comfort. And because women were now well educated they could read of the past trends and identify with various moods. It turned out some women want to cook and some don’t. Some want to garden and some don’t. And some career women admit to the gut feeling that it might be kind of fun to take care of your own baby and see her first steps and get respect for that too.

The housework issue however tended to divide not unite women. It assumed for instance that when a woman works outside the home and then comes home, she has to do double
what the woman at home does, because of her ‘double shift’. And for sure her day is long. It does not end at 5PM, but admitting this admits that the unpaid part is also work.

A house that has been empty all day did not get dirty. Toddlers clutter a house with toys and spills but these happened at the daycare not at the home for many people. The dual – income family statistically eats out more than does the single income family so one can’t assume the mother who works outside the home is cooking as much as if she were in the home. The mother who works outside the home often hires a housekeeper so some of her cleaning is not even done by herself. The woman who works outside the home has it far from easy, but neither does the mother at home.

A doctor friend of mine who specializes in care of children, went home to his wife who had been there all day taking care of their two preschoolers. She asked if he could take care of the kids for an hour because she was exhausted but he said he was tired too because he’d been dealing with kids all day. What we sometimes forget is that a hard day is simply a hard day – wherever it happens. The woman at home has had no dependable lunchbreak or coffee break and has been going flat-out with the kids. I recall a stranger saying to me as I walked in a mall with four kids under age 6, “You must get no time to yourself at all”. She was wrong. I got 20 minutes a day and I cherished those minutes, but she was right because sometimes in the theoretical group nap, someone woke and needed me.

It is not a question of who works harder. We all work hard. All mothers put in about 18 hours. Some do their 8 at the paid job and the other 10 at home and others do the full 18 at home.

So when we say we must start to value unpaid work, we are looking at serious issues, not only to shift national accounting systems and the definition of work itself, but also on the personal front.

Focus on unpaid labor has become a keynote of the UN in 1995 at Beijing and our own feminist leaders are endorsing it. Judy Rebick, former head of NAC noted in Elm Street Magazine September 2001 that ‘valuing unpaid work is the key to achieving equity for women and countering the savage market-obsessed society we are becoming’

The state has usually benefited from ignoring unpaid labor, by getting its services for free. This downshifting of costs to the unpaid sector has been a clever way to balance hospital budgets, increasing the home workload that is invisible to public accounts. The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers is one of many unions that notice this trend. Its website studies ‘the transfer of care work from public institutions to private households and communities’

Besides housework and caregiving of others, another facet of unpaid labor is volunteering. And it too has suffered when we forced all adults to do paid work full-time. The National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating in 2000 found that the drop in volunteering has been so severe that private companies are now trying to give a
few paid days off or modifying work hours to enable employees to do volunteer work. The same survey of August 2001 found however that rates of volunteering were continuing to drop. In 1997 there were 7.5 million volunteers in Canada and, despite an increase in general population, by 2001 the number of volunteers was 6.5 million. This created in effect job loss for Canada’s 80,000 registered charities. Another startling fact was that of those who do volunteer, 7% of the people do 73% of the work.

The International Year of the Volunteer was 2001. However total number of hours volunteering had dropped since 1997 by 5%. Educated volunteers, meaning those with a university degree were now only 39% not 48% of the percent of volunteers. That means that very few people in Canada actually find the time to do much if any volunteer work. Author John Ralson Saul has suggested in 2001 that companies provide five paid hours per 40 hour week per employee to do community service.

Other nations are working to value unpaid labor, but struggling to know how. The UN at Beijing urged all member nations to start to tally it. In Peru there is a Women’s International Network for Wages for Caring Work. In Argentina there was a one-day strike March 8th 2002 for the Housewives Union Sindicato de Amas de Casa. In Ireland there was presentation to the president to recognize women’s unpaid work. Auckland New Zealand had a rally under the theme “Value Women’s Work” and argued for wages for caring work. In that country Parents as Partners argued that caring for dependants is as important as soldiering.

In Spain a Barcelona Wages for Housework Campaign featured domestic worker and housewives. In Trinidad the National Union of Domestic Employees had an all day celebration to display work they do at home for no pay including knitting and sewing. In Uganda the Kaabond Women’s Group celebrated new rights for homemakers and in Los Angeles welfare mothers, immigrant women and women with disabilities pressed for higher state support.

If an unpaid caregiver is of value to the household after all, and saves the state money by not requiring funding for institutional care, then exactly how much is her work worth? Putting a value on ‘mom’ is seen as crass by many, and impossible. It is hard to account for savings, for money not spent. But if we don’t put a money value on the work we risk assuming there is none.

There have been times when such an assessment had to be made in the law. A British court in 1975 awarded 1000 British pounds a year to a family where the mother of two children aged 2 and 4 was killed. In 1993 the Alberta Law Reform Institute had to establish the financial loss to a family when the mother was killed in a car accident while the children were young. In order to assess and award damages this figure included loss of earned income of the mother, and non-pecuniary damages for grief and loss of the guidance, care and companionship of the mother. This amount was $40,000. Then each of the children of the deceased was awarded $25,000 in addition. In September 1995 the BC Supreme Court awarded $1 million to the children of Linda Williams, a woman killed by her husband.
There are other ways to tally the value of unpaid caregiving. We could assess the value of a pregnancy by seeing what surrogate mothers are paid. We could assess value of caregiving by looking at what daycare workers are paid. Some have estimated the value of the unpaid caregiver in terms of replacement costs – how much to pay a professional to come in and cook, clean, tend the kids, sew, taxi the kids around. Some have estimated the value of this work in terms of salary foregone, often called opportunity cost, though this of course would depend on the salary the caregiver could have earned (a medical doctor at home is sacrificing more than a clerk is sacrificing). But for all there is a salary sacrifice and that could be averaged, possibly evening out to the basic average wage in the country.

The Chase Manhattan Bank in 1973 matched up the costs of replacing a woman in the home by a food buyer, laundress, nursemaid, housekeeper, nurse etc. The value in 1973 terms was $257 per week. It is ironic to see that even in 1973 that would make an annual value of over $13,000 which was about 13 times as much as the spousal deduction actually allotted for this woman. Often we talk of the lack of financial equality for women in paid labor compared to earnings of men. That scandal is noteworthy, but it pales in comparison to the scandal of how we treat women in unpaid labor.

In the year 1992 3.4 million people in Canada described their main activity as keeping house. The number of women in full-time paid labor was 3.6 million.

A March 1999 report from the US has estimated that if the chronically ill and terminally ill there were cared for outside the family, the cost of health care would go up from $32 billion to $200 billion. Getting the unpaid service of the family really helps the nation’s bottom line.

Oddly enough governments give lip-service to unpaid labor, but no tax breaks. Human Resources Minister Pierre Pettigrew on April 26, 1999 spoke to the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy saying that unpaid labor ‘along with government and business’ is the ‘third pillar of a civil and civilized society’. He said a new ethic of care represents a major societal change ‘and who better than the voluntary sector to lead us’ Yet not even the terminology of useful work changed. It continued in to be that which is done for money.

Economist Marilyn Waring has noted that the definition of ‘work’ enters a gray area when a woman for instance hauls water for her market garden from which she sells vegetables, if she also uses some of the water for family cooking, which is nonproductive of cash. We enter a very difficult crossover when we try to get the traditional male money-based sense of work to cover the traditionally female sense of work for which money did not change hands.

The ‘workload’ at home has changed over the years but not necessarily lessened. Earlier households had to can fruits and vegetables, did laundry by hand, picked their own eggs. However they usually only did laundry once a week while today’s mother often does 3 loads of laundry a day. Many of our ‘labor-saving devices’ such as vacuums,
microwaves have lessened time we spend on cleaning or cooking but not necessarily lessened the need for caregiving. As the saying goes, ‘babies still need to be washed by hand’.

Legal scholar Mona Harrington has noted that attentive care needs have not diminished. Attentive care for instance is required by ‘sixteen year old high schoolers who need to be list ened to, They need the kind of guidance that can take a parent hours to think through carefully before saying a word”

Early feminists sought not an escape from their children but an escape from their housework. A 1989 study by the New York Times found for instance that the time to prepare a meal has decreased in 15 years by 92%. To make a family dinner now takes about 20 minutes. Ironically with the labor saving devices, there has been an impression that now there is more ‘free’ time but many people have assumed this could then be filled with paid work. But apparently we are not spending this free time on children. A US study by the Family Research Council found that in 1965 the average parent spent about 30 hours per week with children (over 4 hours per day) while in 1990 the average parent spends about 17 hours per week (2.5 hours) It is a drop in time of 40%.

What has often also been ignored were a few things that went along with the household of the 1890s, including the stability of the arrangement. There were fewer divorces and where you settled you mostly stayed. In the US in 1982 the number of divorces had already doubled from 1972 rates. One of three marriages was ending in divorce, including 60% of all second marriages ending in divorce. The overall divorce rate was one in two marriages.

Another stability was place of residence. US statistics have found that in 1970 the average American family moved 7 times in a lifetime while in 1990 the average American family moved 30 times in a lifetime. We are more mobile, more transient. What does that mean? It means that a child, seeking what does not change in his world, despite divorce or medical crisis or financial crisis, looks to home, residence, friends but these also are changing. It is not that we have to keep all those things constant. Some changes are inevitable. But when we notice that some of those factors already are changing at a high rate, what is left for the child becomes vitally important as an anchor emotionally. If we can’t ensure presence of a parent, we should do what we can to ensure the caregiving arrangement does not change. If it was daycare, it should stay the same daycare. If it was mom at home it should remain mom at home. Sadly, current divorce law often does not allow this. 1990 US statistics find that in the first year after divorce women and children have a 73% decline in standard of living while divorced men see their standard of living go up 42%. When we focus on ‘best interests of the child’ we might consider how to ensure as few things as possible change for the child, when some unavoidables have changed.

The subtle shift from ‘house’ to ‘home’ in terminology is an intriguing one. Housework sounds mundane. “Home” has more emotional appeal. Home is where the heart is. House is a location. “Home care” however now has a double meaning. There are those who
earn money to provide care to the sick or handicapped by visiting them in their homes. Nurses do ‘home visits’ and are paid for these functions. Arguments to reduce health care budgets by funding home care are often restricted in nature. They seek compensation for paid professionals to serve in the home, but still not funding to offset costs of family-provided care in the home.

CHAPTER SIX- THE GUT FEELING YOU MATTER TO THE CHILD

International covenants state there is a shared responsibility between parents and the community in the rearing of children. Some covenants prioritize parental choice. However legal systems create several gray areas in such responsibility. Often the parent is given the legal obligation while the community provides no financial or social support. In the case of breastfeeding, the parent is advised to provide breast milk but the tax law and paid workplace rarely provides time for such breastfeeding. When children are to be in safe parks, beaches, homes, cars, the parent is fined if safety is not ensured but the state does not help with costs of car seats or bike helmets. The state’s contribution is simply to provide rules to obey. The state’s share of parenting is apparently the stick with no carrot. Legislators ask parents to supervise their children closely if a predator is on the loose, if the lake is dangerous, if it is cold outside, yet parents are not provided a tax climate where they are able to be near the child for such supervision.

Young children are not able to tell us when they are in crisis, what specifically needs to be fixed. Their cries can mean they are hungry, wet, tired, too hot, too cold, bored or sick. Yet it is our job as parents to try to correct the serious problems at least. What if one of the problems is simply loneliness? What if the child misses us? How would a child indicate that?

We might expect clinging, resistance to our leaving. We might expect bad behavior when we are gone, acting out in anger or we might expect withdrawal and sadness, failure to respond, failure to thrive. Ironically in a culture where we are becoming more aware of the subtleties of mood, of the emotional fallout from job loss or the end of a relationship, the loss of a love, death of a loved one, we forget to notice that for a child, we are the anchor to their security and when we are not there, they deal with as difficult a loss.

Yes it is not a permanent loss for we do return. And it may not be a big loss at all if the caregiver in our place is someone the child loves. But what if that caregiver is a stranger? A child’s concept of time is vague and the child’s ability to wait is minimal. How long can a child endure loss of the loved one before it starts to affect the child’s physical or emotional health?

We like to believe if we leave our children, that somehow they cope. We deal with an emotional turmoil inside ourselves when we are not with the child, wondering how the child is and phoning, checking, using a lot of company time to just make sure. And we
talk about our children when we’re not with them as if somehow that counts too as evidence of our love. And sometimes yes we get so busy we forget them for a while and then we feel that is OK too since when we pick them up they’re OK after all. But this emotional turmoil of worry and guilt and forgetting and guilt and reassurance for a parent also has an effect on a child.

Studies have shown that what is crucial to mental health of a child is not what daycare activists might hope – the presence of lots of playmates – and is not what moms at home might hope - the presence of mom. What matters is something else- it is love. The caregiver does not have to be mom but it has to be someone who loves the child. And it has to be someone who stays by the child dependably, through everything, for at least 3 years. The Senate in its 1980 study Child At Risk found these two factors the crucial ones for children’s wellbeing. So daycares might cringe because often they don’t provide the same caregiver for a child for three years, but moms at home may also cringe because they are in fact replaceable, because dad is as good and grandma is as good and even a loving nanny is as good. What matters to the child is love.

Research has been cited for and against daycare for several decades and for or against home care for decades, often research funded by an organization with a clear vested interest in the results from the outset. It is evident that the answer is not that simple – that all care at home is great or all daycare is bad. Many children seem quite content in daycare. Sometimes children raised in abusive homes might well be better off with another arrangement. What matters is love.

Love shows itself several ways, often unquantifiable. For one thing, constancy of presence. The child needs supervision even when she seems to resent it. I often think of a toddler risking walking away from the adult. It is a big risk. It is much easier as we all have seen for a toddler to walk towards a loved adult. Why? Because not only is the goal in sight but the line of vision is clear and love is there to rescue, dependably and immediately. What happens when the one you need to talk to is not available when you are a teen? What happens when time after time you come home to an empty house and there is no one to share your good or bad school news with? What happens when you get sick or injured and you notice that nobody is nearby who really cares, if indeed anybody is nearby at that moment? What happens in the mind when the 3 year old who has about 300 questions to ask today, does not get answers to half of the questions. Does she stop asking them? Does she stop wondering? Does she start thinking it is pointless to try to learn?

We are handing children a very heavy burden if we deprive them of a stable loving start to life. Study after study is showing the many ways troubled kids lash out when they did not get that crucial bond early. Sometimes the links are unclear because many factors influence children. But there is a pattern that is undeniable.

U of Minnesota pediatrics and adolescent professor of health, Robert Blum revealed in a study April 13,2002 that of 12,000 American high school students the key factor that correlated with teen pregnancy and drug use was time with parental supervision. The
income of the parent did not matter. The marital status of the parent did not matter. Blum concluded that it really does matter at 4 points in the teen’s day that parents are available – early morning, immediately after school, suppertime and bedtime.

Parents of the handicapped often feel only they really can give the level of loving care their child needs and they sacrifice income and convenience to provide this care. In the Globe and Mail Feb 26, 2002 Dr. Cheryl Rockman made an obituary tribute to an 8 year old boy with a hereditary metabolic disorder. She noted “Max carried on happily, thanks to the minute-to-minute care by his parents who were determined to normalize his life as much as possible” Not all parents have the patience or time to provide such hands-on care and the state is right, I feel, to help offset their costs of hiring a loving substitute. But it is no more right in doing that in helping offset the costs of parents who do provide that care. The ‘best interests’ of the child are to get love. The parents can decide where.

**Health of child**

Academics have studied for some time the basic needs of a child. Maslow (1943) Minnicken (1957) Berlin (1975) Salasin (1977), Rutter (1979) Brazelton 2000) Greenspan (2002) are among the many who have looked at this area. Often we can set standards to satisfy physical needs like food, shelter, temperature, toileting, need to avoid injury and pain but we are unable to set guidelines for the social needs – the need for esteem, love, self-realization, the need to be understood. We can establish rules for floorplans and fences security but we do not know how to ensure the child will feel he belongs, that he is unique, that he is loved.

**prenatal health**

There is much research to indicate that the health of the parent has a direct relationship to the health of the child – even before birth. Dr Steven Offenbacher of the U of North Carolina released a study March 1, 2002 showing that pregnant women must brush their teeth regularly so gum disease germs do not target the fetus and risk premature birth. Epidemiologists at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm have released a study Jan 3, 2002 finding that children born of women who smoked during pregnancy have a greater chance of being overweight and developing diabetes in later life. Martine Vrijheid of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine Jan 25, 2002 found that living near a hazardous waste site risks bearing children with abnormalities such as Down’s syndrome

We know that HIV tests during pregnancy can lead to treatment in utero that will prevent a child from getting HIV even if the mother has it (July 2002) and we know that a blood test early in pregnancy can reveal those at risk of a low-birthweight baby and can help mothers take medicines and adjust diet to prevent the problem (Gordon Smith of Cambridge University June 27, 2002)

Dr. David Barker from England spoke in July 1999 to the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists on the importance of fetal growth on brain development, immunity, risk of heart disease stroke or diabetes.
We know that alcohol harms the unborn child and the federal government has poured millions into programs to combat Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. The baby born addicted to alcohol tends to have low birth weight, facial abnormalities such as a cleft lip, a small brain, heart defects, short stature and low IQ.

Yet if we treat pregnant women as troubled or ill, we intervene too late. It might be wiser to address what society has done to add to the stress of pregnancy. The double-bind of parenting, the lack of funding for child-rearing may make many pregnant women desperate and we as a caring society could probably reduce fetal alcohol syndrome if we prevented the depression that leads to drinking.

We know that though most women can’t technically afford to have a child in their mid twenties, but that long delaying having a baby risks medical problems. The Calgary Regional Health Authority has observed Jan 2001 that low birth weight is a definite risk for older mothers. Older mothers risk having a child born with Klinefelter’s syndrome which causes male infertility. According to the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation Sept 22, 2001 after age 40 one in four pregnancies miscarries. The risk of Down’s syndrome is one in 1250 for women at age 25 but one in 30 for women aged 45.

A study by Judy Foreman reported in the Globe and Mail August 21, 2001 has noted that even the father’s chronological age can be a factor in health of the newborn. An older father risks the child developing Marfan’s syndrome, dwarfism, malformed skull and hands. The irony is that to have optimum health of our young we have to make it so people can afford to bear children at the peak health ages – and yet our tax policy does not do this.

**postnatal health**

Once the child is born we know that our care of them can affect greatly their physical and emotional health. We know from the Harvard Medical School May 16, 20001 that breast-feeding has medical benefits for a child. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests breast-feeding for a full year, the World Health Organization for two years. Judith Galtry of Victoria University New Zealand has noted in two studies October 2001 that breastfeeding lowers mortality rates, is a factor protecting against sudden infant death syndrome, reduces pneumonia, meningitis, ear infection and lower respiratory tract disease risk, and can enhance the growth and development of the brain. A study in August 2001 in Norway published in the British Medical Journal found that breastfeeding that extends beyond 6 months is linked to higher IQ at age 5 years. Breastfeeding has been shown to protect mothers against breast cancer, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis in later life. The Canadian Pediatric Society in 1998 recommended women breastfeed for at least one year.

Yet we rarely have business or government policies to value these insights into child health. Some European countries have a lactation program allowing women to pump and store their breastmilk while at the paid job, without loss of pay. Some companies offer
onsite childcare so the child can be breastfed while the mother is at paid work. Some government policies give financial benefits for a mother to be with her newborn and some benefits so a father can optionally be there – but these policies are too little and too few. For one thing the maternity benefits are not for most mothers, only for employed mothers with very strict criteria. In North American culture breastfeeding is still socially a faux-pas in public despite the research findings, and the powerful commercial industry of bottle formula sells on.

We know that mixing with other toddlers is a mixed blessing. Many researchers have found that daycare children get sick more often than children raised outside of daycare. The Canadian Pediatric Society’s 1999 study “Well-Being: A Guide to Promote the Physical Health, Safety and Emotional Well-Being of Children in Child-care Centres and Family Day Homes” found that children in such centers have 2 to 3 more colds respiratory infections, ear infections and diarrhea than kids outside the centers. Dr. Thomas Ball of the U of Arizona’s study February 15th 2002 noted that once a child builds up such immunity, there are fewer colds in elementary school, though the rates for daycare and nondaycare children even out by age 13. He found greater resistance to asthma if the child had been in daycare.

Yet exposure to germs very young is not always necessarily good. Dr. Donald Low has found Sept 20,2000 that in Iceland children with superbug infections such as penuonococcus are banned from going to daycare because of high risks of infection to others. At some centers apparently one in five children was on antibiotics.

We know that children who are hospitalized very young or who undergo invasive surgery often suffer a form of post-traumatic stress for up to six months after their hospital stay, according to a study by Janet Renick of McGill University (June 19,2002). We know that even where we live affects the health of our children. Smog levels in some cities are of concern according to Dr Elliot Halpain of the Ontario Medical Association in its Smogwise Information Program June 26,2002.

We know from animal studies that babies have simple needs, sometimes just touch and cuddling. The Boston Medical Centre studying newborns Jan 2000 found that babies allowed body contact with a mother cry less and show less evidence of pain and anxiety than those denied such contact. Dr Catherine Bushnell of McGill University has noted July 29,2002 that touch itself links to the brain’s pleasure centre. Yet do we have enough time anywhere for cuddling babies?

The Senate committee studying child raising issues in 1980 prepared a report entitled The Child at Risk. It found the key factor determining a child’s future disposition toward criminality is parenting or care-giving. Interestingly it did not find that the caregiver has to be the parent. It matters however that the caregiver for the first 3 years of the child’s life is the same constant person and that that person is loving towards the child.
Lately legal circles use the term ‘best interests of the child’ to describe the criteria for good care. The Special Joint Committee on Child Custody and Access, in May 1999, noted that under the Divorce Act the basic principle for child custody is the best interests principle. “The best interests of the child are served by parenting arrangements that best foster the child’s emotional growth, health, stability and physical care, taking into account the age and stage of development of the child’ The words are predictable. The principle however is a shift. Divorcing couples used to focus on the rights of the parent. Now they focus on what is best for the child.

Ironically, some of our ways of coping with the career-family balance have not worked out well and themselves are problems. We have learned that parking the child in front of the TV is not necessarily good. Anthony Graham of the Heat and Stroke Foundation released a study February 6,2002 finding that sedentary lifestyles and eating fast food put two million 9-12 year olds at risk of adult heart disease. Since 1981 the number of obese children has almost tripled to 13%

The National Association for Sport and Physical Activity has suggested Feb 18,2002 that many tots are confined for long periods in strollers, playpens and baby seats. Jane Clark of the U of Maryland has noted that parents often assume rolling over, sitting and walking will just happen naturally but ‘in fact you have to provide that environment that hooks the brain up to the muscles” Claire LeBlanc of the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario has observed April 5,2002 that there is ‘an epidemic’ of inactivity. Only 38% of girls and 49% of boys are active enough to benefit their health according to data by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute. 14% of Canadians said they lack financial resources for their children to be active and 42% said the children have too many competing demands on their time. Nicolas Stettler of the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia released a study April 7, 2002 finding that obesity patterns for life may be established as early as at four months of age. A direct link was found between babies who had rapid weight gain during their first four months of life and 7 years olds who were extremely obese.

We know that we are penalized for time spent taking care of the child ourselves, and that poverty as a result of such a commitment can then also become a health risk. We know that just feeding a child right can reduce many medical risks, and that even that is a problem for many families. The Canadian Medical Association Journal in October 2001 found that 1.2 per cent of Canadian households with children did not have enough food at some point in 1994. There are now more than 700 food banks across the country according to the Canadian Association of Food Banks. Poverty itself can lead to poor nutrition.

We know that exposing our children to second-hand smoke places them at risk. A February 20,2002 study in the Journal of Pediatrics found that crib death increases with exposure to second-hand smoke. Dr. Gideon Koren of he Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto notes that between 3 and 4 babies out of 1000 succumb to SIDS annually.
We know that some of what we are doing environmentally is changing basic chemistry in our kids. The Canadian National Cancer Institute has observed April 18, 2002 that cancer is on the rise among teenage girls. Adult women aged 20-44 are now twice as likely as men to get cancer and most one in ten new cases of cancer is of a young adult. Physician Gabor Mate has suggested that stress is a very likely factor.

We have put our children into care by others, with the best of intentions. But it turns out that putting them too early into socialization where they have to compete for attention has sometimes harmed them. We have thought we were giving them ‘early childhood education’ but it turns out that sometimes we were just pushing them too far and not giving them enough one on one time to notice their specific skills. We know that education problems surface if children are not stimulated mentally before age 6. Dr. Bruce Perry, child psychiatrist has noted at a Calgary conference April 24, 2002 that adults must spend more time with children and in smaller groups, suggesting that a ratio of one adult to six children is too large.

It appears that to compensate for our lack of time with our kids we have tried a few very human and understandable strategies, some of which may have backfired. We have tried for instance to buy them things that remind them of our love when we ourselves can’t be there. We have wanted to make our time with them happy time so we may have been less insistent on good discipline or even essential training. A study Feb 3, 1999 in the National Post noted that parents are now delaying potty training sometimes till age 4 or 5. Earlier child rearing experts such as Dr. Spock suggested that this be done by 18 months. The two currents of thought, to rush it or to not rush it probably both have merit but the concern is whether the timing is adjusted to the individual child’s needs. Some parents, hearing the daycare will not accept children who are not potty trained, may rush the process more than the child can handle while others may expect the daycare to provide the training.

We have delayed having the kids go to bed at night so we can spend a bit more time with them after our own paid work. We do this out of love but whether the kids then get enough sleep is a question. A study released September 4, 2001 by the Hamilton Wentworth District SchoolBoard revealed that 47% of students were getting less than the recommended 8 hours of sleep per weeknight and 19% said fatigue prevented them from participating in extracurricular activities. 24% of the students reported their grades had dropped because they were just too tired. Lack of sleep has also been linked to irritability, hyperactivity and behavior problems. Dr. Valerie Kirk of the Alberta Children’s Hospital had said that sleep is more important than food or exercise because it governs our hormones, emotions and our immune systems. Dr. Will Wilkoff, author of “Is My Child Overtired?” has said “It’s as though families are trying to squeeze 28 hours of living in 24”

childhood stress

We have told ourselves there is such a thing as ‘quality time’ and that kids can wait for our appearance without anxiety. Yet a study by Thomas Phelan of Chicago reported
January 19, 1999 that 3 year olds have a unique sense of time and for them even ten minutes can seem eternal. Their short attention span means that 15 minutes with them seems long, but so does 15 minutes away from them. For the child 4 or 6 or 8 hours away from the parent may seem nearly permanent, and may cause distress.

We have been very concerned with our kids’ reaction to our lack of time with them, with their restlessness and moodiness, their resistance to leaving us, their resistance to going to sleep at night and we have consulted doctors about them. But instead of daring to ask for a tax system that would allow us just more time with them to nurture them we have sometimes diagnosed the child as having a psychological problem.

To find out if currently policy is working, we can ask children. This is a tricky area because a child has no world experience so cannot compare present treatment to other standards, even of her own life. But if the child were having a basic gut feeling something was amiss, what would we likely see? In basic anthropological terms we’d expect fight-or-flight. We’d expect that some kids backed into a corner without options to change their situation would fight back, become aggressive, angry, would cry a lot and would be hard to handle by those they perceived as able to solve the problem and not solving it. Or we’d expect flight – some would react by withdrawal mentally, failing to respond to stimuli, failing to care, giving up in effect on the point of asking questions, or the point of learning. Are we seeing these calls for help?

I believe we are. Obviously children have always been somewhat self-centred throughout history and they have had tantrums or been sullen from the dawn of time. But are rates of these behaviors increasing? Professor Richard Tremblay, psychologist at the Universite de Montreal has found that 70% of toddlers now are aggressive. Biting, kicking, fighting and bullying confirm to him this trend. An Italian study in Sept 1996 released by Dario Varin of the U of Milan found that babies outside of parental care before age one year smiled less, snatched toys from others more often and were less cooperative at ages 3-6 than children who had had the longer parental care. Dr. Norma Doft in 1992 outlined that aggressive behavior such as biting and hitting and screaming is common at age 2 but not for older kids. Oppositional behavior, saying ‘no’ to every command is normal at age 2 but not for older kids. Lying is an experiment toddlers try but lying is abnormal if the child is over 7. Stealing is not normal after age 4 In other words it is not whether the child has the behavior but what age she is at that indicates whether this is an unusual cry for attention.

Yet despite this knowledge of what is good for kids, we do not have legislation that respects pregnancy’s special demands, or that permits much time nurturing the young. We know that kids need time with the adults in their life so they are emotionally grounded. Keith Turton of the Canadian Mental Health Association has observed March 8, 2002 that teen suicide is linked to not feeling they belong. Paul Hewitt of the University of British Columbia has found in May 2001 that teen suicide is the second leading cause of death among Canadian youth, surpassed only by motor vehicle accidents.
and teens kill themselves each year. Two of the best predictors are depression and hopelessness.

What do teens do if they are not getting the attention or love they feel they need? How would we expect them to express their frustration if they felt any? What indicators of how they cope would mean they were coping poorly?

We might predict that they would watch more TV, play more video games, become more obese from lack of exercise if they constantly stayed in the house while we were gone. We might expect that they might not come home but hang out in malls and loiter. We might expect they would substitute peer group approval for the parental support they were not getting and that they would become more interested in friends over school and family, and would join gangs. We might expect some would express their restless energy in ways we approve of like sports but others might relieve boredom by petty vandalism, drug and alcohol experimentation, early sexual activity.

And we are seeing increases in most areas of such troubled behavior.

But there is not just concern about how kids fare when unsupervised because the presence of a supervisor is not itself a preventer of problems. Though the virtues of ‘socialization’ are often vaunted to urge parents to put children into daycares younger and younger, not all socialization is good. Playing with unruly kids for 8 hours a day may help a toddler develop verbal expressions the parent may prefer he did not have, and may role-model for him ways to handle frustration which are not the ones the parents wishes him to have. One mother put it more simply ‘He entered care with one bad habit and came out with 30’ Socialization can backfire it seems. Little children seem innately to want a lot of personal attention, to be best, to be admired, and when there is no one in their world who is there treating them a special, they often just insist on attention—however they can get it. Barbara Kaiser in her 1998 book ‘The Day Care Handbook’ noted that aggressive behavior in daycares is common and 62% of daycare association members reported being abused on the job by kids. Steve Carter of the Psychologists Assoc of Alberta has said at a May 1999 conference that teen violence can often be predicted from acts of 4 year olds. An August 31, 2001 report by the Alberta children’s advocate noted an increased incidence of abuse of staff caring for children in government care. The National Institute on Child Health and Human Development in the US released a study April 2001 finding that there is a direct correlation between time spent in daycare and traits of aggression, defiance and disobedience. This does not mean daycare is inherently bad. It does suggest however that care wherever it is given should be attentive and often one-on-one.

Recent focus on child abuse is well deserved, but little is said of an equally troublesome problem, child neglect. Children do not always stand up for their rights. Recent studies have shown that abused children are supersensitized to sense anger in their environments and to get stressed even at the hint of it. Fear can lead them to be compliant, to not
object, to do anything just to keep the adult from exploding. Is their lack of outburst a sign all is well? No.

Kids are not unaware of our financial problems. A September 11, 1999 National Institute for Child Health and Human Development study in the US found that children do worse on developmental tests if their mothers are depressed but that a mother’s depression does less damage if the family is financially well off. Financial poverty creates a vicious circle. A 1996 report by the National Crime Prevention Council found that children from low income families are 1.4 times more likely than those from wealthier families to have low birth weight, have twice the risk of death around birth and in their first year, have higher injury rates, have more chronic health problems and are more than twice as likely to have psychiatric disorders, poor school performance and to drop out of school early. Kids are glaringly aware of poverty, especially as they get older and being powerless to help, they may simply experience stress and depression.

If marriages break up due to the high costs of setting up a family and the stress of raising kids, then children of divorce are doubly punished – first because there was stress in the family that they witnessed, and second that with divorce they now lose a main pillar of their emotional foundation.

For those who do act up, there has been an easy solution lately – medication. An October 16, 2001 study in the Canadian Medical Association Journal by Christiane Pulin of Dalhousie University has found that in 2000 Ritalin and Dexedrine were prescribed more than one million times in Canada, mostly to children. Dr. Julie Magno Zito has written a study in the Journal of the American Medical Society in the late 1990s saying that there has been a threefold increase in the use of Ritalin for children aged 2 to 4. The University of Maryland School of Pharmacy has released a study Feb 23, 2000 finding that doctors are prescribing anti-depressants such as Prozac to preschoolers from age 2 to 4. Dr. David Cohen, psychologist has noted in 1999 that overmedication of young children is part of the trend of not responding to the needs of children and says that if there’s one thing kids need it’s time spent with adults who attend to them and love them.

It is troubling that we medicate kids into submission. It is doubly troubling that we have taught them they need medication, that their unmedicated self is inadequate so they lose self-confidence. But it is triply troubling to learn that kids often, being kids, do not handle even this medication responsibly and some sell it.

According to the Dalhousie Study more than 20% of teens with such prescriptions pass medications on to others. 7.3% traffic them to schoolmates. 8.5 % of students in grades 7-12 report taking these substances for nonmedical reasons, just for the experience. A few refer to these drugs as ‘kiddie cocaine’ An April 7, 2002 study by IMS Helalh Canada confirmed that not only are more children being prescribed Ritalin and Dexedrine but there is a rapid rise in the incidence of the children turning around and trafficking these drugs on the school playground and of children being bullied to give these drugs up.
Dr. Lawrence H. Diller in “Running on Ritalin” 1998 has noted that disruptive behavior has been treated differently through the centuries. At one time it was through this behavior showed demonic possession or bad body humors. Others centuries have thought it was a punishment by God. Freud explained it by neuroses within the child. Dr. Diller has suggested that Prozac and Ritalin are being used by millions of people whose behavioral or emotional problems are not mental illness at all or even any major dysfuction by psychiatric standards.

Dr. Steinhauer has released a study in July 1999 finding that stresses during the first two years of life can actually cause changes in the brain of young children including attention deficit disorder and oppositional defiant disorder. He found a correlation between such disorders and poverty, tension in the family and the nature of the neighborhood the child was in.

Jean Twenge in the 2000 Journal of Personality and Social Psychology of the US has studied 50 years of research on North American children and found that right now they are the most anxious they have ever been. She concludes that children are often pressured to succeed too young. Anxiety may manifest itself in the adult years in ulcers, inflammatory bowel disease and even heart disease. Child psychiatrist Katharna Manassis of Toronto’s Hsopital for Sick Children says she is seeing an increasing number of stressed-out kids. The Canadian Institue of Child Health found in an August 2000 study that 27-30% of parents report their children as nervous, 27-28% say their kids cry a lot, and 52% of parents of boys and 48% of parents of girls report their kids have mental health problems of sulleness or stubbornness.

Patricia Shapiro in her 1994 book “A Parent’s Guide to Childhood and Adolescent Depression” has noted that infants can sometimes get depressed, and when they do it is due to a disturbance in the infant-caregiver relatiohsuips. The caregiver’s ability to adjust to the needs of that child must match the needs of the child. “A solid infant-mother (or mother substitute) connection is crucial for a baby to develop into a healthy child who can form positive relationships with others”

One effect we are seeing is that it is teenage girls who experience great stress. We raise our girls to be aware of the world and they see that women are in adulthood placed immediately into a double bind. They can have no children and a career and get a lot of money but miss out on the joys of family. Or they can have children if they choose to, but then they have a problem. If they work for pay when the children are small they’ll have money but they’ll miss time with the kids. If they stay with the kids they’ll have financial insecurity and often poverty. Knowing this dilemma awaits them adds to the pressure teenage girls face. McMaster University’s Centre for Studies of Children at Risk has noted that adolescent girls are twice as likely as boys to show signs of depression and that anxiety and affective disorders are more common also among young females.

When kids are deprived of frequent adult reassurance, they turn to other sources of feedback, including peers and, unfortunately the media. Role-models of ideal women in
the media present what many have said is an unrealistic body shape for adult women yet our adolescent girls often feel they must strive for it. Dr. Jennifer Jones has released an Ontario study in the Canadian Medical Journal recently finding that eating disorders among 12 to 18 year old girls are now common. 23% said they were on diets, 15% reported binge eating and 8% reported self-induced vomiting. Dr. Jones suggests that undue pressure to be a beautiful superwoman is hard for girls to deal with and may lead to later eating disorders as well as drinking, depression and suicide.

**self-destructive behaviors**

I am always amazed at the complexity of the human mind and how complete it is even in children. We can walk out of the room but that does not keep them from thinking or growing. In our absence teens keep learning about the world, developing theories, trying out personalities. If we do not keep touch with them frequently, some of these experiments go horribly wrong.

The US 2000 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse has found that 98.7% of youth ages 12-17 admit using illicit drugs. Sue Shellenbarger of the Wall Street Journal reported a WEFA Group study June 30, 2000 finding that one fourth or 28% of US teens engage regularly in two or more ‘risk behaviors’ using alcohol, drugs or tobacco, having sex, or doing violent acts.

We know from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health in the US 1997 that teens in grades 7-12 engage in fewer unhealthy and self-destructive behaviors if they have parental involvement in their lives.

According to a December 2, 2001 report in the Calgary Herald ecstasy is the fastest growing illegal drug in Canada. One Canadian survey has found that there has been a 8 fold increase in its use among youth since 1993. A study published December 2, 2001 in London’s Lancet medical journal has found that for some users of the drug ‘ecstasy’ there is a significant loss of brain cells. Dr. Kathy Hegadoren of the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta has found that women are more sensitive to the effects of the drug than are men. Calgary police have reported that the drug at teen rave dances sometimes contains traces of LSD, ketamine (a veterinary anesthetic), PCP and even strychnine. Such concoctions have led to at least 22 deaths in Canada.

A national survey for cable channel YTV in October 1996 looked at 2.4 million Canadians between ages 9 and 14 and found that 57% of them were latch-key kids. Of the teens aged 13 and 14, 31% said that drugs were commonplace and the same number said that most of their friends smoked.

According to the Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey of Sept 22, 2001 15% of girls age 15-17 say they smoke while 19% of boys in the same age group smoke. Dr.
Lorraine Greaves of the BC Centre of Excellence in Women’s Health has noted that ads often portray smokers as healthy free and energetic, images which are ‘exactly the opposite of what smoking does’. Girls have been led to believe that smoking will enhance their image as risk-takers and will control their weight. Greaves has said that some girls ‘depend on cigarettes as other people depend on a friend or partner’.

Smoking cigarettes is not the only mischief kids are getting into. Former National League umpire Doug Harvey is traveling across Canada in July 2002 warning teens against the dangers of spit tobacco also known as chewing tobacco or snuff. Spit tobacco contains 28 known carcinogens but many teens apparently attracted by the flavors of mint, licorice and cherry think it is less dangerous than cigarettes. By Harvey’s research it actually results in sooner death than do cigarettes.

A report August 4, 2000 in the Times of London found that teenage girls in Britain are showing renewed interest in witchcraft and paganism. One commentator suggested that such teens are lacking guidance from their families and teachers and churches. The American Medical Association’s 1994 “Family Medical Guide” notes that children commonly have their first alcohol experience at age 12. By ages 14-17, 4-6 million US teens have been found to have alcohol-related problems including poor school performance or criminal behavior.

The Centre of Addiction and Mental Health has released a survey Nov 19, 2001 finding that the escalating drug trend of the 1990s is subsiding somewhat among teens. Students in grades 7-13 who report that they smoke has decreased from 29% in 1999 to 24% in 2001. However the use of the drug ecstasy has risen from 2% to 7% among grade 9 students, the percent of youth who get drunk increased from 17% in 1992 to 27% in 2001. The number of youth who reported binge-drinking rose from 18% to 25%. When the National Post asked readers why drug use remains higher than during the 1990s, 40.5% of readers cited ‘lack of communicaionsn between parent and child’ as a key factor.

Some kids are entering our criminal justice system when they are troubled. There has been a trend when kids are troubled, to absolve ourselves from blame for our broad social policies and to blame the child. There is the problem of stereotyping. The rate of teen crime has actually gone down but whenever there is a crime committed by a teen, the media is all over it, highlighting it. This means that the public assumes the teen crime rate is soaring and the public then is of a mood to crack down on teen crime, being harsher than the statistics may in fact merit.

When Canada does find a teen guilty of a crime, we tend to be very punitive. Statistics Canada released a study August 2, 2000 that found that young offenders convicted of the same crime as an adult offender are more likely to serve long terms. Early release provisions and parole are often not available. According to the magazine “Prevention” by the Government of Canada 2000-2001, youth crime has actually dropped 7% in 1999.
Senator Landon Pearson in her fall 2001 report “Children and the Hill” reports that from 1991-1997 there was a decrease of 23% in youth being charged with crime. But the number of young charged with violent crime is higher than it was in 1989. 52% of victims of youth crime are themselves youths. 33% of youth feel family situation is the chief cause of youth crime, poverty being seen as the cause by 20% of those accused. We put more youth in jail, when we do convict hem, then do other countries. In 1997 only 25% of our young offenders were dealt with outside the formal justice system but in the US this number was 53%, in the UK it was 57% and in New Zealand it was 61%. Canada has the highest youth incarceration rate in the western world.

Sometimes teens and preteens deal with boredom and the desire for adventure by engaging in sex. In Canada the teen pregnancy rate per 1000 teens aged 15-19 is 43. In the Netherlands it is only 8 while in the US it is 93. Dr. Alba DiCenso of McMaster University has released a study June 13, 2002 finding that this number of pregnancies in Canada has not significantly changed over the past several years, despite any type of sex education or abstinence programs. The problem with teen pregnancy is that it may pose health risks as well as financial ones. Oettinger has noted that under 19, mothers are more likely to hemorrhage or suffer toxemia. Teenage mothers have 26% of the babies born with low birth weight. Dr. Wendy Baldwin of the National Institutes of Health in the US found that if a child is born to a teen mother, the rate of childhood mortality before age 4 is 41% above the average for all mothers. Dr. Hoard Osofsky has noted that the pelvis of the teenage girl is usually not fully grown and that poor nutrition habits of teens also aggravate pregnancy.

The desire to not have such situations has led to a few movements, some of which degrade parenting itself, ironically. The desire to have teens not engage in sex, the ‘abstinence movement’ is one side of the coin. Another is the movement to just assume teens will be engaging in sex and to tacitly endorse it, providing free birth control pills, condoms, advice and easy access to abortions. These well-intended programs however have extended far down the age scale, even for girls as young as 13, without parents being informed let alone with out parent consent. These two movements have apparently not succeeded either one, in reducing pregnancy rates.

The other oddity however is that when rates of pregnancy are reported, governments cite a drop in teen pregnancies as a positive thing, and a drop in pregnancies as the goal in general. The avoidance of having a baby is obviously a good idea for some situations but it is quite a leap to report that it is always a good idea to not get pregnant. The degrading of pregnancy itself, as if it is always a tragedy or failure is a result of such statistical reporting. In fact the idea that giving birth is a wonderful experience, that taking care of a new life is fascinating is rarely given.

A study reported in Pediatrics April 2002 found that in the US 39% of grade 7 students surveyed reported having had sexual intercourse already. Girls with low self-esteem were 3 times more likely oo have had an early sexual experience than were girls with higher self-esteem. Though the design of such surveys, self-reporting, puts the exact figures in doubt in the minds of some observers, the trend however may be accurate.
Sometimes the acting up of kids seems related to parental separation and divorce. Some parents flee by simply walking away from the marriage. Many men but some women also give up custody, give up parenting, try to break with the past and ‘start a new life’ by trying to ignore their responsibilities to the children. In the extreme we see parents who give up and who want to turn their children over to the state, sometimes because they simply can’t afford to raise them, other times because they are at wit’s end to know how to parent and have no social support for new strategies.

A Sept 2001 study of the effect of divorce on children found that children in divorce are now 1/6 of the Canadian population of children. Children of divorce also make up 91% of child suicides, 71% of school dropouts, 65% of teen pregnancies, 90% of teen runaways, 78% of young offenders, 85% of children with behavioral problems and 75% of occupations of centers for teen substance abuse. Why is divorce so devastating? Is it because it is also linked to poverty? Is it because the increased absence of both parents is often an immediate consequence?

There is also the problem of what we consider problems for kids. What is an acceptable and normal level of school dropout? Or do we believe that any child, given enough attention could succeed in school and any dropout rate is a failure of our system not of the child? One odd estimate of the consequence to the state was a study of 1994 high school dropouts. It estimated that the loss of income of those students represented $1.7 billion in lost taxes. It always saddens me to see what the ‘bottom line’ is for government.

In policies for employment for instance they do not speak of the value of attachment of parent to child but of attachment of parent to the paid labor force, In the same way here the state is not concerned particularly it seems for the devastating personal effect a poor education can have on a person’s health or standard of living but it does care about how many tax dollars it lost. But even that is a start. If the state realizes school dropout is bad, it at least could help fund schooling more.

**devaluing parenting**

There has been a trend towards devaluing parenting. Instances of child abuse in private homes have received much media attention, as however have instances of child abuse in institutional care such as residential schools. Lacking an extended family to advise young parents, most embarking on parenthood feel insecure anyway. Some organizations with good intentions to help, set up however huge operating budgets. They develop, ironically, a vested interest in parents needing their help and so would be the last ones to encourage funding directly to parents, which may be in fact what parents most need.

There are however even professional psychologists who still trust parental instincts. Dr. Normal Doft in her 1992 book “When Your Child Needs Help” has noted that ‘home is the most important part of a child’s world and parents are the most important people in it”

And here again we have the dilemma. If we find that parents are in poverty, are stressed out, that they feel backed against a wall and that kids are troubled due to this, many feel
the solution is to get the parent out of there, earning money, and get the child in a safe place with professional care. The argument is made that in that way parents are less stressed, families have more money, and kids are getting good care. Yet is that true?

It was certainly the argument for a decade or more. But research is coming in to suggest that that solution does not always work and is not for everyone. Not all parents feel less stressed away from their kids – some feel more stressed, and guilty. Not all kids are happy to be away from their parents – some get very upset. There are more ways to reduce poverty than to get the parent out of the home. One very efficient way would be to financially support being in the home at least as much as the financial support of raising a child outside the home. This new insight is not a backlash against feminism or daycare at all since those options do work for many women and kids. But it is a call for equality because all ways to resolve the dilemma that work should be permitted and equally funded by the state. The issue is not as simple as for or against daycare.

We have discounted the value of ‘experience’ in raising kids, which is odd because we have not discounted the value of experience mountain climbing or building bridges. For some reason we have eliminated the respect of a parent who already has several children and only considered a child care’ expert’ one who has read several books or taken a course. That means that we are losing our self-confidence about how to raise our own children and losing our trust in some basic sensitivity we already have to those with whom we spend time. Medical doctors have reminded parents again and again to trust their gut instincts, but Ironically parents rush to medical doctors to get this advice.

Dr. Fraser Mustard has noted the importance of the first 3 years to educational development and is widely quoted by government to endorse suggestions of national daycare for the age group. Yet the argument that stimulating a child’s mind is good, is not restricted to the daycare site. It can also happen in the home. I have a poster above my desk with the photo of a grandfather reading to his child in the park. The caption is ‘Learning can happen anywhere’

**inconsistent legal definitions of maturity**

Legally we only have to satisfy very mundane needs. In the Criminal Code of Canada we must not expose the child to danger, we must not abandon the child, we must provide the necessaries of life. The age limit for that is gray. Latch-key kids who are left alone under age 12 may have parents risking criminal charge.

The definition of child actually is not consistent internationally. In Canada a child is defined as under age 12 while in Scotland for some situations a person under 15 is still a child.. In South Australia anyone under 18 is a child.. In the US race seems to be a key factor in determining adulthood while in Northern Ireland religion is deemed to be a key factor. However these are not as key factors in Canada.
This grey area of deciding when young people are competent to handle their own decisions matters in terms of caregiving. Prof Nick Bala of Queen’s University notes that even infants can inherit property and have some basic rights, but one of these rights is to right to be protected under the law. Children need a lot of protection and when they in inadvertently or intentionally harm others, usually can’t do serious harm.

An adolescent however has greater potential to seriously harm others. Adolescents according to some, are still in need of some protection since they think of short term not long term consequences and since they engage in high risk behavior. They tend to respond to peer pressure intensely whereas when they are fully adult they may not. In March 2002 Karen Dublinksy, Queen’s University historian has commented on a recent case regarding a 15 year old girl who apparently inflicted a fatal wound on her newborn baby. Are 15 year olds fully responsible for their actions? Kirsten Joyhnson Kramaa, a Brock University sociologist has suggested that in some strongly religious families an unwed pregnancy still carries huge social stigma.

Dublinksy has observed that though at one time people considered that women were not moral adults and could not be blamed when they in distress took the life of a newborn child, we have now gone to the opposite extreme. Treating such situations as questions of sanity has been one way of handling it but a recent trend is to consider these purely criminal acts. Blame the mother. But would we blame her if she smoked or would we protect her from that decision’s consequences?

The oddity is that in the absence of clear guidelines society has established some very inconsistent policies about maturity. In essence we trust young people with major decisions early and with minor ones such as voting, very late. Activities which might seriously harm others such as driving a car are permitted when the decider is young, but activities which relate mainly to health of the self – such as smoking or drinking- are rights given only very late.

We give rights of adult-like decisions in Alberta and Canada this way:
At age 7 a child may become a member of the Women’s Institute in Alberta
A 12 year old can consent to or withhold consent for adoption, guardianship orders, or access by a non-guardian
A 12 year old has the right to retain counsel
A 14 year old can drive farm equipment on the highway or get a learner’s driver’s license in Alberta.
A 15 year old may work in most businesses but must be supervised between 9PM and midnight in a restaurant, bar, gas station, hotel or motel and may not work in those businesses between midnight and 6AM
A 16 year old may quit school, get a driver’s license and can contract for insurance.
A 17 year old may work underground in a mine.
At age 18 a person can marry without parental consent, can apply for a name change, may sign local petitions and vote, may apply for lease, can make a valid will, can serve as a juror.
Only at age 18 can a young person purchase cigarettes or enter a bar and drink liquor. In some states of the US the young person must even be 21 for legal drinking.

It is illegal to abandon children under age 10, thereby threatening their life, health or risking permanent injury (section 218 of Criminal Code) 12 year olds cannot be given a criminal conviction, should not be fingerprinted and cannot have their names published in the media. A person aged 12 or 13 cannot be charged for sexual offenses. A householder permitting sexual activity of a child under age 14 is liable to punishment of up to 5 years in jail (section 171) and up to 2 years if those involved are ages 14-18 (section 171)

Anyone who removes a child from Canada under age 14, without parental consent is punishable by up to 5 years in jail (section 273.3) Sexual touching of a child under age 14 is punishable by up to 10 years (section 152) A person under the age of 16 has the right to maintenance of food, clothing, medical aid and lodging from the parents, foster parents, guardians or the state. A 16 year old may not marry unless pregnant or the mother of an aliveing child. A 16 year old must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian or other adult if hunting with a firearm. Many car companies will not rent a car to a young adult under age 25.

So you have a 13 year old girl who can have an abortion without parental consent but who can’t leave the school building to cross the street during class without teacher’s consent. A 15 year old cannot rent a pornographic movie depicting sex acts but she can engage in these same acts in reality not just fantasy. You have a 14 year old who can be trusted to babysit and save the life of a toddler but who can’t vote on whether to pave his street. You have a 16 year old who can quit school and end her formal education, leave home and not be forced back by police who however can’t buy cigarettes because she is still a child.

A 16 year old girl in Calgary whose religious upbringing of Jehovah’s Witness in the spring of 2002 made her refuse blood transfusions to save her life from leukemia, was deemed unable to make this decision on her own and the transfusions were forced upon her by the state. The decision was reversed only months later, as the girl lay close to death. We do not agree on when teens can be held accountable. In Alberta there was for a time a Young Offenders’ Act which considered girls eligible for adult prosecution at age 16 but boys eligible for adult prosecution only when they turned 18. Some in the media deemed this the ‘boys will be boys law’. It has since been changed. But factors determining who to blame vary and one quick solution many areas are adopting is to prolong adolescence and blame the parent.

A September 26, 2001 Quebec court finding an 8 year old had shot and killed a 65 year old neighbor laid no charges against the boy but sentenced the boy’s father to 18 months in jail and a fine for negligent storing of a firearm.
It is not just a question of who to blame and who to punish when kids go wrong. It is also a question of how much we can trust kids and how fast we move them into roles of adult responsibility. One of the ironies of life is that privilege comes with a burden – if you get to do something, you also are responsible for its consequences. If we permit drinking or smoking, sexual activity or any other adult-like activity we also are saying the child is able to make the decision and responsible for its outcome. It is illogical to give permission but then forgive the child for not being able to foresee the ending – we should not give permission if we feel the child cannot foresee. That being the case, our inconsistency about giving privilege is troubling.

We often for instance push our children very quickly into acting ‘mature’ often just to get them out of our hair and to assuage our guilt when we can’t be there. We tell ourselves they are OK alone at age 12, that they can take the bus downtown alone at age 14 and we want to believe that at age 3 they really are fine in the company of another adult not us, and they should stop crying.

Government policy tends to focus on funding the years of early childhood only, as if after about age 6 kids are fine. A Calgary Regional Health Authority report April 2000 found that of 96 suicides 7 were of teens aged 10-19. Child Psychologist Kim Dell’Angela of Loyla University has noted that kids between 7 and 12 have usually been overlooked but they are also going through pivotal changes in abstract thinking. Child psychiatrist Kathleen McKenna of Children’s Memorial Hospital Chicago has found that children left alone at this age often get into trouble with Internet pornography sites or with alcohol.

Research is showing that the teen who appears self-confident at age 13 is still in need of an adult from time to time. Dr. Sung Joon Jan of Ohio State University has found that adolescence parental influence does not decline. Peer influence peaks at about age 13 and school influence peaks at about age 15. Dr. Sung Joon Jan has said that parents prematurely give up even trying or being able to function properly as good caregivers of teens.

Because of these inconsistencies, governments are not clear on when they offer financial assistance to protect a ‘child’ and if they are cash-strapped, they may cut it back too soon. For instance the Ottawa based National Youth In Care Network reported May 2002 that teens aged 16 and 17 are often deemed adults by social welfare authorities and are denied financial help, but they often are not yet finished their education and are barely employable. If they are out on the street because they were in abusive homes they may have few options. Article 1 of the Convention on the Right of the Child states that children are entitled to protection and defines a child as a person under age 18.

What is the solution? Actually nature itself is responsible for some of the grey area about when kids are adult. Some mature more quickly than others. An age cut-off itself is not a perfect indicator. As one psychologist said the mental age of a 12 year old is 12, plus or minus 11 years. So we need to give to the courts a lot of leeway to hear witnesses
tell about this child and this situation. From my own experience teaching teens in public high schools, there is a mocking of a youth justice system that penalizes only by having you draw a poster, but often if the parents were called in and the humiliation for being caught was intense, the poster, though mocked, actually is enough. Having healing circles, community service, restitution, formal apology to the victim all are strategies that teach and heal – they do not just punish. These are the strategies I would suggest for minor crime offenders under age 16. For the sake of the child, we must look at situations case by case. The fact that keeping kids out of jail also saves the state money is an added bonus.

According to the National Crime Prevention Centre’s brochure “Incarceration in Canada 2001”, there are on any given day 4900 young people in jail in Canada, an increase of 26% since 1987. This may not mean there are more young offenders though, but that we jail more of the ones we find. The annual cost to house an adult male in federal jail is $40,000-$70,000. To house a juvenile costs $100,000 a year.

A November 2001 study by the Rand Corporation in the US has found that when a teen goes wrong, a focus on crime reduction would cost each family $228 to put youth in jail, $118 to use probation, $48 to use parental training and only $32 to have programs that help troubled youth complete school. All would result in a drop in crime of 10% it is estimated. Why not then go for the least expensive?

**supervising youth**

There are also some very odd policies about supervising our youth. In the absence of the parent being there we have become super-vigilant to establish park safety rules, school safety rules, bus rules, street ‘block watch’ safety programs, and other programs to ease our minds that the kids are still OK. Some of our new legislation for safety borders on the extreme. The Toronto school board has torn down 172 parks for elementary school kids in the year 2000 fearing injury and possibly lawsuit, though in the 13 years records have been kept no child has actually died on the school playground equipment. The Globe and Mail Sept 14,2002 has urged school boards to not be so overprotective.

Some have argued that these programs reach the point of ridiculousness – helmets when you are on a tricycle, warnings on hot chocolate cups that the contents are hot. Surely no one wants to risk a child choking but the best protector against it is not just toy safety rules. It is also vigilance- a child after all can bag on cheese. We have become vigilant about what many consider normal school yard squabbles, now defining bullying as a major crisis. After the suicide of a 14 year old in BC, following threats from classmates, one elementary school principal of Port Moody BC (March 2002) suggested that schools must talk about harassment. It was even suggested that schools bear the ultimate responsibility for bullying behavior. An entire national symposium was held May 23, 2002 in Ottawa focusing on bullying and entitled “Fear and Loathing”

Whereas the idea of spanking a child was for many generations not only the norm but advised for major infractions, there is now a movement to make it illegal, probably to
reassure parents that no caregiver of their children will ever touch their child in anger. Jerry Hall, a Texas supermodel and mother of four has been part of such a UK campaign by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children which has slogan as “Hitting children must stop” (April 2002)

Ironically the new Youth Justice Act proposed for February 2001 would make harsh treatment of youth more common not less, kind of like the state saying to parents’ You can’t hit him but I can’. It would impose adult-like penalties on more older youth and on crimes that were nonviolent. There are two strong lobbies about how to treat kids who offend and these parallel very much the bookends of the points of view about definition of adulthood. One group says 14 year olds who commit a violent crime should be kept out of jail, allowed to do community service, and their names should not be published by the media –we must protect these children. Others say that at 14 this is no longer a child such offenders’ identities should be published and they should face adult sentences.

What kids need most

But given that love is crucial to the child, how can we ensure it? Fredelle Maynard says the first thing a baby needs is close, warm physical contact. Erich Fromm wrote of the importance of unconditional love, love that does not have to be earned. Time spent with the child is important according to Grollman. And it takes time to learn to love a child just as it takes time for a couple to fall in love. Even George Washington noted that true friendship is a ‘plant of slow growth’.

Sara Gilbert has said that emotions are stubborn. Part of love is listening to the child. Giffin has written that the children need someone who has an ‘absolutely irrational commitment to them’ Someone who would leap over buildings for the child. A top-selling book after the Sept 11,2001 disaster was one from Canada that had as the theme’ I will always find you’. What reassures children is that we can’t rest until we are with them and they are well. They want to depend on that kind of love. Does our tax policy allow that priority? I feel it does not.

We all love our children and do what we can for them. If we are forced away from them we deal with our loneliness for them by phoning them, by talking about them to colleagues and by rushing home to them the moment we get off work. We lobby for better daycare, we petition and parade that the care of our children in our absence must be exemplary and we make this claim for daycare funding out of great love for our kids. Though advocates for daycare or home-based care differ widely in choices, they are identical in love for the child. That is the common ground.

Some use the money they earn to buy kids more clothes and toys. A National Post article of August 18,2001 found that some parents pay $3500 for diamond tennis bracelets for teenage daughters, buy mink coats for toddlers and buy robots as pets for over $2000. But most parents are simply putting food on the table with that second paycheque. But is it fair to have a state policy which dictates that the only way to put food on the table is to leave the child?
It is too simplistic to say that working outside the home is bad for kids for it has definite advantages for kids. Because of the second income a young adult often can afford to get into university for $20,000. The parent who earned that money can give that gift. If the child needs braces, there is no substitute for a dental plan a salary provides. Some even claim their kids respect them more if they have paid jobs, but I suspect that respect only comes in early adulthood not in preteen years. Some claim that as parents they are frustrated at home unless they get away for a while so they are better parents if they leave. Some claim they paid a lot of money to get educated and owe society the use of those skills so they can’t stay home with kids. There are lots of reasons used to justify being away from the kids and it is not for me to say these are invalid. They are valid, for those people.

What is important is that equal respect should be given to those who solve those dilemmas other ways. What about the linguist who watches her children learn to talk with avid fascination and is not bored at home? What about the mother who teaches her children about the news of each day and nurtures them into being brilliant debaters and to get high marks in school? What about the respect kids also have for someone who greets them at the end of a troubled day with a hug and lemonade? And what about the parent who figures out a way to earn money freelance writing from home so is employed and yet still with kids? It is not a question of which parenting style is better. It is a question of the state treating them all equally.

Research about negative effects of bad care however is fraught with hard feelings. If the abusive situation was a private home, there may be a movement to whisk kids away into daycare as a secure safe option. And yet when the daycare setting is found to be the scene of abuse or neglect, mothers at home may feel that no stranger can be trusted like mom can. What we often ignore is the uniqueness of circumstance. Bad caregiving can happen anywhere and by anyone. I was talking to a retired judge once saying that I felt care by a grandmother was a great substitute for parental care. He said yes but that sometimes not, that a grandmother was also a mother-in-law and that sometimes these women can be very vicious and mean. It just means you never know. Daycare workers can be barely fluent in the child’s language, underpaid, overstressed, bored, negligent – but so may relatives. The guarantee we have of our child’s welfare ultimately is not going to be ‘rules’ and inspections by government once a year. It is going to have to be parent’s own judgment.

Who is competent to provide good care? A tragic death of a 16 month old child while in the care of a 10 year old in Alberta led to a fatality inquiry which concluded in 2002 that no change in legislation is required to have a minimum age for babysitters. In legal terms parents can be charged with neglect for failure to supervise a child under age 12 so the question seems moot- a child under age 10 should not be babysitting because that child should be being babysat. Yet practical experience reveals that many parents have one sibling or neighbor watch a smaller child for short periods of time, routinely, without tragic consequences. Legal intervention to prevent such short segments – eg. while I run
to the store, while I’m downstairs doing laundry – would be ridiculous. And yet abuse of
the privilege may well endanger children.

But one must wonder what is our standard of care. Dr. Barbara Dennison of Columbia
University has released a survey June 5,2002 finding that the average TV and video
viewing of a child ranges from 11 hours a week at age one to 18 hours a week at age 4.
The Institute of Quebec Statistics in 1999 found that 9-16 year olds watch more than 3 ½
hours of TV a day.

One level of care is simply that the child survives and is still healthy. Then there is the
standard of great care where the child has been intellectually stimulated, has learned new
skills, has been taken on an outing with fresh air and exercise, has been fed well and
cuddled, reassured and her language development has been stimulated. It is easy to
legislate care levels to ensure safety – basic health rules. It is nearly impossible to
legislate loving care standards of the higher level. And it is not true teens only offer level
one care, not level two. Preteens caring for babies may well have ability to offer loving
care strangers cannot, given that they may love that baby. Often the baby already has
bonded with them and has a real interest in learning to speak with them and imitate them.
But the preteen also may not know ways to handle tantrums or medical crises as well as
an adult might. The preteen may be able to offer some degree of safe care, carrying the
baby, ensuring the crib is safe, making sure the bottle is not too hot, but the preteen may
panic if a medical emergency develops.

What is of concern is whether saying ‘any kid can do this’ degrades the role of taking
care of children. Minimal care goals can even be reached by tying a child in a highchair
or keeping him in a playpen all day. And yes, any child can offer that level of care. To
recognize that children deserve better than being parked in front of a TV for 5 hours, that
children deserve better than being stuck in a house for 24 hours with no outings is to
recognize that raising children optimally, is quite a sophisticated skill. Degrading it
degrades women’s traditional work. I like to make the comparison between hamburgers
– you can have a plain beef patty on a bun or you can have a triple decker with lettuce,
tomato and onions. If your goal of child’ care’ is the first version, yes any child can do it,
usually. But surely for the best interests of the child that is not the level we aim at.

The issue of leaving a child to fend for herself for a few hours is also controversial. A
survey released October 22, 2001 by the Afterschool Alliance in the US has found that
nearly 40%of US teens have no adult supervise after school. What happens during that
time? 75% report they are more afraid after school hours than during school of being the
victim of violence or a crime. The child without adult supervision is not always actually
alone. It could be that the child is with siblings also underage. It could be that the child is
with friends, also underage. This is both a good thing and a bad thing. Children can help
each other and console each other and keep each other safe. But they also can lead each
other astray.

There are several solutions of course. One is to proof the child and tell her how to take
care of herself, but most adults realize even training is not itself adequate for a very
young child. A second solution daycare activists like is to have all preteens in supervised care after school.

Where daycare numbers are low, some daycare activists feel that the solution is to offer more daycare options. There is often no daycare for the parent doing a nursing shift from 11PM to 7AM. There may be a problem of transportation or actual efficiency of having a child go to daycare from 4-6PM each day when he could simply go home for that time and amuse himself. Some daycares in Quebec and a few in Alberta have started to operate 24 hours a day, to answer the shift problem, but this still may not meet the needs of kids.

Interviews with children in daycare settings about their preferences are woefully lacking but sometimes the numbers speak for themselves. Numbers of children in daycare over age 6 fall off dramatically and though daycare expense deductions can be claimed till age 16, it is nearly unheard of to have a child over age 12 still in daycare. Some kids just don’t like daycare and consider it for babies only.

Parents who have no family in town and few neighbors may also be unable to easily afford a sitter. If they are just setting up in the community they may be at lowpaid jobs themselves where every dollar counts. Sitters are in a double-bind because they like the income but if they have to declare it they get taxed on it and if they are seniors and they declare it they will lose pension. Yet if the sitter wants to be paid in cash with no paper trail, the parent also cannot declare this as an expense and have any state financial help for it. So it is very expensive to hire a sitter and many simply choose the cheaper route of leaving the child home alone. Were there a funding voucher system that flowed with the child, there would not have to be an accounting for how the money was spent and it would be received anyway by the parent, to spend on sitter or neighbor or daycare as the parent desired, without financial hardship.

A third option for after school care of kids is to sign them up for sports or clubs. Community centers may offer art and ballet classes or canoeing, tennis, gold. Canadian law permits tax deductions for such activities for teens after school, including hockey class, drama class, in fact any receipted expense up to age 16. The content of the course taken is irrelevant since for the tax department it is valued akin to being babysat anyway. It is noted as required supervision of a child while the parent earns money. But there is a catch. Only dual income families can deduct this expense. A single income family’s child taking hockey camp has to pay full fee while the dual income family’s child at the same course gets a huge tax write-off. Many feel this inequity is unfair.

The cheapest way to keep the after school child busy though, is at school. Many promote sports team involvement in the schools and there is increasing pressure on already overworked teachers to now also put in several hours after school coaching teams. The advantage of this to the family budget is the teacher is already paid by the state. And
there are strong advantages of course to pursuing any sport – physical fitness, camaraderie, ‘good clean fun’.

The disadvantage is for teachers who as a profession have struggled for decades with being taken for granted as glorified babysitters anyway. Teachers, who now have at least 4 and often 6 years of university training just to enter the profession are experiencing high levels of stress as they are now asked to do way more than teach 30 elementary students or 200 secondary students and mark all their assignments and be available for tutoring. Now they also have to coach and supervise clubs. In my opinion this additional burden being put on all teachers, regardless of their field of expertise, is not in the best interests of good education or of maintaining high levels of teaching. It is asking for more than teachers are able to give. It is like asking a medical doctor not only to diagnose and treat you but also to come into the waiting room to amuse you with magic tricks while you wait and then after the appointment to walk you home.

I am a teacher so one might discount my words as bias but on the other hand I have an insider’s view of how demanding the profession is if you really want to teach well. It is of course possible to spread yourself very thin and coach an hour, teach 3 hours, supervise hallways over the lunchhour and teach two more and then coach an hour – but then you get a very low performance product. If you plan on teaching only from handouts, if you give the students lots of free periods just to read, if you slack on in dozens of other ways, sure you can get through this long day but is that good teaching?

So instead of just telling kids how to cope with being alone, or putting them all in daycare, or after school classes of signing them up for school teams coached by exhausted teachers, there is another solution. We could actually permit parents to be home when the child comes home from school. We could do this by giving tax breaks to home-based offices, flex time, time-banking. We could do this by enabling telecommuting. And we could do this by valuing part-time paid employment as much as full-time in pension plan terms. In other words if we let the people make their own choices and arrangements, simply funding them so they can afford the choices, we can trust the people to supervise their kids better. It is cheaper and more efficient, more democratic. But most important of all, it is best for the child.

**federal spending on kids**

If kids are such a valuable resource for us, and as Churchill says the best investment any nation can make is putting milk into babies, then how much are we spending on kids? The Federal Budget of 1993 for instance spent $2.2 billion on family allowance (a program that itself has now been cut) but it spent $11.2 billion on defense. It is a question of priorities.

Professor Nick Bala of Queen’s University has estimated that $1 spent now on kids will save $7 down the road in welfare and youth crime costs. In 1998 Cleveland and Krashinsky recommended $5.33 billion be spent immediately, $ 4 billion on daycare
alone, for a benefit of $106 billion per year later. Every dollar invested was to return $2 in labor productivity and decreased social costs. But they erred when they said this benefit only happens in daycare. It happens when we invest in kids everywhere.

Institutional care is always more costly than home-based care, for those in jail but also for medical care of the sick, elderly or even the dying. It is also higher for care of children in daycare than for those at home. The state actually would save money by encouraging and assisting home-based care, yet for some reason it only funds institutional care.

The cost of one day in hospital is $500 or $182,500 a year. Home care with a 24 hour nurse for a year costs $118,625. The cost of a bed in a nursing home is $36,000 a year. The cost of keeping a senior in a lodge with personal attendant in 2001 is $11,000 a year. The cost of keeping a senior in his or her own home with a visit from a professional is even less and the cost of letting a senior be in her own home cared for by relatives is even cheaper. What type of care is ‘best”? Not necessarily the most costly one.

-early childhood education

The term ‘education’ is itself a vague term. All of life is an education on one level. Even bad experiences teach. We hope of course that when we educate the young we are giving them good experiences but even those happen everywhere. Children are always listening, “Little pitchers have big ears’. The daycare lobby has cleverly shifted its emphasis from housing kids so moms can earn money, to offering something good for the child. And they have claimed that what they offer is vital education. A December 7,2002 study released in Ontario suggested for instance $1 million be spent on universal daycare and full-day kindergarten for 4 and 5 year olds with the reason given ‘so that children start school ready to learn’.

Yet it is not logical to speak of making a child ‘ready to learn’. Children are born ready to learn. You can’t stop them. Suggesting that kids can learn in a daycare is of course true, but it is unfair to claim they only learn if in daycare.

As a teacher who has instructed in kindergarten classes I can attest to the activities there being educational for sure, but that is not to say that these activities – playing with blocks, playing with dolls, coloring, printing letters, singing, being read stories are exclusive to that setting. Most homes also offer these activities. That means that if the goal is for children to be ready to enter school, then anyone meeting those goals should get funded.

As a teacher I have some 30 years experience working with children and I have many strong views about what constitute good education for the young however. But it is not necessary to cite my own experience alone. Many academics have also studied what actually matters in the development of the mind. Edith Neisser has noted that children develop at individual rates and a given age category does not indicate how much
independence the child should show. So first of all children need to be noticed for their unique skills and personality and allowed to develop them without being too rushed.

Children also need unstructured play, time to be creative. Garland and White (1980) have noted that this free time is not however time for the adult to go away, but time for the child to do undirected play with the adult watching and praising. Ames has noted that children vary in their desire to play in groups and that some personality types dislike excessive social involvement. A child needs to feel in control of her environment and to have some activities to do which make her feel competent. Sadly, if a caregiver is busy with many other children there may be less time to notice uniqueness. Fredelle Maynard noted that in Israel, China and Russia where communal styles of child-rearing were embraced, there was a de-emphasis on individuality. In a democracy that praises the rights of the individual it is ironic to en masse endorse a child-rearing policy that might ignore individual capabilities.

To educate a child we need to give feedback, but it should be of a certain type. Dunbar has noted that if children live with unpredictable discipline for instance they feel insecure and distrustful. Children need to see adults role-modelling behavior, and language. Children need verbal stimulation. Fraiberg has found that if a baby’s cries are repeatedly ignored the baby learns not to cry and yet also not to express himself and his speech development is hindered. Children need mental stimulation. Children need to feel secure and that they can depend on us before they risk being independent. Giffin has noted that parents too often rush independence in their children.

The problem with studies in education is often lack of a control group. You can’t take a given child and educate her two ways and compare which way worked. You can’t morally withhold education just to see how life turns out without it. You can’t know for certainty how much a child would have learned anyway, naturally, without your intervention, and you can’t know how much your studying of the child itself changes the child’s attitude to learning. In addition some effects of teaching a child to speak or to read may not really show significant results immediately and need long-term assessment. A study published July 19, 2002 in Child Development journal reveals the work of Jeanne Brookes-Gunn of Columbia University. She has found that if a mother returns to full-time paid work away from a child before the child is 9 months old, there is no significant difference in mental or verbal development of such a child compared to a child whose parent was with her still, at ages 15 or 24 months. However at age 36 months the mental and verbal development of the child whose parent did not return to full-time paid work is more advanced.

We know quite a bit about how to teach little kids. We must not assume however that only certain locations teach. Current state policies, unfortunately make that assumption.

CHAPTER 7- FAMILY FINANCE- THE NOT-SO-SUBTLE PRESSURE
I was so naïve at first. When I discovered daycare moms got tax breaks and moms at home did not I wrote a letter to the Prime Minister at the time, Joe Clark, informing him of this and asking that he correct it, assuming that he had not noticed it and would quickly fix it. When I discovered the single income family pays in some cases half again as much tax as the dual earner family on the same income I informed government as if they did not know this – and I expected it would be fixed possibly by the next post.

It had not occurred to me that they knew of these inequities and not only were aware of them but intended them. They preferred certain lifestyles not by accident but fully intentionally. They considered them ‘incentives’ to do what the state preferred and ‘disincentives’ to not

The ‘financial pressure’ put on households is subtle. There is no law against having only one income or having 1 ½ incomes not two full time incomes. The state just makes you pay more tax if you don’t have two full-time incomes. This violates in my mind a basic principle ‘a dollar earned is a dollar taxed’ because in essence it taxes based on who earned it and where, not how much.

There is no law against raising your child outside daycare but the tax breaks only come if you use daycare. So there is just a subtle tilting of the balance as the courts say, subtle favoring of one choice over another till the other becomes simply unaffordable. The difference in treatment was a question more of a violation of a basic right to equal benefit and equal treatment under the law. It was a human rights discrimination.

Heather Gore-Hickman, Chartered Accountant has calculated for May 2002 the tax differences in BC for example between various households all of which in total bring in $60,000. The first shock is that the single income family earning $60,000 pays 42% MORE tax than does the dual earner family earning $30,000 and $30,000 even though they have the same exact total income. But that is not the only shock. Any couple earning along the continuum also pays a penalty. The couple earning $36,000 and $24,000 pays $7049. The couple earning $50,000 and $10,000 pays $7959. The couple earning $60,000 and zero pays $8783 in tax. Nearly all couples are taxed more than the couple that earns 30,000 and 30,000, even though their household income is the same.

How many families are affected then is –nearly all. Though only 22.7% of single earner families are single earner (still that is over 1/5 of families) and 60.5% are dual earner according to Stats Canada Income Statistic Division for 1999, most of the dual earners also are not earning equal incomes partner to partner, so they too pay a penalty.

There are so many ways for the state to sound like it is addressing the issue without really doing so. You ask for help for kids and they send in programs for organizations that help those kids who happen to consult them. You ask for help with poverty of children and they encourage you to leave the kids and earn money to alleviate the poverty. You ask for
recognition of the value of children to society and the state funds programs that give advice.

Social program budgets are often large. Yet a closer look shows the numbers are not really impressive per person and they are not impressive historically. In 1942 the government spent $135 million on social programs; in 1985 $149 million.

Often the state’s help is bandaid, and too late. Financial pressure on those raising children often breaks out in frustration, depression, spousal abuse, and certainly marital discord, separation and divorce. Granted money is not the only problem, but polls reveal it is often the chief problem, especially as reported by kids. The state tried to help, in 1999 by assigning $50 million over 5 years just to help provinces and territories assist separating and divorcing couples “resolve support and custody issues”. Money per individual crisis was available, in the form of advice, but money to help the families with financial problems that may have led to the divorce was not allotted. In the Monty Python equivalent of this, it is like breaking someone’s leg and then massivly funding either the blue cast or the pink cast.

Often what studies show is the effect of financial pressure, not the source.

A July 2002 study by Statistic Canada has found that abuse of seniors most commonly is assault – slapping, punching, threats to apply force. Police statistics find that harm to someone over the age of 65 strikes one of every four seniors in Canada. Emotional, psychological abuse and financial coercion are other forms of such abuse. Elizabeth Podnieks of the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse has noted that one souce of stress is lack of financial help to provide care. What may be happening is that the senior needs care, the family member is called on to provide the care but the care takes time, lengthens the work day of the family member with a full-time paid job, and constitutes sometimes an actual financial cost for the caregiver besides.

Resentment in a generalized way may break out on the helpless aged, as it also can do on the helpless young, or on spouses. The solution of institutionalizing seniors into care by nonrelative ‘professionals’ may work for some though it does not solve the money dilemma – such care is costly. It would be least expensive and more efficient for the state simply to provide more funding for the care of seniors, funding that flowed with the person receiving the care. Then there would be less stress and resentment for the caregiver and the senior would retain independence and dignity in choosing where to get this funded care.

Currently in Canada we are taxed as individuals but benefits are returned to us as families. Some has suggested that to be fair we should either tax the individual as we now do, and return benefits based on individudal income, or tax the family and then return benefits based on household income – in other words that the state be consistent. We either do or do not share income. But the state benefits financially from the inconsistency.

Second-wave feminists did not trust the sharing of income and admittedly, if sharing were compulsory, many would object. What about those who are career oriented and
independent minded and don’t want to share the money? What about those who cohabit and share but are not married? What about two friends or an adult and a child who share income? In other words – is the taxation base to be only those who actually do share, and based on the sharing regardless of marital status, or are we to force people to share?

That is not a hard question to resolve actually. We could simply give people a choice of whether to be taxed as individuals or households. In the US there is a choice as there is in several other countries -Germany, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Spain.

But how would taxation on the household work? There are those who claim that if we add the two incomes and then tax them, they’re both taxed at a higher rate so that is unfair. Well obviously that is not how household tax would work. It could work in one of two ways. First you could combine the incomes of the two and then half them and tax the average, twice. In that way the lower income person does pay at a higher tax bracket but the higher earner pays at a lower bracket so this evens out. Or you could have a separate tax bracket for families, with a lower rate because this was shared income covering more than one person. The US has not two but three tax schedules to allow for how people choose to declare they share income.

Given the public outcry at the tax bias against the single income family, the state wanted to give the appearance of addressing the issue but it was mostly a misleading smokescreen. The Liberal government reduced taxes slightly for everybody saying that should help but this has not really fixed the problem. It has just moved the unequal numbers to a different level on the graph.

Often the state will cite statistics telling average income of families with children is increasing so the state can claim it is alleviating poverty. And yet one must look more closely to see who exactly is getting more money. For instance in 1999 the average household income of two parent families with children was $57,665. But this was because the average household income of a two-earner family was $58,063 while he single income family only had $42,898, or 74% of the income of the average family. It is the single income family which is suffering and its income is actually declining each year, not increasing. In 1999 the total average household income for two parent families with children was $73,910. For two earner families it had gone up to $73,984. For single earner families it was only $54,407 (now 73% of the average family income)

The surges in income have been greater for the dual earner family for some time. 1992 figures show that the single earner couple had gone from $40,748 in 1982 to $41,838 while the dual earner family had gone from $56,426 to $63,663 in the same time period. The single income family was up only $1090 while the dual were up $7,237. Ironically single parent families, an often beleaguered group, over the same time period went from $23,543 to $24,642 so they were up $1099 or MORE than the single income dual parent family. Sympathy for the problems of single parents is well-placed but these figures clearly show that the single earner couple is also doing very poorly.
Some have argued that a single rate tax would remove at least the sliding scale of penalty for how money was earned. With a single rate tax all families with household incomes at $60,000 would pay the same tax. That would imply also however that a household earning $200,000 paying for instance 10% tax would only pay $20,000 tax and would have a whopping $180,000 left over, while a family earning $40,000 would pay $4,000 tax and would have $36,000 left over. Many feel the rich should pay more tax not just in absolute dollars but in proportion of income because after all they can afford it and the ‘inconvenience’ or even impact of a tax for them is not the same as 10% for the poor. The graduated or ‘progressive’ tax proponents argue for the basic principle that all people should be taxed based on their ‘ability to pay’ and the rich, having more ability to pay, should pay a higher rate. This argument however could be adjusted to account for households. A household of $60,000 income has the same ‘ability to pay’ regardless of who earned the money. So we could still maintain the policy of progressive taxation if we let the household, not just the individual, be the tax base.

The federal tax brackets are however not the only hurdle. The provinces add an additional tax and the twelve provinces and 3 territories also do not agree on brackets. As of July 2001 for instance there is one tax rate in Alberta, there are 3 rates in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, PEI and Newfoundland and there are 4 brackets in New Brunswick. There are 5 tax brackets in BC. In addition some index the brackets to inflation – BC, Ontario, PEI, New Brunswick, Ontario – while others do not.

In terms of pensions and sharing benefits, the federal government requires dividing of CPP contributions and equalizing pensions for married spouses but the provinces do not. In fact Ontario law prohibits splitting provincially regulated pension benefits. This means that were we to address the principles of equality and fairness, we would have to not just convince the federal government, but also the provinces.

There is a small window of good news however - the state is starting to recognize that it costs money to be home taking care of the sick, or handicapped and they are starting to recompense a few of the expenses. The caregiver tax credit was introduced in 1998 though it only amounts to $266 per year or 73 cents a day. This amount has most of the problems of other government recognition – its amount is too small, and its administration is biased. Care of healthy children is not eligible. A Canadian Senator, Sharon Carstairs has been lobbying in 2002 for tax breaks for parents caring for terminally ill children. But not well children.

Yet the principle of caregiving being a salary sacrifice is a small small start. Morris et all 1999 have estimated that for unpaid caregivers of the disabled there is a salary sacrifice of $25,000 a year, plus loss of pension credit benefits and career advancement. Under the criteria of the caregiver tax benefit though, as it stands, only 450,000 caregivers actually qualify.

-tax policies for children- the child dependent deduction
Most countries have some recognition of costs of raising kids across the board. A key tax principle is that having children reduces your ability to pay tax so that it is fair to drop the tax a bit on those who are raising children. Various countries have policies to recognize costs of kids not out of pity but out of a recognition that these are society’s children, the next generation and all the corny but very true platitudes of ‘our future’.

Given that realization, many nations have a family allowance of some sort. But they differ in the mechanism. Some like Australia give more family allowance per child if the child is in a large family. This acts like a birth incentive one would suppose as well as an admission that with large families there are massive new costs such as bigger accommodation and more transportation Some give family allowance well into the early twenties, to help the young adult attend post-secondary. Some finance family allowance through government coffers but others use a payroll tax. Israel uses some payroll contributions as do the Netherlands and New Zealand. Some countries allow a household to have a different tax rate if they share income. Taxation is based on household income, not individual income, in France, Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland. Other countries let families choose if they want to be taxed as individuals or on household income – Portugal, Spain, US, Ireland, Germany.

The point is that most countries have something. Canada used to have something also. The child dependent deduction (or dependent credit) in 1984 was $710 and it was for every child in the nation. However it was considered too costly and was reduced in 1988 to $470 and was made into a nonrefundable credit so the poor could not access it. In 1991 it was further reduced to $79 per child or $138 for 3rd or later children to age 18. For a disabled child it was $262. In 1992 this credit was abolished and replaced with the child tax benefit. In 1993 both the refundable child tax credit and the nonrefundable child tax credit were eliminated and the new child tax benefit was begun.

Canada has tried several systems. Besides a child dependent deduction, there was for a time a family allowance. It was begun at the end of the second world war. The family allowance cheque was praised by feminists for being money for the mother, giving her financial recognition of her own. However others claimed that the program was too costly. In 1978 the state had a refundable child tax credit for lower and middle income families, paid once a year after tax returns. It was for incomes under $16,810 then gradually reduced till it was eliminated at incomes of $26,330. In 1988 it was given to only those earning $23,500 at the top end so some families were cut off benefits. At its maximum, in 1991, it was $585 per child ($1.60 a day) For daycare users it was one of several tax breaks. For those who did not use daycare there was a supplement at most worth $207 (57 cents a day) For many women in the home, this $207 was their entire income for the year.

Since 1992 it is not only possible but required by many families in the nation to fill out a tax form without even being allowed to mention that you have children. Your taxes are not adjusted at all unless you put the child in daycare, which is not the preference for large segments of the population. It has been said that in 2002 Canada is alone among the G7 countries for lacking any universal recognition that it costs money to raise children.
So the state has done some experimenting with giving money to all kids, with cutting off how poor you have to be to get benefits, with making the benefits refundable and actual cash or whether they should be nonrefundable so they reduced your tax but only if you paid tax. And the state has experimented with whether the payments should be once a year which is a kind of windfall but hard to budget for, or once a month which can help with rent and other regular expenses.

Many nations fund family allowance creatively, some not just through general tax coffers but some through actual payroll deductions from all business. It was announced in 2001 that the state of Arkansas has adopted a beer tax to fund early education and child care. A 3% tax on retail beer sales will generate over $6 million next year. Though this money apparently is directed towards daycares, it could was easily be directed to financial support for all children – the point is the source of money is pretty good.

**Child Care Expense Deduction**

How many children are affected by Canadian tax laws? The March 2002 figures of children under age 6, according to Senator Landon Pearson’s “Children and the Hill” report are 2,172,804 children, 7.1% of the population. Canada’s census results for March 13,2002 are a total population of 31.3 million. By many European standards it is not a big country but if 2 million of the 31 million are under 6, it is still a sizeable group. There has long been an argument that women, unlike men, have children so they can’t just rush off to paid jobs. To enable them to have the paid job they must have help with their child-rearing responsibilities. And it is the state that should help them. The state should subsidize the costs of their children’s care so the women can ‘work’, meaning so they can earn money and pay tax. The greater good is deemed to be that women earn money and the state currently takes over much of the child-care cost to enable it. So the state developed a ‘child care expense deduction’ policy which covers the costs of receipted daycare or nanny care but only for those parents who have paid income or for those who are in school studying so they will one day have paid income. In other words the focus clearly is on the criterion of money being earned.

The rationale given is that women need this boost to ‘level the playing field’ with men. Otherwise men’s salaries would go straight to themselves, while women’s would be lessened because they have to cover daycare costs and that is not fair. Here again one cannot fault the argument in terms of the right of those getting the benefit, to the benefit. The problem is in who is excluded.

The legislation assumes that only with daycare access can women work. I beg to differ. Raising children also is work. By job description it is identical to what a nanny or daycare worker does and it is not done for oneself so it is genuinely other-serving work. Some have claimed that this ‘work’ if done for blood relatives of the child, is not ‘work’ because it is not at arm’s length. In fact the tax code stipulated for many years that the caregiver of the child must not be a blood relative to claim this deduction.
This view of ‘at arm’s length’ is a legal concept derived from the danger of a vested financial interest coming into play so the person involved can get rich off the policy while seeming to be unbiased. That surely is not an applicable policy here. The work done in the home to raise children provides no financial benefit and in fact provides financial loss so there is no ‘vested interest’ to get rich. The concept of ‘vested interest’ assumed that family members were all in a patriarchal system where everyone benefited from the main earner’s income automatically and each had no autonomous nature. The law is lately noticing however that each person does in fact have an autonomous nature and family-operated businesses with salaries paid between relatives are now legal. So raising one’s own children could be seen as the activity of the caregiver, whether a blood relative or not.

A second assumption is that women only can have paid work if they use daycare. In fact many women cleverly earn money as the state wishes, but not using daycare, as the state assumes they must. Some use care by grandma, neighbor, friend, dad or even themselves, working part-time outside the home when the child is in school, taking the child to paid work, operating a family dayhome, doing freelance writing while the child naps etc. So a huge proportion of women do not need daycare to earn money but they do incur costs of rearing children.

I have been told that the daycare break was not for moms at home because daycare was a cost of ‘working’ necessary for performance of that job. However there is no job that requires you to even have a child, let alone to use daycare, so the cost of daycare is not required for the career. The cost of taking care of a child is not a business expense as the Supreme Court decided in the Symes case 1993. It is a personal expense. It is voluntarily undertaken for personal reasons and not as part of the job description. That makes it more akin to having a horse that needs boarding while you do your paid carpentry work. The horse expense is your personal choice. Or one might liken it to cost of a wheelchair, that certain people not others need to perform a job. But wheelchairs are not voluntarily chosen, only because of need. If we see having a child as a handicap, this is far from valuing children.

The current child care expense deduction has many conditions on it. First it is only for receipted care not all paid care. That means it is trying to avoid the receiver not declaring it and being taxed on it. But that requirement alone excludes much informal babysitting. Second, it is only for care by nonrelatives, in most provinces. That excludes precisely and ironically the very care which it might be in the best interests of the child to provide—care by a loving relative, or even a parent. Specifically excluding blood-relatives may deny the child exposure to those most able to teach the child the language, culture, traditions and values of the child’s culture.

But the current deduction is unfair on another dimension also. It is only for the lower earner of a two-income family unless the claimant is a single parent. That means that all dual parent families in the country are excluded from it unless the second parent has paid income. That means that the identical daycare experience for child A and child B can be deducted by parent A but not by parent B, simply on the basis of whether parent A has
income or not, or if you like, on marital status of the parent. These are not fair bases on which to judge the social value of any substitute care.

The current CCED extends also to any type of receipted care without a time restriction. That means that a parent could go out partying for the weekend and deduct the entire cost of a sitter, being able to claim the expense because the parent has paid income while a single income family using a sitter for the weekend so they could attend a funeral could not. It can be claimed in other words unrelated to even the excuse the parent needs the daycare so he or she can earn money. It is an easy system to abuse.

Another problem with the CCED is that its powerful lobby has extended several times the age of those getting the benefit. It is currently available for care of those up to age 16 meaning that a parent can deduct ‘daycare ‘ expenses for a 15 year old. Very few 15 year olds are in daycare so this deduction is being used for other organizational care of the teen such as drama school, hockey camp, ballet school, art class. The irony of that is that the exact class, camp or school experience involved cannot be claimed as a deduction by the single income family.

Often when the state is asked to help children and eliminate child poverty it simply increases the child care expense deduction. But that only benefits the few not the many, and it benefits often some very rich children, while ignoring needs of the very poor who don’t happen to be in daycare. For example in 1976 the child care expense deduction for children under age 7 was $2,000 and for those over age 7 was $1,000. In 1984 these figures became $4,000 and $1,000. In 1994 they were $4,000 and $2,000. In 1998 they were $5,000 and $3,000 and by 2000 they were $7,000 and $4,000. The amount for parents not using daycare remained throughout at zero and zero.

There is also the irony that a 15 year old is herself legally allowed to be a babysitter. In many provinces preteens at age 12 are legally allowed to be sitters to younger children and paid to do so – so we have a legal inconsistency where the babysitter herself is deemed in law to be in need of a sitter. It should not be possible to have it both ways. Obviously parents who work outside the home away from their teenage children are deeply concerned about the wellbeing of their offspring in their absence and have convinced the state that their costs of providing substitute arrangements for them are vital to the state. Surely if these courses are important though, they should be deductible for all parents, even single income ones. Or alternately, a voucher program would enable parents to choose what experiences to provide, even the at-home experience with a parent.

Administration of the CCED is topheavy. Receipts are needed. The payee has to tell his or her social insurance number and then declare the amount as taxable income. This means the present system favors younger caregivers for whom the amount still will keep them in the nontaxed category – teens, low-age part-time workers elsewhere. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women specifically and expressly recommended against such a policy but it continues nonetheless. “No tax receipts would be required as evidence of child care expenses because the child care allowance would be paid to all
mothers. The contribution made by mothers who stay home to care for children would be recognized and fewer mothers would be forced to work outside for financial reasons.

How many people use the CCED deduction? A 1997 study. Infant Child Care from Statistics Canada found that the age of the child makes quite a difference. Over 2/3 of mothers do not use daycare. Those who do use it, in 1997 stats from the National Child Care study, use it most when the child is aged 3-6 and least for babies 0-18 months.

A study in 1998 by Quebec’s national statistics bureau (BSQ) found that only 49% of parents of children under age 12 use daycare on a regular basis. In Quebec the $5 a day program was set up in 1997 for four year olds and it was extended to 3 year olds in 1998 and to children from birth to age 12 years in 2000. However the report noted several problems with the system including low daycare worker salary of about $20,000 per year, high staff turnover, and inability to meet paid work schedules of many parents. Child care workers in Quebec have gone on strike several times in the past few years.

The state claims all through the debate that all is well, saying it has increased benefits to children, both the child tax benefit and the supplement and the CCED. If it cleverly omits that it denies these benefits to most people and that it reduced the cutoff limit so it has to give them to even fewer people, it sounds generous. It also can claim how much it costs the state to fund these programs.

The CCED for instance cost the state in 2000-2001 $424 million. This sounds like such a huge number people feel embarrassed to suggest it is not enough.

In the US there are similar misconceptions. The Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1997 noted that 63% of all women with children under 6 are employed outside the home (2/3 of all mothers of that age not all). But of them 37% are employed only part time while 63% are employed full-time outside the home. That means that only 63% of 63% are in employed full-time – or 0.40 of all mothers. Only 2/5 of mothers. The other 3/5 are not counted in the stats as having costs rearing children. It is a sizeable group to ignore.

The state also subsidizes daycare in other ways. In BC in 2002 the subsidies for child-rearing are for 'nonparental 'care only but within that category there is some choice. However there is not equality. For those using licensed centers for a second child aged 0-18 months there is a $585 subsidy. Family day home care for the same child gets only a $438 subsidy. In-home nonparental care gets a $198 subsidy. And parental care gets no subsidy. There must be the assumption that it costs less to raise a child in a home than in an institution, possibly the age-old assumption that women at home, even unrelated to the person getting the care, are wiling to work for very little.

The number of people using daycare is often subtly misrepresented. Numbers are not shown for a full range of care options, but just for the nonparental ones. Numbers are compared between types of daycare – those for profit and those not for profit. This subtle
exclusion of those not using daycare at all creates a skewed impression of what people are actually doing.

In Stats Canada 2000 “Women in Canada’ the tally of licensed spaces was announced. In 1971 there were 16,791 children in regular daycare and 600 in family daycare – total 17,391.In 1996 there were 366,451 in regular daycare, 435,478 in family daycare – total 801,929. These figures can easily be used at first glance to say the trend is for use of daycare and but more telling is seeing how many children are not being counted because they are not in daycare. Millions.

How much is it worth to take care of a baby? Ironically for the exact same job description some get paid and some do not. In Canada a new mother bonding with her newborn is paid at house A but not house B because at house A she used to have a paid job last year and so she gets maternity benefits. The other mother does not. A mother providing day home care care to others’ kids gets a salary but a mother incurring costs of caring for her own child gets nothing. A foster parent gets paid but a mother at home does not. In Alberta foster parents are paid $44 per child per day (Feb 2002) A surrogate mother gets paid sometimes $15,000 to carry the pregnancy to term but a natural mother does not. In the US the Fox Agency in New York hires out ‘baby nurses’ to come into the home of a newborn and sleep in the baby’s room for a few nights to give night feeding at a cost of $160 a night. We do not pay per job. We pay per identity of the person doing it. Is that fair? Is it fair to say the state and society value care depending only on the factor of in fact parentage, race? That seems a discrimination. Many have suggested that if the state funds any care of children, it should equally fund all care - funding should flow with the child.

In Alberta since 1997 there is an attempt to recognize the nondaycare option and some families receive a $25 cheque a month for babysitter expense not incurred in daycare. Though one might be shocked at the amount of this cheque since at minimum wage it would cover about 4 hours of care per month, the more telling other problem is that the restriction on who gets the cheque still exists – only dual income families qualify.

In Quebec between 1988 and 1997 there was a sliding scale of baby bonuses. They increased for larger families, allotting $500 for first child, $2500 for second, peaking at $7500 for the birth of a third and succeeding chid. The goal was apparently to increase the birth rate similar to what in the French-speaking province has been known for decades as a policy of ‘la revanche du berceau’ (revenge of the cradle). The result - the birth rate in Quebec in 1990 went up 18% form 1987 In 1991 half of the births in Canada were in Quebec. But the program was discontinued. The policy was replaced with another plan - $5 a day daycare.

The shift in assisting all children to only children in daycare marked a huge departure from universality. It created a financial pressure, or as some would prefer to call it an ‘incentive’ to put children into the care of nonfamily members, and a pressure or ‘incentive’ for all mothers even of young children to be away from the children earning money. I was told by one Quebec politician that the goal was the same- to help increase
the birth rate, this time by making the care of children inexpensive while mom earned money. The problem of human nature that the state ignored is that women don’t have babies just because there is a place to put them. The motivations for having children are complex but a rather important one is the desire to spend time with a child. Quebec’s birth rate in 2002 is now one of the lowest in Canada.

CTB, NCB

The child tax benefit was to help the poor since the state claimed it could not afford to help all kids. It was funded federally but was administered provincially, creating inconsistent applications, especially for children on welfare. In many provinces when a child tax benefit went to such families it was counted as income and welfare payments were reduced the same amount. The help did not reach the poorest of the poor.

The CTB started in 1993 to replace family allowance, the child dependent deduction, the nonrefundable child tax credit and the refundable child tax credit. On the one hand it is financial help to raise children and its value has from time to time been raised, so it is hard to object to it on principle.

And yet many have noted flaws in it nonetheless. It is not for all kids, just a few. It is not for the very poorest since the money somehow does not reach them. It is not indexed to inflation so its absolute value drops over time. And its amount even at its highest is very small. It is expensive to administer because of its complex formula and it does not recognize two facts all parents know – that it costs more to raise teenagers than it does preschoolers and secondly that it costs at least as much to raise the 4th child as the 2nd child, not less.

Its maximum monthly payment was $85 per child under age 18 (those earning in the family $25,921 or less) and it was gradually reduced from that amount until it was phased out at family incomes of $70,981. A supplement was given to the ‘working poor’ of $500 per family each year regardless of number of children (but not to families on welfare) Let us examine that. A monthly payment of $85 a child amounted to $2.83 a day and that was the most help you could get – most families got less.

To counter the criticism it has been increased. It was $1020 at its maximum but this amount has been pushed up, in 2000 to $2081 per child for the year, and in 2001 it was $2372 but even that is reduced quite quickly based on family income. It starts to drop at family incomes of $22,000 by 2002 figures, and is eliminated completely for incomes of $67,000, so actually not many qualify. It allots on average $162 each for the poorest who qualify, per month, $32 per month for those slightly better off and $1.40 each for that group who still qualify as needy but barely. The amount is adjusted for larger families – but not much. By 2004 the amount will be $2400 for the first child and $2200 for each subsequent child. (these figures amount to $6.57 and $6.02 a day) For mothers who are without income there is a mechanism by which children under age 7 will get for the year $219. (This is 60 cents a day)
The Child Tax Benefit is increased from time to time. It is projected to be moved up to $2500 per year by the year 2004. However the right hand giveth but the left hand taketh away. The cutoffs for getting this benefit also are occasionally adjusted. It becomes very hard to actually get the top benefit and very easy to have your benefit reduced.

The formula for the CTB is complex \((1/12 \cdot ((A-B) + C))\) depending on number of dependants, age of dependent, age under 7 and income of family. One amazing assumption it makes is that later children cost less than firstborns. By 2001 a first child gets maximum $1155, a second $855. Since the amount less and less covers the actual cost of raising a child, this formula acts as a disincentive to have large families.

One of the biggest flaws of the CTB however is how it is based – on family income. Even though Canada’s tax policy claims every individual is taxed individually, the state conveniently ignores this principle when it is to return benefits to the taxpayer. By basing benefit of the caregiver for instance on the income of another person, the spouse also, the state has to pay less money back to help the family. Family income is used to calculate the child tax benefit and the goods and services tax credit.

It may be that the purpose of the child tax benefit is itself suspect since it is not even officially intended to help kids. It is to help parents who earn money. In official parlance the national child benefit is intended ‘to combat poverty by helping to protect benefits for low-income parents who enter and stay in the workforce’. Here one notes clearly the paid work criterion which many feel is completely unrelated to the deserving nature of a child.

The 1966 Royal Commission on Taxation said basing taxation on household not individual income would be fair but the Canadian government did not change its policy, possibly because to do so it may have to make adjustments that have the poor paying fewer taxes and the state would lose tax revenue. It has stubbornly kept to its commitment to individual tax because let’s face it it gets more tax dollars that way. And yet, if it returns benefits to the public, such as with rebates, deductions, credits or other recognitions of legitimate costs it assumes families share income.

The family allowance program which was discontinued several years ago, was universal. Universal programs do not have conditions on them and are cheap to administer. They they treat all citizens equally. When a program stops being universal it becomes more costly to administer.

A nonuniversal program could be justified for example if it brought the poor up to the level of the others, and if it only benefited the poor. Yet the child care expense deduction has nothing to do with poverty- it benefits those rich or poor who use daycare.

So slowly the state has realized that the perception of fairness is fast disappearing and it has tried to give the appearance again of being nearly universal. The child tax benefit is its latest attempt. It has been noted that Canada in 2000 is the only G7 country to not have a universal program to support children financially. So Canada has pointed out in the Throne Speech of January 2001 that currently the CCTB goes to 80% of families with
children and by 2004 it will go to 90% of such families. Does that make it a universal program? Well not really. It is still a graduated amount of benefit and oddly enough the poorest still don’t end up getting it.

The National Child Benefit supplement in 2001-2002 is estimated to be going to cost the federal government $2.5 billion dollars. Added to that is a children’s special allowance of $64 million. When such large numbers are hauled out of course it looks like the state is tremendously generous. And yet the per child benefit is not nearly as impressive. Many children get nothing. The amount of the benefit for those who do qualify has increased, from $695 to $964 per child in 2001 and $1255 per child in 2002. But there are not many who get it. The very poor who are defined as needing it are those with family incomes under $20,922 as of 2002.

In National child benefit supplement has recently increased by about $300 a year. It is combined with the national child benefit to make top rates of $2400 for a first child (CTB is $1145, supplement is $1255). For the second child the amount is less. The income level at which the NCB supplement is fully phased out is $32,000 as of July 2001. That means that some very poor families are unable to get it.

The decline depending on birth order is also of concern for the supplement. A first child gets $1255, a second gets $1055 and each subsequent gets only $980. (2002 figures)

The National Child Benefit Supplement for the very poor actually comes through the provinces and each province administers this funding differently. Some keep the money from kids on welfare and redistribute it through dental and other programs rather than letting the families have the cash. The amount of money in the program is considerable, totaling $1.875 billion.

**present spending on children by the state**

Taken together these two funding programs the CTB and the NCBS total $4.447 billion dollars. Were this money spread evenly over all kids, instead of targeted to the poor, it might be more fairly distributed in a legal sense since every child is of equal value to the state. Canada has chosen however to give no help to families of a certain income who are raising children. There are 2.8 million children in Canada. Were the funding spread over them all, equally, what would that give per child? **$1,588 per child.** This would be a universal benefit to all children. Granted it is not huge but it is considerable enough that many parents would feel parenting was supported by the state, unconditionally. However that is not the only federal money that is currently available for kids. Much more money goes for kids also, but it is even more targeted or some might say, discriminatory. This money is for daycare kids.

The NCB Initiatives which sponsor child/daycare for 2001-2002 total $225.5 million. They make up a full 30% of money the NCB initiatives use. Another 19% is spent, totaling $139.7 million in 2001-2002 on ‘early childhood services and children at-risk-
services” which again are daycare of a sort, or if not daycare, then direct program intervention usually to have the child away from the parent. The amounts of these two programs total $362 million. That means that, the state gives special preference to those who use daycare. Were this daycare funding mixed with the cash funding for the poor and spread out so every child in the country benefited not just those who made the cut – there would be another $362 million for the 2.8 million children or another $129 per child.

In addition many provinces further add money for children but only daycare children, by virtue of child care subsidy programs. Some provinces also fund construction of daycares. Many offer programs to give ‘advice’ to parents in the home, to make home visits which give nutritional or parenting advice but though these programs cost a lot of money to the state, they do not provide any financial help to nondaycare parenting styles. Some fund projects to study daycare, to collect materials and review training, all of which again is for daycare only but this money does not even claim to reach children. It goes directly to organizations.

Because the daycare subsidies are jointly funded by the federal government’s NCB programs and the provinces’ coffers, it is not easy to tell how much each contributed when only totals are given. However just a quick look at totals does show the level of commitment the provinces also have to daycare. None of this funding is matched by funding to nondaycare children to offset home care costs.

Here are the child care/daycare funding estimates and the early childhood services funding for 2001-2001 from the various provinces and territories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Child/daycare Funds</th>
<th>Early Childhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland and Labrador</td>
<td>$5.2 million</td>
<td>$4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>$600,000</td>
<td>$1.1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>$1.3 million</td>
<td>1.4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>3.26 million</td>
<td>5.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>$175 million</td>
<td>40 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>$6.4 million</td>
<td>$20 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>6.3 million</td>
<td>600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>27.3 million</td>
<td>65.2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>225.36 MILLION</td>
<td>137.8 MILLION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let us assume that we have already included the $225 million in our total above that could be redistributed to every child not just daycare children.

And now let us take the 137 million that is given to programs not kids, and to early childhood services not kids, and put that also in the pockets of parents and kids directly. That would free up 137.8 million more or per child (2.8 million children) or $48 more each.

Now we have a figure of what the state can already afford to give for the kids of the nation because it is giving it. It is simply the amount it is already giving, redistributed so that every child in the nation gets it equally. And that total is $1588 +$129 + $48 or $1765 per child per year for every child in the country.
But that does not even count what the state already is investing in children because it
does not include the other big bonus daycare users get, the child care expense deduction.
This deduction can be up to 7,000 for a child under 7 and up to 4,000 for a child 7-16.
On a very rough estimate of one-third of the nation’s children actually in daycare and
able to claim the deduction, and then assuming that some of them do not actually claim
the top amount but only use daycare part time, let us assume that of the 2.8 million
children 0.9 million use the CCED and claim an average of 5,500 per year. Let us
assume at least that the state is comfortable with and braced for at least that as the amount
it is prepared to subsidize daycare with.

There are some who say that the daycare deduction is only really a benefit of 17% to the
family but is amount is taken off the total income before tax so it even can change a tax
bracket. Every single dollar is used as a full dollar so the 17% benefit is not quite logical.
But let us admit that the amount paid the daycare was paid by the state not the parent to at
least ¼ of the total fee of the daycare.

So let us use ¼ of the tally as the federal additional investment in daycare. Well what
amount does that come to? It is one quarter of 49.5 million dollars or 12.37 million.
Now let us divide that amount up also so that every child in the nation gets it instead of
just the daycare kids. Again with 2.8 million children that adds $4.41 each but if we
counted it in terms of off the top savings to the family, and the maximum the state is
braced to pay, that would be $17.67 a year per child.

What do we notice here? We notice that the state spends a lot on daycare institutionally
but not much on it in terms of daycare deductions, proportionally. So those who want the
CCED shifted to become universal, such as myself, have been naïve. That is not nearly
where the money is. The state is massively funding daycare kids and program
interventions through another door also. What would be fairest would be not only to
equalize the CCED but to spread that other program funding to all kids.
Were such an ideal situation to happen, the per child funding across the country would be
around $1769 per child per year.

There are many who feel that the state should not help everybody raise children. Some
who have no kids feel they have no interest in the wellbeing of kids of someone else, but
they also probably resent school taxes or paying for health care premiums when they
aren’t sick. The irony is that they do benefit from the work and productivity and tax base
of every new generation whether they admit it or not.

But some say that the rich should get no help. Yet why not? Why should the middle
class who earn the dollars have to use those dollars directly when the poor do not? Why
penalize someone for working hard? On a basis of equality, every child is of equal
benefit to the state – even the rich child. If the rich pay taxes, they deserve their share
back just as the poor do. And there is the additional observation that however rich a
married man may be for instance, if his wife is home with the kids and not earning
income, she is as poor as the welfare mother, in terms of personal income and were there
to be a divorce, she may well end up homeless and shafted very fast, unless there is some valuing of her own personal work raising the children.

Yes we can have divorce law to protect the financial vulnerability of those who are caregivers in the home, but we should also protect them before divorce, by recognizing their own work, which in this case is the savings of state funding of daycare for her kids because she is providing care at home. Her sacrifice of salary is at least as noteworthy as that of the welfare mother and often technically it is more because rich women often are highly educated and when they sacrifice income it is considerable personal income they sacrifice. So we should not of course favor them but there is no reason to snub them either. The work of caring for children is equal work whoever is doing it, and however wealthy their spouses are. A temper tantrum is a temper tantrum, potty training is potty training and language development and early literacy are the same, rich or poor. Childbearing is a great leveler of social class and our tax laws should also value child-rearing equally across the classes.

But there are those who for years have told me we could ideally have equal funding for all kids but the state, can’t afford it. So I have been given the excuse that the state simply is too much in debt. But recently that excuse has become invalid. The nation right now has a surplus some say of $7 billion.. It can afford it.

**additional funding for kids**

There are many proposals for universal daycare which are in the billions of additional funding. And some in the PM ‘s department are actually quoting such research so a big ‘investment ‘ in kids may be in the works.

The argument for equal funding for all children has a philosophical appeal. If you have two children you don’t give one a sandwich and make the other starve. If you only have one sandwich you give each half. The principle of equality is a human rights principle because our charter of human rights speaks of equal benefit of the law.

Several provinces have tried on their own to make fine-tuning adjustments to the child benefits system. Ontario in 1997 created a child care tax credit of up to $400 per child under age 7. However the amount was cut back if family income was over $20,000. Again only receipted daycare type expenses were recognized.

Cleland and Krashinsky have proposed an investment of an investment of millions of additional dollars in early childhood saying a dollar spent now is $7 saved down the road. This argument is however valid not just for daycare. If more funding is going to be given to preschoolers, the question is not whether, but where. A fair investment would be in all kids, not just daycare kids.

The basic problem of the CTB could be noted simply in the statements of Human Resources Minister Jane Stewart May 30,2002. She cites that 1.2 million families with 2.1 milion children have benefited since the program was launched in 1998. She does not
happen to mention how much the benefit was – it was in fact very small for many and nothing for some of the poorest. But then she goes on to say that her program is designed to ‘help families move from welfare to work’. That crystallized the bias. She does not see child-rearing itself as valuable work. And what program is it that ignores the value of caring for children? Is it the coal miners’ program or some program unaware of children? No. It is the child tax benefit system, the one of all programs that a person might expect would value taking care of children.

CHAPTER EIGHT – THE PAID CAREER

As women began coping with this dual tug- one to earn money and one to be with the kids, the career world shifted. It shifted because women entered, but they also brought with them their concerns. So the paid labor force tried to adapt by on-site daycares, maternity and parental leaves, family days off, flex-time and perks of paid holidays with kids. But there was a reciprocal effect too – the career choice affected women.

Actress Jodie Foster has observed recently that if actors pay someone to pick up their mail and walk their dog and pick up their kids from school, they are paying someone else to in essence live their lives. She has noted the irony of working harder to earn money so someone else can live your life. Actress Jill Clayburgh has in July 2002 returned to movie –making after a self-imposed 20 year hiatus to raise her children. Born to a wealthy family she was often left with a sitter and she decided when she had her children at age 38 that she wanted to be a bigger part of their lives. She noted that ‘for whatever complicated reasons’ she need to be with her children. “I just am very happy I was there for all the birthdays’.

This sentiment is being acknowledged more and more by women both in paid careers and ones in the home. Though most stop short of condemning mothers who continue to work full-time outside the home when the children are young, there is a growing lobby that it is as good to be in the home.

Pay equity

In an ideal world women would be paid the same as men. There are some who would put conditions on this such as ‘so long as they are doing the same job’ or ‘as long as they are doing jobs of equal value” We then enter the problem of how to establish value of a job in money terms. Is it value to the organization, contribution to profit and the bottom line? Or is it the level of responsibility, in which case those who keep a person alive are worth more than those who put tags on fruit tins. It is hard to establish the ‘value’ of a job.

The pay equity debate has focused on equal pay on the jobsite and yet there are other equity problems not yet addressed. One is the fact that women tend to be in lower paid professions, the ‘caring professions’ of teaching, nursing, and doing menial tasks like
housekeeping and cleaning. Do we pay women less because they do those jobs or do we pay those jobs less because women have always done them?

It is becoming apparent as men now enter those professions more, with male daycare workers and male nurses that gender of the person doing the role is not the problem – it is the gender of the role itself. Caregiving is traditionally female and the fact it is paid less may be a tradition that actually discriminates on a basis analogous to gender. Women usually do it, so it must be worth less. Economist Marilyn Waring has noticed that around the world ‘dung work is women’s work”. I was listening today to a radio program from a third world country explaining about the harvesting of certain spices. The male guide was saying that the harvesting was highly skilled and only women could do it because only women had the ‘patience’. He then admitted it is backbreaking work.

So one hurdle we need to address is the lower pay of caring professions in general, including midwives, homecare nurses, daycamp supervisors, and anyone who works with children. It has come to my attention that even among medical doctors, obstetricians get among the lowest salaries, on a per hour basis. Their fee for overseeing a 9 month pregnancy’s appointments, plus delivery and post-delivery is very low. Is it because they are dealing with women? Society may have to look at these issues.

However there has been much progress. When gender is ignored, a kind of equality creeps in . A Women in Canada 2000 report by Statistics Canada has found that women make up the majority of full-time students in most university departments, 69% of those in education, 69% in health-related fields, 63% in fine and applied arts, 62% in agricultural and biological science, 61% in humanities, 57% in social sciences. Only in math, engineering and physical applied science do men outnumber women still – and the door is as open to them there so these numbers may show simply women’s choices.

We have female astronauts and race car drivers, female vets and soldiers and female pilots of commercial airlines. Many professions ignore gender completely. You get paid for what you do.

However after a few years on the job, men are often higher on the corporate ladder and women earn less. Why? Often it is because women were turning down travel, turning down postings away from the family, turning down working extra hours and weekends because they had caregiving responsibilities at home. They were sacrificing income, because of the caregiving side of life. The employer is often not to blame.

And if pay is based on experience on the job, as it often is, when women take time off for caregiving, they end up technically having had less job experience so their lower salaries are in some ways logical. I am a complete believer in equality of men and women on the paid job but I feel there has to also be a logic to the pay scale from the employer’s point of view. And where there are inequities, they are often due to something completely outside the realm of the employer- the caregiving side of life. It is a vital issue to address – but we should not expect the employer to address it. We should expect society and the state to address it.
If women want to get a foot up on the corporate ladder before they have their first child they are probably wise. A Statistics Canada study May 2, 2002 found that if women postpone childbirth they earn 5% more than women who give birth before age 27. Delaying motherhood created an income advantage especially for women born after 1960. But this delay may have a downside because it gets women closer to the outside edge of age when it is medically safe to give birth.

The pay equity battle can’t be resolved simply by forcing companies to pay men and women equally. It has to also come another way – by having the state value the caregiving time that does not necessarily have anything to do with an employer – but that has great benefit to the state.

The phenomenon of the ‘feminization of poverty’ has been noticed by the Supreme Court which in divorce settlements has tried to address it. However during marriage and with current child-care laws, unpaid caregiving still is not recognized.

**maternity benefits**

The assumption of the women’s movement was that women should not be penalized for getting pregnant or giving birth. Since only women do this, women need special treatment in order to ‘level the playing field’, correcting a historical biological imbalance that tended to let men soar ahead in job promotion and consistent salary while women took financial hits every pregnancy. Fair enough.

The administration of the program however left it clear that the goal was not to value maternity. Pregnancy and giving birth were treated as medical problems, for forgiveable inconveniences, like needing a wheelchair.

In the first place, maternity benefits were called ‘maternity leave’, using the same expression of sailors who are briefly on holiday. There was no admission the next few months would involve some of the hardest most intense work of the woman’s life caring for a newborn. Second, the program is funded under the employment insurance program so technically maternity is a form of being unemployed. The category suggests that care of the young is still not useful ‘work’. The third problem is that because it is funded under Employment Insurance, it has similar criteria of eligibility to any other unemployment benefit - paid labor the previous year.

In 1974 maternity leave was introduced for Canadian women. By the 1980s to qualify you need have put in 300 hours of paid work in the preceding 52 weeks. If you had put in 299 hours you got nothing. If you were already home with a child you got nothing. In 1997 the Employment Insurance Act increased the minimum number of hours required to 700, thereby cutting off thousands of new moms from benefits and continuing the policy of already ignoring new mothers who had not had paid employment. In 2001 the state was able to announce it had made it easier to get maternity leave since it now cut the required hours to 600. One might cynically notice that this ‘improvement’ is like taking
away a chair to sit on and then giving back, out of largesse, a three legged stool. But the principle remained the same. It was not enough that you were female and gave birth. You also had to have had paid income last year, so in essence it was a reward for earning money. To call it a “maternity benefit” and yet to exclude many women who had experienced maternity seemed odd.

It excludes many women who did put in the paid 600 hours. Self-employed women are excluded. So are employers. In addition, those who put in slightly fewer than 600 hours, for instance 500 hours, are also ineligible. Another area of problem is the amount of the benefit. This is not universal an equal-the maternity benefit is a percent of actual income, so the rich get more than the poor do. One can understand the rationale of that—a well-paid woman to keep up with her well-paid male counterpart should be able to keep up. There is a top level of benefit but the formula still means rich women get more than poor women, from the state, when they have a baby.

The plan also excludes all women who did not put in 600 paid hours the preceding year. This includes women who were home getting bedrest during a difficult pregnancy, women who were already home caring for another young child, and women who put in 599 hours of paid work before they had the baby. So there is a discrimination between new mothers. It is in essence the same problem as that of the child care expense deduction. The program sounds like it is for children or maternity, and one would assume all children are equal. But the actual purpose is to reward paid labor. It has little to do with children.

Some have suggested that those who pay into the plan deserve to get the benefit and those who do not pay in do not. Yet women at home are not allowed to pay into the EI plan even if they had the money. The state already apparently considers them ‘unemployed’ or ‘nonemployed’ but certainly not ‘working’. Men usually contribute to the plan most of their adult lives before retirement. Some of their unused contributions must go to pay for maternity benefits for women. A man whose wife was home earning maternity benefits may not feel resentful that some of his EI was going to pay for her. But a man whose EI benefits were going to pay for another man’s wife’s maternity benefits while his contributions were not allowed to fund maternity breaks for his own wife at home might feel the program inequitable. In other words, a universal program is the only one that would seem fair were it really a ‘maternity benefit’.

Clearly though, the requirement to have done 600 paid hours of work the preceding year has implications for those bearing more than one child. Technically to get the benefits a woman would have to return to paid work 600 hours between the births of every child. This means again that a prime focus of the program is not valuing time with a child but is valuing returning to paid work.

Even the courts have recently questioned that aspect of the maternity benefit provision. A Winnipeg judge ruled on April 6, 2001 that a nurse denied maternity benefits in 1998
after the birth of her second child because she had not put in the required minimum number of paid hours, should get the benefits anyway. Roger Salhany ruled “When a mother works part time because of her unpaid parental responsibilities, she should not receive inferior employment insurance coverage” However the laws did not change outside her own case.

There is a further administrative problem for the maternity benefits package in Canada and that is its effect on small business. One of the clauses of the maternity leave legislation of Jan 2001, that extended the paid leave to a full year, was that a small business has to keep open the paid job for a full year so the new mother can return to it. Large corporations have not complained much about this rule because they can easily reassign roles of employees and do it regularly. However small businesses have been very upset at the provision. To hire a one –year replacement and then to have to let her go to rehire the former employee costs businesses a lot in training costs and considerable distress as well. If a business keeps the position vacant, overworked other employees are forced to do the tasks the absent one would have done and may come to resent pregnancy. Catherine Swift of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business suggested July 31, 2002 that the last extension to one year cost small business over $1 billion a year.

All of these problems with the maternity benefit package surfaced again in July 2002 when some federal government officials announced there was talk of extending maternity benefits to two years from the current one year. Though advantages to the child might be longer time for breastfeeding and longer time to bond with the baby, the myriad problems of the maternity benefit at present were again discussed in the media. It would seem to me that a fairer system would be on that did not penalize business at all. If we penalize business, employers will hesitate to hire women of child-bearing age and that surely is the exact opposite of what the feminist move for maternity benefits was about.

Yet here again governments can claim generosity at very low price. The Canadian government in its 2000-2001 budget spent nearly $723 million on maternity benefits. The average weekly pay out in 2001 was $290.05. It is a costly program to run so people are shy to ask for it to be increased. And yet it is not a fair program. In the feminist movement we have asked men ‘examine your privilege’. We must now ask the same of women who get benefits other women do not get.

There is always a segment of society that does not believe maternity benefits are deserved at all. Some feel that if you decide to have a baby you should pay for it completely on your own – the state should not. Those people often do not understand fully how much society depends on each generation of new productive workers in order for society to continue.

But others feel that a maternity benefit may simply encourage women to have babies irresponsibly, especially if it was a benefit given to all women, whether they had paid employment or not. I have never heard a woman suggest that actually but several men
have said it. I suspect that these men are not fully aware of how much intense work it is to take care of a small child, how stressful it is to deal with a screaming toddler, and how no woman I know would ever take on this twenty year commitment simply for a few dollars. The amount of maternity benefit, even if universal, would be far less than minimum wage. Few women would find that an incentive to do the 18 hour day job 7 days a week. But one sees again the attitude that taking care of children is lazy, ‘living off the fat of the land’.

A better system for maternity benefit would focus on maternity itself, and would not link it to unemployment. It should be funded through general revenue, a payroll tax or even as in one US state raising funds cleverly, through a beer tax. It should have one condition only – maternity. It should be equal for all new mothers, regardless of previous income and it should have no conditions of re-employability with all employers. Individual women can make their own arrangements for re-employment, hopefully having the courage to ask for the job back based on merit of their performance there, as in fact men have to do, and not on the basis the employer owes her the job because she was pregnant.

Some have asked whether maternity benefits should apply to adoptive mothers and it would seem that the benefit for giving birth should not. However a benefit for feeding and bonding with newborns surely should. Should it be transferable to men who prefer to be home with the child? I would think so.

**Parental Benefits**

It is now possible in Canada for parents to transfer parental benefits so that if a mother was not home for the full 12 months with the child, she could let her spouse or partner use up some of her allotment. Parental benefits are therefore accessible, sometimes paid and sometimes unpaid, and open to fathers too. The federal government likes to advertise that these benefits are transferable, as if it is therefore gender neutral. That is however not quite accurate. If a woman contributes to employment insurance and has a baby, she can transfer her benefits to her spouse. If however a man contributes to EI, he cannot transfer his ‘share’ of benefits to his at-home spouse who gave birth. The benefits again are tied rather unequally, not just to the woman, but to the woman who earned money. In a fair society they would not be.

Because employment insurance is a program contributed to by employees and matched by employers, it is not too onerous to give to it for an individual employee. But the growing numbers of self-employed often have resisted being part of the plan because the law requires them to contribute both halves- employer and employee. The self-employed are often struggling financially and asking them to contribute to this plan is usually a burden. But because they often do not contribute, they are then considered ineligible for maternity benefits. The same problem in a parallel way applies to employers. The irony then is that both for maternity benefits and parental benefits vast numbers of new parents are unable to qualify. The state can claim how much it spends on the programs as if it is being generous, but really few are benefiting.
Yet the state can claim massive costs for the program to sound like it is generous. For instance in 2000-2001 the parental benefits backage cost the state $471 million.

**Careers and Stress**

In 1995 a Redbook survey found that 40% of women thought feminism had made the career-family conflict worse. Much attention has been paid to the stress of the career woman who has to put in a long day at the office and then comes home to another work load taking care of the family. It is a genuine problem. But it is not the only problem. There is a parallel stress for the woman or man who works from a home office who is trying to juggle taking care of kids while answering the phone and running a business. There is the stress of the woman or man taking care of small children 18 hours a day without respite, who also gets no financial help with the role, and little respect. In some ways the movement to liberate women has at this juncture at least created for them a lose-lose scenario. No option is easy and all involve stress. Some women feel guilty leaving their kids and some feel guilty not earning money. Some feel jealous of the supposed freedom of the career women’s two hour lunch. Others feel jealous of the supposed liberty of the woman who can take the kids to the park at 10 AM.

Women who have felt they should be able to ‘have it all’ have usually discovered this is not possible simultaneously, though it might be possible to have it all eventually over a lifetime. For the time being, women are dealing with high levels of stress as they address the issue. It is no wonder really. We have asked women to be two things at once, to do two roles at once. Something usually has to give.

HRDC has estimated that in 2000 stress-related disorders cost Canadian business $12 billion a year. In Calgary alone it has been estimated that workers suffering from clinical depression cost the local economy $400 million a year. In 2001 Canadian firms spent $3 billion for sick days per year. Extra visits to the doctor to deal with career-family stresses cost Canadians $425 million. The number of days lost due to illness or disability has increased lately. In 1992 the figure was 6.2 days per year and in 2000 it was 6.7.

A report by Brigitte Kitchen for HRDC, entitled “Work and Family” has found that overwork and stress-related disorders cost Canadian business an estimated $12 billion a year. “Women between the ages of 15 and 44 report stress at two times the rate of men”

IMS Health Canada released a study September 2000 finding that of the top 10 reasons people ages 36-54 consult a doctor, the most common reason is hypertension, the second most common is depression, and the fourth most common is anxiety. Of the top 5 reasons, 3 are mental. The National Population Health Survey of Stats Canada Sept 15, 2000 found that of people over the age of 12, 60-70% report taking pain relievers and 2-5% are on anti-depressants or tranquilizers. 3% are taking sleeping pills. A University of Lethbridge study of 700 registered nurses in Alberta Sept 25,2000 by Assistant Prof Karran Thrope found high levels of stress and burnout. The research concluded “A major stress facing these women is how to balance the whole home and work life”
According to statistics for Alberta Health and Wellness May 16, 2001 anxiety, stress and depression accounted for 30% of all doctor visits in the province in 2000. Across Canada visits to the doctor for depression have increased 36% in the past 5 years and the World Health Organizaiton has estimated that by 2020 depression will be the leading cause of disability worldwide. Dr. Robn Reesal in a Calgary Herald column May 16, 2001 raised possible explanations for the depression including the decline of the extended family, the higher incidence of both parents working outside the home, and lack of guidance and structure for children.

We have placed women in a double bind. Though for some segments of the economy to function well, such as health care, we are downloading costs to the homes where we require women to be, yet they often can’t afford to be there. In a paper by l’association feminine d’éducation et d’action sociale March 1998 “Who Will Be Responsible for Providing Care” it was noted that hospital stays have shortened and volunteer caregivers are being asked to provide at home a growing and increasingly complex range of treatments. The extra demands on people, usually women, create financial stress, anxiety, insecurity and exhaustion.

Obviously some suggest that stress for parents is alleviated by having daycare or that ultimately a 24 hour daycare option would suit everybody’s needs and reduce stress. Yet that may not reduce parental loneliness or guilt. Women at home were struggling with the equally conflict-inducing false consolations of the past. There were those who advised women to not complain, to just bask in the privilege of being with their kids, though in poverty. There were those who told women they had a subtle power, an influence on kids that was to be their consolation for the lack of social prestige or funds today or for their pensions. These consolations were ringing true but also false.

Children are poor men’s riches – Thomas Fuller
The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world – W. S. Ross
Of all the rights of women, the greatest is to be a mother – Lin Yutang
No man is poor who has a godly mother – Abraham Lincoln
A hearth is no hearth unless a woman sit by it - Richard Jefferies
The soul is healed by being with children – Fyodor Dostoevsky
I never did a day’s work in my life. It was all fun – Thomas Edison

Women in the home who dared to ask for equal funding for their children that daycare mothers got were sometimes mocked even by other mothers saying they were selfish. Sometimes on radio talk shows a man would phone in saying everybody should fund their own kids and not keep asking for ‘handouts’ from the state. Women were told in literature that if they were poor at least they were not materialistic.

Poverty sits by the cradle and rocks the child to greatness
Poverty is the step-mother of genius – Josh Billings

Women in the home felt as rotten as career women did, but in a different way from the 60s. The malaise of the 60s was theoretically at least that women in the home wanted out but weren’t allowed out. In the 1990s and 2002 women in the home often want
desperately to be with their kids but they feel increasing social and financial pressure by the state to leave this role.

Despite the glowing Mother’s Day cards that once in a while give a mother a token pat on the back, the overriding emotional pressure on mothers in paid or unpaid roles, was demoralizing.

Under this stress, usually linked to financial pressure ultimately, many women were backed into a corner, and responded, predictably with fight or flight. If kids were the problem, then don’t have kids. Others had the kids but some had so much stress that marital conflict, even separation and divorce, certainly spousal abuse, child abuse, alcoholism and substance abuse became avenues of letting off steam. Sometimes women were told, as in the sixties, that if kids were causing them stress, it was healthier to get away from the kids and yet in my own experience, with four preschoolers at once, I found that when I got really frustrated and exhausted what worked better was to get away with the kids. We went on two outings a day. I think it kept us all sane.

The increase in stress of women, or men, trying to balance career and family is predictable given the Social Readjustment Rating Scale developed some years ago by Thomas Holemes and Richard Rahe in the Journal for Psychosomatic Research. In this scale items are ranked for stress. If a person in a given year has over 250 points total, the risk of high stress is so great that physical illness may result. By this scale one could easily look at what happens when one becomes a parent. Gain new family member (35), sleep less than 8 hours a night (25), change in personal habits, diet, exercise (20), change in work hours or conditions (15), pre-menstrual tensions (15), change in social activities (15), change in frequency of family get-togethers (10), change in responsibilities at work (25) working more than 40 hours per week (35), pregnancy (35). Add to that the financial consequences that are common - change in financial state (35), spouse begins or stops paid work (20), And add to that the common changes that come with a baby such as moving to a new residence (15) and one sees that even with ordinary birth, the stress level skyrockets for a parent. Where the social climate insists women now be two places at once, it is no wonder many women are feeling a huge burden of psychological pressure.

Alan Mirabelli of the Vanier Institute has noted that 60% of mothers and fathers feel ‘rushed every day’ and 65% feel more rushed now than 5 years ago. 48% of mothers and 54% of fathers now worry they don’t spend enough time with their children. This data confirms at 1995 study by the University of Quebec in Montreal finding that ¾ of employees raising children under age 12 have trouble balancing roles. 56% of women and 42% of men with at least one child under age 12 at home, reported a high level of psychological distress, twice that of the general population. In single parent families the stress level was nearly 70%. An Angus Reid poll September 11, 1999 found that stress among parents includes irritability, problems in sleep and actual depression. 66% of parents and 60% of all Canaianians polled said they would support measures to do eveyrthing possible to encourage one parent to be home with small children.
Studies are showing that overwork itself is a stressor, even at the paid job. And it has repercussions on the home front. Ross Stolzenberg, sociologist at the U of Chicago has released a study August 18, 2000 finding that if a woman works for pay more than 40 hours a week there are negative effects on her husband’s health.

And oddly enough, if there is stress at home, it is less pleasant to be there so some are more reluctant to return. Arlie Hochschild has observed that there is a vicious circle to the problems of lack of time spent on kids. In her research she has noted that as problems pile up at home, some people put in more time at paid work, possibly because returning home is too painful when there is not enough time to deal with the problems there.

Those who take time away from paid work to handle family concerns, are sometimes penalized in industry. A Statistics Canada report of September 2, 1999 found that the average woman at paid work was absent for 9.2 days each year. The report noted ‘the higher the proportion of women in an industry, the greater the likelihood of absence for illness or disability and personal or family responsibilities”.

Oddly enough, if our goal was to save money on the paid job by having women always there full-time this backfired by loss of productivity for sick days. And if our goal was to save health care dollars by sending people home from hospital early, this has not completely worked either since medical consultations have increased when the home stress level soars. Dr. Linda Duxbury of Carleton Univeristy has found October 28, 2001 that career-family stresses are ‘giving people the sense that they’re out of control’. Her research found that Canadian firms spent $3 billion for sick days per year and resulted in doctor visits costing $425 million to health care, not counting medical tests, prescription drugs and hospital stays.

**health consequences for mothers**

Data about how having a baby affects a parent’s physical and emotional health is not lacking. Usually it is the emotional health that is noted. But there are real physical effects to having given birth. Recent data for instance shows that breast-feeding a baby can actually reduce a woman’s chances of breast cancer.

There is also a ‘window’ for the healthiest time for child-bearing. It has long been known that the older the mother, the higher the risk of birth defects for the child. Modern medicine has made it possible to catch some of these risks early and reverse them but some remain nonetheless. What is interesting is that for men too, there is a window. A recent Columbia University study April 29, 2002 has found that men between 45 and 49 are twice as likely to have children with schizophrenia as dads under age 25.

When women wait to have children because of the career aspirations and then discover the window is very short before there is a risk of birth defects, some couples panic. A study of 782 couples from 7 European countries in July 2002 has found that some couples give up too soon on being able to conceive and rush for high tech assistance. Dr. David Dunson has found that with increased invitro fertilization available, some rush to
beign assisted to conceive, not always aware of the risks. IVF for example carries an increased risk of pregnancy complications, low birth weight or multiple pregnancies. Fertility drugs can in rare cases cause a syndrome leading to blood clots. Infertility is a serious problem affecting one in six couples. However most women who failed to conceive naturally with in the first six months get pregnant in the next six months. Only 16% of women aged 35 to 39 with older partners still had not conceived after two years. But many are afraid to wait till age 40.

The news in the summer of 2002 is full of legal developments regarding sperm donors, artificial insemination, womb rental, surrogate parenting. Not only do many women still want children but they are paying a lot of money and investing a lot of time and inconvenience for medical tests in order to do so. Any liberation movement of women which assumes women have outgrown maternity is out of touch.

stress in care of the elderly

There is no quick solution just because the kids are grown. Often it is about then that seniors need elder care. It is stressful for a senior to have to go into a nursing home and many prefer to be in their own homes. Yet the help they may need to do that creates stress for family members. Dr. Vernon Jubber commenting September 2001 on the lack of funding for in home care of the elderly has noted that the dignity of a senior and the senior’s social circle are often maintained best if the senior can remain in his or her own home. Though a bed in a nursing home costs $36,000 a year, helping keep seniors in lodges with personal attendants only costs $11,000. Jubber has said ‘If we just had a little more support we wouldn’t have to go to long-term care’ Sadly though, the state gives little support for the options that are outside full institutional care.

CHAPTER 9 – IN THE NATION’S INTEREST – A CARING SOCIETY

Sociologists are noticing that a health society requires not only workers who earn cash and pay tax, but well-balanced people emotionally and that having someone listen to you is crucial to the functioning of the nation. The ‘ethic of care’ has been cited as a new focus. And this ethic which aims at the mental health of all people, notes that caregiving does not end when a child grows up. At several points in our lives, each of us requires care – when we are young, when we are, sick, when we are elderly, when we are dying, and some of us when are handicapped. The identities of those needing care change but there will always be a sizeable group in society needing such care. Who provides it? Traditionally women and in fact still mostly women.

A study by the International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry in February 2002 revealed that unpaid caregivers often suffer depression and burnout but many also feel very much useful in life by the sacrifices they make. Health Canada has estimated in a study of caregivers of the elderly, that the average age of the person getting care is 84 but the average age of the caregiver is 64. 2.1 million Canadians are already caring for older
relatives in their own or a senior’s home in the year 2000. And sixty to 75% of such care is provided by women.

Professor Joan Tronto in the US has noted that no person is fully autonomous at all points in life but that being dependent is not necessarily permanent. She prefers to say that people are interdependent. Ironically the unpaid care provider is depended on by the one receiving care, but may be depending on the income of another. Tronto says the terms matter. “Political theorists emphasize dependence as the character-destroying condition. If women in the home are seen as dependent, they are seen also as inferior.”

Marjorie DeVault calls the buying cooking, and serving of food ‘sociability work’ that keeps people nourished not only physically but emotionally. Such work reinforces relations of intimacy and connection. William Doherty of the U of Minnesota in “Take Back Your Kids’ has suggested that lack of attention to the family dinner for instance has led to lack of attention to the family’s inner life. Psychologist Blake Bowden of Cincinnati found in a 1997 US study that teens aged 12 to 18 who ate an average of 5 meals each week with an adult relative had less depression than those who ate 3 meals or less with an adult. Those sharing fewer meals with adults were more likely to take drugs and to be pessimistic about the future.

Mona Harrington has suggested that caregiving work is not just for those who can’t care for themselves- the sick, young, handicapped. She notes that even high-schoolers need care because they need someone to listen to them. “They need the kind of guidance that can take a parent hours to think through carefully before saying a word.” She says adults should take time to read to children and talk to them daily. When parents no longer have time to deal with children’s needs, the state is being asked to step in and this solution is flawed. “The present structure of government services including the schools was never meant to and cannot..make up for the child care that private families no longer provide”. Harrington questions the solution of ‘low cost high quality daycare’ saying that the cost of high quality daycare is also high.

Robin West in the US says a society that recognizes caregiving is a just society. She also says the caregiver must be cared for also, so he or she does not become exhausted.

Home care of the elderly is a rarely studied topic academically. Mary Perry Executive Director of VON Calgary as informed me that institutional care is still the main focus of legislators. Often when budget cuts are made, it is home care that is cut. Rejean Hebert of the Institute of Aging of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research has observed August 2, 2002 that the portion of the budget dedicated to home care in each province varies between only 2 and 6 %. Home care is stil female dominated

What caregivers have in common, paid or unpaid, is that they are treated as second class. Carol Baines in 1991 ‘Women’s Caring’ has noted” Whether caring for her own children full or part-time or looking arfer someone else’s child, each woman is likely to experience the undervaluing of an important part of her life”
birth rate drop

A UN report of November 6, 2001 found that world population could hit 10.9 billion by the year 2050. The UN Population Fund recommends reducing the rise. The number of babies born in the third world continues to outstrip means to feed them. Women in less developed countries have a birth rate of 3.6. According to the 2001 World Population Data Sheet, 83 million people are added to global population each year (births minus deaths). The 1984 figures of birth rate showed the trend already with Africa at 4, Latin America at 4.2, Asia at 4.2. China has already addressed this crisis by advocating a one child per family policy. The goal is to keep birth rates down.

But, only one million of the yearly births are in industrialized nations. The birth rate in the industrialized world is falling. Right now it averages 1.6, below replacement level of 2.1. The birth rates in 2001 were for Spain 1.07, France 1.26, Germany, 1.3, Italy 1.2. The birth rate in Japan is 1.34. Though Malthus, Joseph Townsend, Henry Kendall said we must reduce global population which is increasing by 90 million per year, there are others such as Ben Watenberg, David Toolan, David Osterfield who note an irony to this argument.

Canada’s birth rate is dropping. It has gone from 3.0 in 1945, to 3.8 in 1955, to above two to 1.8 in 1966, 1.87 in 1974, 1.50 in 1984 to 1.47 in 1986 and 1.45 in 1988., 1.7 in 1989 and 1.5 in 2002.

A 1990 report by the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families of the US Bureau of the Census surveyed many nations and projected population growth in each. For the year 2010, at present growth rates, it was determined that children ages 0 to 14 years would be 14.9% of the population of Germany, 15.9% of the population in Sweden, 16.4% of the population of Italy, 16.6% of the US and Canadian populations, 17.8% of the population in Japan, 18.4% of the population of the US – but 27.6% of the population in Asia, 28.3% of the population in Latin America, 28.6% of the population in India. It is the rich who are not having babies. The poor continue to have them.

What does this mean? It means that there is a vast difference between the two worlds. Well-educated women who hear of global overpopulation may well decide to limit their own child-bearing, but they are doing so in the very countries that need babies.

For the present it means that there are fewer children using our preschools and schools. The Canadian census released July 15, 2002 revealed that the number of preschoolers, aged 0 to 4 is on the decline – 11% since the last census. This drop has surprised daycare activists who now must adjust their argument that the need for daycare is increasing. However it also has implications for any activists for children’s rights. Those who ask for universal funding for children, who have in the past been told the cost is prohibitive at least now can argue that the cost is now less than it was first thought it would be.

The irony of an obstetrician’s office is startling – in one room a woman is told she is pregnant and she is suicidally depressed by the news. In the next room another woman is
told the same news and she breaks out the champagne. Women do not agree on whether
having children is their particular goal or not, but to admit that is itself to change the tone
of second-wave feminism. In the second wave children were often seen as the enemy,
pregnancy was a sign of failure, progress in liberation was equated with decline in
pregnancy rates and ‘risk’ of pregnancy was spoken of in the hushed tones of ‘risk’ of
cancer. To admit some women want children is part of the third wave of feminism. But
the state is not assisting most of these women.

Sadly the movement to value the right to have children as well as the right not to, was
misinterpreted. It got linked with the anti-abortion movement and that debate clouded the
issue. Take for instance the expression ‘pro-choice’ This expression meant the favoring
of a woman’s right to choose abortion or not. Yet the movement against abortion is also
‘pro-choice’ being that it favors the baby having a choice, an option to live. Both groups
are pro-choice.

Those against easy abortion labeled themselves ‘prolife’, suggesting that the other group
was ‘anti-life’. Yet the movement for abortion argues strongly that the emotional well-
being and the life of the young woman are their chief concern – they are very much pro-
her life. Breaking women into camps is an unfortunate way to hold back a movement of
respect for women’s roles, paid or unpaid, mothers or not.

What has happened frequently in the industrialized world is that abortion has become
legalized and funded, as it should be, but costs of continuing the pregnancy, have and care
for the child are not funded in a parallel way. So for many women finding themselves
pregnant, the choice is not about abortion, it is about poverty.

More couples are choosing to have no children. If one tallies families with only two
people in 1951 that number was 31% of the population only but in 1991 it was nearly
half- or 42.6%. Admittedly this figure is partly because senior couples whose children are
no longer with them are living longer, and single-parent families with one child also are
on the increase, but many are also couples who call themselves childless or more
popularly now “child free”

There are ethical questions involved and practical ones. Why are women choosing to
have fewer babies? With birth control advances women and men are claiming the right
to be sexually active without having a child. Some of the decline in birth rate is due to
this newfound freedom and to genuine desire not to have children. Some women are
establishing careers instead of or just well before having children. But for many the
problem is simpler, infertility or lack of cash. Surveys show people want more children
than they are having. Statscan’s 1995 social survey found that the average couple wants
2.4 children (comfortably above the replacement number of 2.1) but they actually at the
time were only having 1.5 children. Sylvia Anne Hewlett in April 2002 has studied many
professional career women’s feelings about children and found that large numbers of
them would have preferred to have children and many still would like them. The book is
‘Creating a Life: Professional Woman and the Quest for Children”
Delaying having a baby has its time pressures – there is a window past which it is unwise to go. David Dunson of the US National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences has released a study May 2002 finding that female fertility starts to decline in the late 20s but there is no decline in male fertility before age 35. Women under age 27 have a 50% chance of conceiving during a given menstrual cycle, but for women aged 27-34 the rate is 40% and for women over 35 the rate is 30%.

By Statistics Canada’s 2000 study “Women in Canada” birth rates for women in their thirties are up. In 1981 there were 19 births per woman aged 35-39 but in 1997 that number had more than doubled to 33. Statistics Canada released a study Nov 15, 2001 finding that the average age of a bride in 1998 is now 31.3 years, up from 28.6 ten years previous. A Stats Canada report of December 10,2001 found that the average age of first-time mothers is correspondingly rising. For women ages 35 and older fertility rates are up from 14% of new moms to 32% of new moms. The age of dads is also increasing. On 1983 men in their thirties fathered 32% of first babies of women but by 1999 that percent had risen to 51%.

Knowing that the risk of birth defects increases with age of mother, some women panic and want medical science to intervene. A researcher at McGill University has begun work to develop a birth-control pill to delay menopause so women could have babies later. What we have not yet addressed though is the fact that a 60 year old parent of a teenager may have a lack of energy to deal with the hurdles of the role.

Family size declined over the past several decades for many reasons. As families moved from rural to urban areas there was less need for a lot of family members to work the land. Housing cost more in the city and it was actually better to have fewer not more children. Children did not aid with expenses by helping in production and the earning of money. Children in urban settings generally are an expense mostly, give or take the odd paper route. Statistics Canada Historical Statistics and the Census of Canada have noted that from 1921 to 1997 the size of the average family went from 4.3 to 3.06. It has gone down steadily, 3.7 in 1951, 3.1 in 1991, 3.06 in 1997. That means that parents were having 1.06 children on the average over a lifetime. In 1950 20% of Canadian children lived with at least 5 brothers or sisters. By 1991 that number was 1% according to the Canada Year Book 1998 for Stats Canada.

Is this a concern demographically? If people in each family have fewer siblings they also have a smaller social support system as they grow up and throughout life. It does mean you have fewer birthday gifts to buy but it also means you get fewer. It means that when you have a crisis and need a new roof, you have fewer family members to rush in and help. When there is illness in the family it means there are fewer around to offer unpaid informal care, fewer relatives to tend the young. Who will pitch in in crisis then? The state may be asked to shoulder more of these costs – home care of the sick, the handicapped, the elderly.

the national impact on the tax base
For the future, the low birth rate here means there will be fewer in the paid workforce in 30 years, fewer paying taxes and supporting social programs, so there will be a crisis in funding of health care and pension plans, and in maintaining the tax base. One might guess that the dip is only temporary. The baby boomers were born in about 1945-50. They tended to have their own children about 25-30 years later, meaning in 1970-80. The children of the children of the boomers for the most part still have not had their children, since the average age of first giving birth for women is nearing 30. That means we can expect a bit of a baby boom from 2002-2012. But it will probably register as a little peak, not a permanent surge.

In other words a declining birth rate may create a huge bill in the formal economy. Family provides an emotional support and the cost of mental health care may increase if informal care is not available. Family provides culture and language, a sense of who you are, where you are from, your traditions. Grandparents and extended family can offer a stability to children so that if a divorce or illness happens a child’s world can still be fairly stable because of the extended family’s continued baking the child in love. International covenants Canada has signed support the right of each child to be raised in the language and culture of the parents. This becomes more and more difficult when the language and culture have very few role models around.

**greying population**

The greying population means there will also be a crisis with the national pension plan. Canada in 2002 has 31.3 million people of whom slightly over 2 million are children under age 6 (7.1% of population) By Statistics Canada figures Feb 10, 2002 (Calgary Herald) there are now 2.3 people under 20 for every person over 65 while in 1966 for every senior over 65 there were 5.5 people under 20. By 2030 seniors are expected to be 25% of the population.

Because people are getting better medical care and living longer, it means the portrait of the population is shifting to more seniors. In 1998 there were 3.7 million seniors in Canada but by 2016 there are projected to be 5.9 million (becoming 15.9% of the entire population) In May 2002 Health Canada estimated that the population of seniors in this country, at 3.7 million in 1998 will be 5.9 million in 2016 (making it not 12.3% but 15.9% of the population)

The drop in birth rate in the western world means that we may eventually lack skilled workers and our productivity will drop. Life expectancy according to Women in Canada by Stats Canada 2000 noted that in 1921 life expectancy for men was 58.8 and for women it was 60.6. By 1997 life expectancy for men was 75.8 and for women 81.4. This is a good thing for seniors. But it also means our national pension plan will be severely challenged.
addressing birth rate drop

Politicians, aware of the problem of a ‘birth dearth’ in the western world have struggled to address the issue. Should they just bring in a lot of new taxpayers fast by easing immigration rules? That is a quick-fix but immigrants also age and die. Should the state force people to delay retirement? Yet the elderly often are not well and many need to retire. Should they raise pension premiums? You can’t tax employers and employees out of sight for pensions. Ultimately we have to return to the one solution that keeps on giving each generation. Someone has to have children. This however puts having children in a new light. It is of social benefit. It is essential for society to go on. And given that, there is strong reason to argue for a universal system of tax support for child-bearing and child-rearing. Since each child is of equal value demographically to help the economy also, this benefit should flow with the child. It should be equal for every child, wherever.

Most western nations are struggling with the same problem. Some have tried birth grants and these tend to work. Some, like Norway have assisted all parenting styles, daycare or not. Others however have experimented extending maternity leave, but only to women in paid labor. Some like Quebec and British Columbia have experimented with universal, free or low-cost daycare in case the reason women weren’t having children is because they had no good substitute care arrangement only to women in paid labor. These experiments have had more mixed results, possibly because they do not assist all women with children.

The US has tried tax credits. Congressman Frank Wolf introduced the Family Friendly Tax Relief Act of 1998 (H.R. 3583) providing an additional $500 per child tax credit for children under age 5. A 1977 act already provided a $500 tax credit for children under age 17, and this credit is for families who do not claim dependent care tax credit. Though much of the US focus has been on daycare, including President Clinton’s 1998 $21.7 billion child care plan, the slight improvement in treatment of children universally may have had an effect. The birth rate in the US announced Feb 13, 2002 by the National Centre for Health Statistics has noted is now at 2.13, more than at any time in the past 30 years. Stephanie Venture of the NCHS has stated that parents may have increased births due to a sense of financial security.

For a century Canada’s fertility rate was higher than that of the US but in 1999 Canada’s rate was 1.52 while American’s had gone up to 2.08. US women aged 20-24 have a birth rate 75% higher than that of Canadian women. For the first time in decades, the US is having enough children to meet its replacement rate target.

Quebec’s daycare plan has not succeeded in raising the birth rate in that province. It appears that many women do not decide on how many children to have based on availability of daycare.

What would it take to reverse the declining birth rate if we decided we should? A recent program in Ontario and Nova Scotia (June 2001) involved governments working with medical doctors to give an attractive maternity benefits package. Even self-employed women qualified and the women did not even have to pay premiums to get the benefit.
The result was that though 170 women were projected to want to participate, 350 actually did, resulting in a mini baby boom. This program revealed that when money is in place to allow it, more women have babies.

CHAPTER 10- A REVOLUTION IN A WORD – ‘WORK’

The real issue is what ‘work’ is. If work is only the earning of money, then statistics correctly ignore ignore all the unpaid responsibilities women (and men) take on. But those statistics tend to be inaccurate. The term ‘work’ continues to used in the restricted sense, male-biased. Even the Women’s Bureau of the US in 1990 equated ‘working mothers’ as those who earn money. Newsweek in 1990 contrasted two categories of mothers, those who ‘stay home’ and those who ‘work’ There are many ironies there.

The term ‘working mother’ is misleading. A working engineer is currently doing engineering. A working actor currently has an acting job. A working mother by that logic is one whose chief responsibility is mothering – i.e. a mother in the home. In that respect a ‘working mother’ would be the direct opposite of what the state considers it. A button was created several years ago “Every mother is a working mother” The button dares challenge the term.

If we define ‘work’ as that which produces goods, services and income we should still include unpaid work. The one who takes care of the baby while someone earns money is helping the earner earn by handling some of the responsibilities he has. The one who raises future workers is in creating the paid workforce itself.

The term ‘work’ has so many meanings that to restrict it to the earning of cash seems inappropriate nowadays. Colloquially we speak of getting a nail out of a hammer as a lot of ‘work’ meaning effort. We ‘work’ the land. Whether or not the task is paid does not make it easier to lift crates or toilet-train a child. In the ultimate irony we consider a woman in labor, out of the labor force. Maybe it is time we changed our terms. We should at least speak of ‘paid labor’ and ‘unpaid labor’. We should at least speak of people in the ‘paid labor force’ not just the ‘labor force’. We should refer to women with paid income, not women who ‘work’, and women who ‘work in the home’ not women who ‘stay home’. As we move into the twenty-first century we are noticing the diversity of human activity that all contributes to the whole. Some of the work is paid, but much is not.

Many are now saying the definition of ‘work’ is too narrow in tax law. A PhD candidate from the U of Michigan interviewed on CBC Radio Sept 6, 2000 has suggested that work has not just mental and physical components but also emotional ones and he suggests a term ‘emotional labor’. He cites that people who have to deal regularly with rude customers or who have to for long periods of time suppress anger or fake happiness are under additional stress and that should be considered part of the job. He notes that emotional labor takes its toll and employers have to allow some time away from the task each day for employees. The same could be said of parenting. The physical labor is
undeniable as parents hoist around small children and run around picking up after them or saving them from falls. The emotional labor however has rarely been recognized.

Why is unpaid caregiving labor simply ignored so often in economic tales? Many have suggested it is because women did it and women were ignored. Some have suggested that it is because the work does not involve an exchange of cash and economic planners tend to have tunnel vision and only watch cash flow. Some have suggested that the work is not noticed because it is hard to see – it is ‘invisible’ because it is done in private homes not big offices, it does not advertise, it does not appear on the stock market, and its value is noted mostly when it is not done. If the dishes are not done or the laundry builds up, people notice it is crucial work. If the child is lacking supervision, legal authorities go ballistic and yet if the child is supervised, nobody values this work.

A fourth reason for ignoring caregiving however may be simply naivete. I often think of it like a little child falling asleep in the back seat of the car and just trusting that when she wakes up dad will have driven them home safely. It is a beautiful thing to trust, but it ignores the hours of effort to drive the family home. When little children go to grandma’s house and eat cookies there, they never think of the expense of butter or oatmeal that grandma incurred. Cookies at grandma’s just appear.

In the same way we as a nation are still little children, expecting some fairy godmother, just provide a whole bunch of good things for us, free, out of the goodness of their hearts. And this is the unpaid labor sector. Men who expect their socks to magically appear every few days laundered in the dresser have made tax laws that assume women every day will take care of the sick and the young, for free. Hospitals send sick people home just assuming some such Standard Loving Relative will pick up the slack. Schools send kids home early when the pipes freeze, teachers go on strike and there is some naive assumption that all will still be well because there is an adult at home. But there may not be. We have to as a nation grow up. We have to recognize that grandma also pays grocery bills, that if someone is there to help the new mother, that person is sacrificing income somewhere else, that we can no longer naively assume the volunteer sector is as Isabella Bakker said a well that will never run dry.

The term ‘working mother’ is often used in government documents and has become a real problem for the women’s movement. You will still hear some homemakers say shyly “I don’t work’ or some men saying that since they got married and had the five children the wife has not worked a day in her life. But that is becoming less common. More and more people are using expressions of respect for the care sector. And true to form, it is big business that has noticed this shift and responded to it in advertising. State Farm Insurance ran an ad in spring 2002 showing a woman helping put a shoe on a child . The caption was “We never met a mom who wasn’t working’ Ziploc bags is running a TV ad July 2002 with the slogan “I like everything that makes my job easier so I can spend time with my kids” The times they are a changing. If only the government would notice.

need for child care
The reason the term ‘working mother’ matters so much is that statistics and government spending are often based on it.

Some argue that there is a growing need to fund daycare because more women “work”. However even for paid work, there is an inherent inaccuracy to the claim. Many mothers earn money but do not need daycare to do it. Many mothers earn only a small amount of money per year, even just $20 doing one free-lance article and are mostly at home with the children, but are categorized along with other ‘working mothers’ as if they are full-time employees and therefore needing daycare.

Sometimes daycare lobbyists ask for more funding because of the number of preschoolers in the country compared to the number of ‘daycare spaces’. By this logic there should be a daycare space for every child and if there is not, the state is negligent. Yet by that logic there should be a hospital bed for every citizen in Canada every day. One should not assume that we need daycare for every child Many parents do not want it. Daycare lobbyists sometimes counter saying there should be ‘universal access’ to daycare. They argue that if only daycare users should get funding but if everybody has the chance to be a daycare user, that makes it equal. That however is conditional equality. It is like Henry Ford’s old joke “You can have the Model T in any color so long as it is black”

Sometimes the ‘need for daycare’ is equated with high numbers of people using daycare in a given area, or long waiting lists for some daycares. Admittedly this does seem to be intense demand In 1971 there were 17,391 kids in daycare in the country but by 1997 there were over 450,000. And yet one must look at the situation. Only daycare is funded by the state. Since other care arrangements are not funded, of course there is a line-up for the funded option. Given the tax disincentives for mothers to be home and the tax incentives for mothers to have paid employment, there is not at all a level playing field out there for parents. If there were we don’t know for sure how many would really line up for daycare. Assuming present practice reflects preference is a leap. It is like assuming that if strawberry ice cream is free and chocolate costs $1.00 that the line up in front of the strawberry flavor is because people like strawberry. It is a much fairer indication of what people want if there are tax breaks equally for all child-rearing options.

Another indicator given for the need of daycare is the high rate of women and children in poverty. And yet there are several ways to alleviate poverty. One is to have the mother out in the paid labor force with the state helping pay for childcare. That is a good option but only one of many. Another is for the state to help with costs of raising the child in the home or with a relative. Women can gain financial autonomy two ways – one by leaving the home and having their own paid job, but there is another – by getting financial recognition for the job they are already doing in the home. There is no ‘need’ for daycare. There is a need for financial help raising children.

A neighbor of ours when I was little had a four year old son who kept running over to our house calling out “I need a cookie” The daycare lobby is doing the same. The boy did not need a cookie per se. He needed food. Children do not need daycare per se. But they do need financial support. Some will use it for daycare; some won’t.
State-funded daycare is not always well used. In 1994 nearly 4/5 of kids not in parental care were not in daycare either but with friends or relatives. The 1998 study “You Bet I Care” on page 163 revealed that 53.7% of daycares actually have vacancies.

In 2001 there is a 60% vacancy rate in daycares in BC and in 2002 only 25% of Quebec kids are using the state run daycare. The choice of child care setting also shifts depending on age of child, with a surge in use of daycare centers for kids ages 3-6 years, followed by a decline of use of that setting to nearly half, for kids aged 6-12 years. Use of dayhomes is less common than daycares for all age levels but it also peaks at aged 2-6 years and then drops to less than a third of that peak for kids aged 6-12. It seems then that parents avoid use of childcare settings daycare centre or dayhome for children under age 3 or over age 6, if there are other options.

A category of care often ignored is care by relatives. In many European and eastern nations care by the grandma or aunts was a given. The extended family is often not nearby in North America but that does not mean it is never there. What if it is nearby? Do we allow it to provide such care, and more important do we support and fund such care? The answer is no. Dr. Zinsser in “Future of Children: Who Relies on Relative Care?” noted in the US in 2001 that the proportion of families relying on care by relatives is a steady proportion and intergenerational ties remain intact in those arrangements. A 1997 US survey found that if a mother had paid employment, relatives provided care of 27% of children under age 3. Many surveyed believed a maternal grandmother was the ideal caregiver in place of the parent. In 1996 of all children aged 9-14, 57% fell into the category of latch-key kids.

Sometimes statistics just ignore a category. Some government documents studying child ‘care’ chart children in for-profit centers and those in not-for-profit centers, ignoring the millions of children not in any centers. Sometimes the category for ‘licensed’ care is charted against the category of ‘unlicensed care’ The fact that relatives and parents are not licensed should not mean the qualify of their care is less, but there may be that suggestion.

What people do presently does not reflect what they would do if the options were different. If parental, granny, neighbor and daycare are all funded equally, we do not know what people who use. We do know that in places where only daycare is funded, there has been an increase in use of daycare, but that does not prove preference for daycare – only attraction of its financial support. To know what people would choose given equal weighting one would either have to give equal funding and observe behavior or one would have to ask them by polls for preference.

The need for financial support for parenting is common in all western industrialized nations, and probably in all nations. The ‘need’ for daycare is a questionable claim. The more logical response is ‘daycare yes, but not necessarily daycare’. The equal funding
option for all children in or out of daycare is being proposed by the Action Democratique Party in Quebec which won 3 by-elections in 2002. In Europe voucher systems in Austria are proving enormously successful.

**cost of working**

Costs of daycare are subsidized by the state, not to benefit the child, I am told, but to defray the parent’s ‘costs of working’. In a reply to my UN complaint the Canadian government suggested that a woman working outside the home has transportation and clothing and child care needs that the woman at home does not have. Yet the woman who transports small children around twice a day to museums, stores, play groups and parks has to transport 2,3 and 4 people several times a day. Erma Bombeck used to write that a mother in the US delivers her baby once cervically and then for the next 15 years by car. Dodge Caravan has run an ad in the spring of 2002 with a young mother buying ice cream for her child, car in background, with the slogan “What idiot coined the phrase stay-at-home mom?”

Women in paid labor need ‘working’ wardrobes but for some these are uniforms supplied by the employer. It should not be assumed that a mother in the home merits no functional clothing. These assumptions about women in the home as persons insult the dignity of women.

The biggest cost of ‘working’ however is usually omitted in charts that assume only the woman with income has such costs. The biggest ‘cost’ of the lifestyle of taking care of one’s children at home is lost salary. The cost of the career choice is biggest for the one who sacrifices income for a year or more. To have sympathy for the woman who earns money is laudable, since admittedly it does cost money to buy clothes and get to and from paid work. But all mothers incur costs, and the ones who are poorest are the ones getting the least help for the ‘costs’ of their option.

The state argues that subsidizing the costs of ‘working’ helps women enter the paid labor force and provides them an ‘incentive’ to be there. Now these are different things. If we want women and men to be treated equally, we iron out some of the advantages men have over women so that women enter the ‘level playing field’. Yet this assumption that only women have child-rearing expenses is itself gender bias. Surely in a fair society we should give either parent this deduction since it takes two genders to make a child.

The amount of subsidy the state gives for daycare expenses is also a problem. To be equal with men, women could have argued for men to get less but women stridently asked to not harm men. Equality was to have women get more, to move up to be equal with men rather than to have men move down to be equal with women. In the same way, the women’s movement should not degrade other women.

Yet by the present help for ‘working mothers’ it risks doing so. If a woman’s income is to be attractive enough for her to continue at the paid job, she has to end up with some take-home pay. Her child care expenses should not eat up all her salary. But this means also
that the expense of childcare has to be kept low, and the wages of child care workers have to be kept low. Most child care workers are women and the state has created its own vested interest in ensuring these women do not get much pay. A better solution may well be to have state funding that flows with the child, unrelated to the woman’s income.

**cost of child care**

There are several ways to look at the ‘cost’ of childcare. There is the cost to the family. This is the cheque written to the nanny or daycare provider and usually the cost is subsidized in many ways by the state. What is usually ignored is the high cost of the care of children in nondaycare arrangements when the caregiver earns nothing (salary sacrifice) and then on top of that has to provide toys and food.

For one thing, the cost of operating a daycare or dayhome depends a lot on the operator. Do you want to have fancy toys or ordinary ones, a van for outings or a wagon, a playground with cement floor or an acre-wide field with trees? The daycare operator has a lot of leeway in deciding how much to pay staff, how large a square footage to provide and there are minimal restrictions by the state but no maximums. Therefore a daycare operator can spend as little as possible to just pass inspection or a lot more. Drs Cleveland and Krashinsky in their “The Costs and Benefits of Good Child Care” estimated that daycare for a 2-5 year old full-time (and by that they mean 10 hours a day) would cost $8,000 per child. The salary assumed for one daycare worker monitoring 8 children is 36,000. (Costs of care of the handicapped are more but are not factored in). The economists estimate it would cost the state at that rate about 5.3 billion dollars to provide a universal daycare program. Were one and two year olds also given daycare, the costs would increase 2.1 billion to a total of 7.4 bilion dollars for care of children aged 1-6 (Laurel Rothman and Martha Friendly, Child Care Research and Resoucre Centre)

BC’s child care program estimates a cost per space (by this they mean child) of $5200. It is estimated that for all children to have univeral daycare in BC the cost would be $3.38 billion. Some estimate that this program throughout Canada would cost $26 billion. The Quebec daycare program amounts to about $6500 per daycare space for 1-12 year olds. The cost of daycare for every child in the country would be huge. But if we assume that money is available, is there a fairer way to invest it in kids? If there are 3 million children and there is $26 billion available, that means $8666 per child.

Just as it is unfair to extrapolate birth rate problems from the overpopulated third world to the underpopulated industrial world, it is unfair but common to assume women’s issues are the same. In some third world countries women were until recently not permitted to work outside the home. This was used as evidence of continued oppression of women in the western world. However the third world itself has shifted. In Turkey effective Jan 2, 2002 a 1926 code designating the man as the head of the family was changed to divide property and assets equally. Wives will no longer have to get their husband’s permission to
get paid jobs. Reports in 2002 from Afghanistan also reveal that women there are now able to walk around without the head to toe burks previously required and are permitted to return to paid professions and get an education. But as educated western women get outraged that anyone would forbid a woman to work outside the home, they are only lately starting to realize the reverse problem here – women being forced to work outside the home and not valued for their work in the home. Neither is fair.

-business of daycare

The term ‘daycare’ has been questioned for its accuracy. If it applies to care of children during the day, then all children are automatically in daycare, and for that matter nightlife. In the US the term ‘daycare’ has been used recently to refer to the day housing of medical outpatients, similar to day surgery terminology or for adult mental patients for whom supervision is provided during the day. Thus the term ‘daycare’ is misleading.

Some has suggested the term ‘childcare’ possibly because it limits the scope of the term at least to children. However the expression ‘child care’ carries with it also the problem of logically applying by definition to care of a child, wherever whenever yet the state uses it to mean only receipted institutional care or receipted care by nonrelatives to the child. Keeping the general term though, inaccurate as it is, makes the state sound like it is being universal in its benefits. If it funds’ child care’ many may think it is funding care of all children, though it is not. It would be more accurate to say the state is funding ‘paid child care’ but that may be less politically appealing to the politicians. One cynical mother has even suggested that the state should admit it does not fund care-giving but ‘care-selling’

Daycare operation is a business. Money changes hands, salaries are paid and in many cases the operator of one daycare operates several in a chain. There is nothing wrong in a free country with offering your services and trying to make a profit. However to claim you are an essential public service is not the same. Some lobbyists for daycare seem to want the public to make that leap.

Statistics Canada has noted that child care providers take in $1.8 billion dollars making a profit of 96 million dollars a year.

Because daycare is a business it has a built-in administrative structure, often including managers who are free to attend conferences. Because users of daycare are usually parents with salaries they tend to have income enabling them to travel, attend conferences and support lobby groups. When governments hold consultations about children they look to organizations dealing with children and tend then to select to consult daycare users and managers. There is nothing wrong with that but it does mean that those who do not use daycare suffer a disadvantage

Parents in the home are not listed in business directories. So the state often forgets they exist. Provincial and federal governments have from time to time held round-tables and forums on children. The general public is invited to send in letters. I telephoned the
Alberta government to ask if I could come to the sessions and was told that they were closed door sessions for ‘stakeholders’ only and that they had already been held. Being ‘out of the loop’ is common for parents who do not use daycare.

When I made my complaint at the United Nations in 1997, the Working Group’s reply noted a lack of women in decision-making. The lack of consultation of women in general is problematic in government, but in our traditional area of expertise, caregiving, it is particularly troublesome. The lack of consultation of those who take care of children in the setting of laws that will specifically affect them risks being a violation of democracy.

Daycare is not inherently evil. However corporations are not blind to benefits of having the state not themselves fund daycare for their employees. IBM in the year 2000 spent between 4 and 5 million for child-care in Toronto. But that is not the full cost of the care. The state helps set up such facilities and funds them in an ongoing way.

The cost of daycare per child in 2001 is about $2515 per year ($3110 in Ontario) The cost of dayhome care per year is less, at about $1306. Child care fees in 1998 were typically $15 a day ($2 an hour) Fees per month for infants ranged from $322-546 a month which totals $3864 - $6552 per year. Subsidies from the province can be in Sask $225 a month totaling $2700 a year ABC Edmonton claims in 2001 that it costs $6800 per year to handle a special-needs child with developmental delays.

daycare worker salaries

We know that there is a high staff turnover in daycares. This turnover places small children at risk because it denies them the stability of the same predictable person’s presence for 3 formative years. So why are daycare workers leaving? One main reason is salary. The salary of a daycare worker in 2000, according to Statistics Canada was only $20,600 while average salary for other professions was $34,000. A 1998 study “Women’s Support, Women’s Work” found that the average wage of a warehouse worker is 58% higher than that of a daycare workers. Daycare workers in Quebec have been on strike in 1999 and in 2002 to protest low salaries. The average salary varies across the country. It was approximately $11.41 per hour in Montreal in 1999, up from $9.60 an hour in 1993, totaling $19,000 per year. In 1998 Alberta workers got $16,954 a year while those in NWT got $27,384. The salary of a daycare worker in 2000 was $26,000 while average salary across the nation for paid workers was $34,000. In 1996 in Canada there were a quarter of a million daycare workers.

The government expenditure on daycare keeps creeping up. NS Dept of Community services allocates $7.6 million just to improve child care in that province. In 1998 the Ontario government announced a $1100 childcare supplement per child under age 7, but only if that child was in daycare. In Alberta the state subsidizes daycare fees for some kids at $350 a month per child.
Daycare operators may or may not operate at a profit, depending on how they define their role. Governments categorize ‘profit’ and ‘nonprofit’ and ‘not for profit’ groupings.

The cost of child care has been adjusted in Quebec so that $5 a day care is available. This solves the immediate problem a parent may have of how to afford childcare but it poses serious other problems. First the rich pay the same rate as the poor so that their increased ability to pay is sometimes felt as unfair. Second the quality of the care can be questioned given that the focus is on saving money.

In Canada in 2002 people paid $3.5 billion for child care services in one year. 13% of households had daycare expenses they could deduct. The average decution the household could deduct though was $2428 for the year 1999, suggesting that a lot of people do not use full-time daycare.

**other business spinoffs**

There are those who have argued, in the BC made movie “The Vanishing Housewife’ in 1997 for instance, that commercial businesses prefer dual income households because there’s more money in it for them if both parents earn money. Dual income families are more likely to eat in restaurants, buy fast food, buy more leisure equipment, and expensive furniture. They are more likely to have expensive homes and two vehicles, and statistically more likely to have microwave ovens, and VCRs. Business has no interest in a tax system which helps one parent or the other be out of the paid labor force. Business would prefer the consumer has the most money possible to spend. So the ‘best interests of the child’ may not be foremost on the mind of big business. Governments exist hopefully to be aware of this motivation and to take it into account when hearing submissions from large corporations about the need for daycare.

One of the ironies of any movement that raises public interest, such as the backlash to feminism, however misguided, is that the state stops dead in its tracks and doesn’t know what to do. For instance the National Action Committee on Women was widely funded to promote women’s equality in the 1970s but when women noticed it was ignoring some women’s groups, and focusing only on minority issues with a particular agenda, instead of the government urging NAC back to helping all women and working in all issues, the government pulled the plug on NAC nearly completely. It was an overreaction.

But the same thing is happening in some ways or risks happening regarding funding for children. With daycare lobbyists arguing for funding for their children, the state was right onside pouring in money until a large group objected that the nondaycare kids were now being ignored. But instead of the state then helping all kids equally, it simply pulled the plug on many funds. This is happening in the US with budgets for daycares being cut and it is also happening in Canada. The Ontario government as of November 2001 had cut almost $100 milion from regulated child-care and family resouce centers and was planning to cut $200 million of the proposed $470 million child care budget. Martha Friendly of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit of the U of Toronto wrote...
angrily to the Globe and Mail saying the Ontario government was ‘out to get’ child care and was ‘hornswoggling’ Ontarians.

Some have then argued that maybe mothers at home deserve money but first we have to ensure daycare users get help. This argument however is flawed. Equality does not favor anyone.

**-paid professional care**

Having someone besides mom or dad take care of the baby is not new and is time-honored. Nannies in Britain have been not only loved but revered for over a century. Nursemaids were known in Shakespeare’s time. Slaves in the southern US often were required to do domestic chores and tend the master’s children.

Nowadays with the movement to have what is called ‘home care’ of the sick, there is a professional segment of the nursing profession which gets paid to go to homes and give care of the sick, and this is a paid job. The issue of paying for the work though is complex. If we pay for the task, then all who do it deserve financial help. If we only pay some and not others, we seem unfair.

What qualifies something for pay then? Should only ‘professionals’ get paid and if so, what makes someone professional? There is a gray area in the law about tasks done for blood relatives but is genetics a reason to exclude someone from pay?

One of the clearer areas is self-care. If you do your own dishes and make your own bed, does society benefit or do you alone benefit? Clearly the main beneficiary is you alone.

When it comes to provision of care of one’s child do you benefit yourself from the caregiving? If you have get up nights to tend to a newborn, there is emotional satisfaction but the caregiver is clearly the parent and the receiver is the child. The receiver of the care, the child, has no ability to pay. There is a reverse flow of money in fact because the care costs the giver in equipment and supplies and often in salary sacrifice. But it is not just the child that is benefiting It is also the state. Do you have to be a professional to provide this care? No, yet the state benefits anyway.

Some have misunderstood the argument that family members deserve financial help for caregiving, as if we are asking for money for what should be done out of love. But the argument is not for ‘pay’ for this work. There is a movement for Wages for Housework, but I am not part of it. No one I know is asking for pay for taking care of a child. What some are asking for is recognition of some of the costs of this care, to match the recognition there already is of costs for the same type of care elsewhere. Some have suggested asking for this financial recognition quantifies and commercializes love. In fact it does the reverse since it dares to ask that those who love the child be enabled to be with the child. It seeks to remove the cold commercial aspect of care not to add to it.

The idea a blood relative should be excluded from financial help may be a
throwback to an outdated idea that a child is property. At one time it was thought that the care of a child is done at the whim and pleasure of the parent without any legal consequences. Centuries ago the sacrifice of a child was the decision of the parent not the legal authorities. But we have moved on from that. A child now is seen as an individual with rights.

A parent has many legal obligations not only once the child is born but even before, including the feeding, supervision, and provision of safe environments and treatment for illness. These are not options. The parent can be charged with abuse or neglect for failure in these areas. Who would charge the parent? The state would. What business is it of the state? The wellbeing of this child is of interest to the state. Now if that is true, then surely the state must also claim some responsibility in the financing of this care which it has deemed obligatory and in the state’s interest. The blood relation of the adult to the child is not relevant to the value of the child to the state. Each child is of equal value.

There is an irony to what is considered ‘paid professional care’. In sports if you are paid you are no longer amateur but professional and the same designation seems to hold true for caregiving. If you are a 12 year old babysitter but paid, some would enter you into the category of a professional caregiver since it is your profession and you are paid. A mother of 8 who has been taking care of kids for 20 years however, if she is unpaid, would not be considered a ‘professional’ because she is not paid.

What is a ‘professional early childhood educator’? In a typical college course in Alberta, leading to a diploma in early childhood, the applicant must be 18 or have a high school diploma. The course lasts two years, or four semesters so graduates may be as young as 20. There are courses in learning through play and special needs children and the student must take 4 arts and science courses to get the diploma, ensuring one supposes a more rounded education. There is a security check done on students so they are able to hire themselves out when finished as trustworthy. So we have people who do not necessarily have any hands-on experience with children, who may be as young as 20, who have only taken 4 semesters of courses. Each course need only be passed by a C- grade.

It is ironic that in an era where common-law unions without actual marriage certificate get the same rights and responsibilities of formal marriage, since in practice the two are ‘married’. but presence of a child care ‘diploma’ is somehow revered as better than practical experience dealing with children.

Society also permits paying babysitters though there is a vast international difference in their pay. Here again the western world seems to undervalue the role. A survey by the Runzheimer International research firm found in December 2001 that in US dollars, babysitters in Geneva and Toyko are paid $10 an hour, in New York and San Francisco $6 an hour, in Montreal $3.75 an hour, in Toronto $3.60 an hour. Only in Moscow and Beijing are rates less – at under US $3 an hour.
We also pay foster parents. In 2002 there were 44,600 foster children in Canada. In Alberta in 2001 a foster parent got paid $23 a day. By 2002 that figure had gone up to $44 per child per day. Is this enough? Too much? Many who receive it say it is not enough. And yet natural mothers and fathers, incurring the same expenses, have even more reason to complain. They get nothing.

In the case of care of the sick, handicapped, elderly, dying, the type of care involved may be a chief focus distinguishing unpaid and paid caregivers, but not really. Much of their care is mundane – cleaning, taking temperatures, feeding, dressing. Admittedly there is a need for insertion of lines for intravenous tubes but many family members with very little training have for years also been providing considerable medical care including changing dressings and administering medicine under doctor’s prescription. With home-based IV lines for medication, home-based ventilators for breathing, home-based kidney dialysis family members not only often give the bulk of the care but also offer very high-level skilled care. To exclude them from social recognition for this care and from financial recognition of their salary sacrifice to be there to provide it, is unfair.

It is easy to count kids and adults so we could establish a ratio of one to the other. And yet so what? If an adult is asked to supervise 5 newborns obviously there will be little time for each child. But say we established a ratio of one adult to 2 newborns. Does that guarantee good care? No. The adult could prop the bottle for the babies and then watch TV all day, ignoring their cries or dirty diapers.

Standards for ‘quality of care’ may measure area a child has to play in, but does that guarantee good care? Governments like to put conditions on financial help they give and they like to set standards. Yet standards for child-rearing that can be set are of only minimal care. Standards for optimal care are uninspectable. We can measure the play area in metres but we can’t measure if the baby feels loved. Some have suggested that if the state funded all care of children, it would have to set quality standards and make home inspections.

This is a red herring argument. We don’t inspect every vehicle’s contents before it goes down the public highway. We don’t inspect every house before we let the occupants sleep there each night and enjoy the publicly-funded electrical system. We operate to a certain extent on trust, in a democracy. If the state suspects a child is being abused or neglected, it already has the right to enter the home and inspect. But not in general will it need to. Random searches are a contravention of rights.

The last problem with standards is cost of having them. It is possible to establish some standards, such as that every facility for toddlers must have a trained nurse on the premises, must have vans for field trips where every child will have his own carseat and seatbelt, where the van must recently have passed vehicle inspection, where the hot water heater and the furnace and the playground have all passed the test of a certain capacity and safety, and these tests probably are necessary for institutional care. But we should not overburden government with inspection of private homes also. A February 2002 report
released by the Ontario Children’s Aid Society found that social workers spend 85% of their time not working with children but doing paperwork. We should spend state money more wisely.

CHAPTER ELEVEN – VOTING WITH THEIR FEET – THE CHANGING PAID WORKFORCE

The traditional 9-5 work place is a reality for a diminishing number of people. Many do paid work on other shifts, evenings, weekends. My children who have done part-time jobs in the restaurant industry shocked me at first when they made a distinction between having to work Saturday- day and Saturday-night. Some job-share or work part-time for pay. Some use flex time and come in as they choose and leave as they choose but still get the job done.

Such arrangements have big consequences for society- not only in diminishing traffic at rush hours but in cutting back need for office space for each employee at the same time. Employers find that hiring part-time workers saves them money since they don’t have to pay out as many benefits and some workers prefer part-time hours. Some employees work for contracts, in blocks, for 3 months on and 3 months off. In fact once a couple has children that event alone may lead to different shift requests. Statistics Canada found in an October 1998 study that ‘having children increased the likelihood of working shifts’

What does this mean for social policy? For one thing it means that you can’t assume all parents are at home after 5 when the kids are sent home from school, but you also can’t assume they are not there at 2PM. You can’t assume that a daycare that operates 7AM to 6PM will suit everybody’s needs. You can’t assume that the only type of child-care arrangement an employed parent uses is daycare. In fact a 1992 study by Stats Canada found that 45% of parents do not work a 9-5 day at their paid work.

Federal tax policy is somewhat out of touch with current work place trends. It still seems to assume that part-time work is a failure to find full-time work, whereas in fact many people prefer the part-time schedule.

An August 2,2000 study by Aon Consulting found that Canadians over 18 who work for pay at least 20 hours a week have quite different work attitudes than did their parents. Many expressed a desire for flexible hours, a compressed work week, job-sharing, personal time off, work-at-home options. No longer is there strict devotion to this job. There is a restlessness among new employees go where the hours and lifestyle match their preference.
There are additional reports that the 9-5 day is stretching out for many. Canadian Policy Research Network has completed a study Sept 3,2001 with Statistica Canada finding that 14% of Canadians now work more than 50 hours a week, compared with 11 % in 1976. Dr. Chris Higgins at the U of Western Ontario has released as 2002 National Work-Life Conflict Study on July 3,2002 finding that one in ten people in 1991 worked for pay 50 or more hours per week but that in 2001 that number has risen to one in 4 people. Unpaid overtime has increased as many employees express fear of asking for pay for overtimework.

Linda Duxbury of the Canadian Policy Research Network studied such issues in October 2001 and noted in “Work-Life Balance in the New Millenium’ that in 1991 people were spending on average 41 hours per week at the office but by 2001 the number was 43 hours. People taking work home rose from 31% in 1991 to 52%.

How are these problems resolved? Graham Lowe in “The Quality of Work” and Charles Grantham in “The Future of Work” have looked into future trends. Grandtham says the new world of work will be people voluntarily coming together for contract work, as workmates, based on a common philosophy and that when each project is done, they will move on to the next. Has our tax law however even begun to notice these shifts? Has our recognition of caregiving to match this new range of options? It has not.

Tax law seems to be always behind the times. In the case of caregivers, it is woefully behind, assuming apparently that there are still only two roles for women – full time caring for children, or full-time outside the home, and two ways to raise children, daycare or at home. The reality is that parents have been widening these options for nearly a decade and it may be time tax law caught up. Parents are employed but in a home-based business Parents are employed outside the home in shifts so one is also always with the child. Parents are employed outside the home but they telecommute so they are still physically at home. And kids are not just in daycare or at home. They are at the neighbor’s, at a day home, with the nanny, at grandma’s, at nursery schools and play groups and library story hours. There are many arrangements out there. When tax law ignores this it becomes unfair.

There is the assumption for instance that most parents both have paid income outside the home. In 1971 39% of husband-wife families were dual income. In 1988 62% of families were dual income so the number for sure had gone way up. But by 1992 the number was 61% so it has in fact stabilized. A full one-third of families still are single-income.

**self-employment**

Self-employment is becoming popular. The self-employed however usually get less income and certainly have less job stability. They have to contribute both employer and employee portions of the employment insurance and pension plans so it costs them more to get benefits. A 2001 Canadian Policy Research Netowk study ‘What’s a good job’ found that more than half of self-employed workers did not have a medical dental plan.
According to Statistics Canada figures from the 2000 census the number of women who were self-employed tripled from 1976. The number of self-employed men doubled. A 2002 study by the Department of Human Resources and Development has found that the self-employed are now 16% of the paid labor force.

A December 1999 study by Stats Canada entitled “Working Together: Self-employed couples” has found that self-employment has doubled to 2.5 million people in the past two decades. In one third of families where both spouses have paid income, one of the two is self-employed. 227,000 couples were running a business together in 1999.

This trend to self-employment is international, enabled in many ways because of the Internet. Ferber has noted in 2000 that home-based workers in Italy total 3 million. Career management consultant Barbara Moses in the Globe and Mail March 4, 2002 has noted that the sharp division between self employment and working for someone else is now blurring. For example if a contract worker has only one or two regular clients he may seem to be working for those people as bosses. She has found that contrary to stereotype that the self-employed want independence, many small business operators simply chose that option because it suited their lifestyle preference.

**home-based**

A 1996 census by Stats Canada found that in Canada over one million people reported paid employment from home. Dr. Jacob Slonim, dean of computer science at Dalhousie University has noted in an October 3, 2000 interview in the National Post that the trend to small communities offer rural, idyllic life style for some people while they still by computers remain very linked to the world.

Ekos Research Associates survey of Nov 2001 found that 11% of Canadians now work primarily from home. That figures includes those who telework, telecomute and the self-employed. 68% of those who work from home report an improvement int heir quality of lfie. 50% of Canadian workers have expressed an interest in working at home.

**tele-work**

In 2002 employers cited that their employee productivity jumped by 15-20% when telework options were given and that the savings to the company annually (less office space etc) were $10,000 per teleworker

John Challenger CEO of Challenger, Gray and Christmas, a Chicago outplacement firm has estimated in Dec 1999 that at least 10 million Americans now telecommute. As abroad-based Internet access enters US homes and the home computer is as fast as the office one, and with the lower cost of videoconfeencing lately, more and more people can do their office job from home.

The Canadian Telework Association has revealed Feb 18, 2002 that there are now about 1.5 million teleworkers in Canada. President Bob Fortier says that those who telework are less often absent from the paid job due to childcare, eldercare or illness and are not
affected much by weather. Studies in his organization indicate that teleworking 2-3 days a week increases employee productivity 15-20% and companies save $10,000 annually per teleworker.

**part-time paid work**
In 2000 caring for children was cited as the reason for part-time not full-time paid work choices by 32.5% of women aged 25-44.

Though many argue that full-time paid labor force participation is the ideal for all men and women at all times and cite part-time labor force numbers as evidence of a problem, the reverse may actually be true. Statistics Canada for the year 2000 surveyed reasons for part-time work for people ages 25-44 and found that 27.1% chose this style in order to provide care for children. 7.2% had personal or other family responsibilities. That means that 34.3% (over a third) were working part-time for pay so that they could meet caregiving obligations unpaid. Personal preference was cited by 59.4% of women aged 45 and over.

**home-school**
In 2001 there are an estimated 70,000 to 80,000 students being homeschooled in Canada. In a US study by Barbara Kay reported August 15, 2001 in the National Post, there are between half a million and one million children being homeschooled in the US.

Some believe that the government does not have to change its tax policy but that the marketplace will take up the slack. Companies are being asked to have onsite daycare. Some companies are giving employees flex time options, or reduced pay for 4 years so the fifth year can be a paid sabbatical year. Some are including family on the business trips. But alone, these adjustments to family demands and priorities are not always working. They are not available to all paid workers and even if they were, they are not applicable to some situations such as home-based work. A fair policy that treats all kids equally would have to still be administered universally by the state.

**dad at home**
Another growing trend is for the man to be home with the children while the woman has paid employment. Prominent women often have the same backup system prominent men used to have – a spouse at home taking care of concerns there, but now the genders are switched. The stigma of second-class goes with the caregiving role though not the gender. So dads at home are becoming aware of the bias against the caregiving role and also opting for more rights for it. Fathers’ organizations sometimes promote custody rights of fathers in divorce disputes because they prioritize caregiving by dad but other men’s organizations take this one step further and actually argue for the rights of those men who are sacrificing other career to be with their children.

In the US for instance there is an organization called “Full-Time Dads’” and another called “Dads at Home” and in Canada, “Fathers are Capable Too” and “Dads Canada Initiative” Many dads are juggling career and family by working from home base just like women
have creatively been doing. In a March 2001 article in the National Post Business magazine Odi Ramu, a hardware supplier to aircraft dealers pointed out how he loves working from home. “Feminism has nothing to do with it” He says he just loves ‘the real pleasures of being there with my growing kids’

Many companies are trying to give employees more options. A July 15, 2001 Globe and Mail article found that Telus in BC is offering benefits to dependent spouses. BC government professional employees get a day off with pay to take a child to youth court. Casin Windsor gives “commitment days “periodically to help employees balance career and family despite their 24 hour a day 7 day a week rotating schedules.

CBC and CUPE give a day of leave with pay to appear in divorce court. KPMG has five personal days per year for care of sick children, medical appointments or other personal commitments. Air Canada offers voluntary work-sharing agreements with their UCCPE members and has thereby avoided laying off 300 staff. Toronto’s Dealt Chelsea Hotels’s 33 maintenance workers made a pact in 2001 to share the pain and workshare rather than see any members laid off.

Companies are trying to admit their employees have a life. However they may be noticing this too little and during crisis only. It would be better if family were allowed to be a regular priority and only the state can enable that kind of policy.

In the US these job trends are also being noted. In their 1997 book “Going Part-Time’ Cindy Tolliver and Nancy Chambers have noted that 57% of employees work for companies that offer part-time options. Job-sharing whereby two people share one full-time position is offered by 37% of US companies. Telecommuting, working at home and teleworking are offered by 85% of the nation’s biggest employers. In 1997 8.8 million US workers telecommuted. 23.8 million people in the US worked from home running their own business in 1997. And another trend is “temping,” working for temporary job assignments only. In the US in 1997 1.3 million people were doing this type of work, a number that had tripled since 1987.

-recent books

From many disciplines people are commenting on the impact of this job shift socially and for taxes. Arlie Hochschild in “The Time Bind” argued for shorter paid work hours. Joan Williams in “Unbending Gender” argued for changes in workplace norms. Economist Nancy Folbre argues for tax law reform and social support to parents in “The Invisible Heart”. Noami Wolf in 2001 Misconception’s” has argued for a mothers’ manifesto including flex time, family leave and tax incentives for home-based care as well as higher paid daycare salaries.

Danielle Crittenden 1999 in “What Our Mothers Didn’t Tell Us: Why Happiness Eludes the Modern Woman” observes that for too long we were not told that as mothers “we love our children more than anything else and want to be with them as much as we possibly
can’. She concludes ‘any solution must begin with the recognition that women need help getting away from the workforce to be with their young children’

**-new organizations**

Men’s and women’s groups are springing up all over the place now to urge governments to value caregiving and the career-family balance including

- The National Mothers’ Rights Council in the US,
- Moms for Milk Breastfeeding Consumer Advocacy Network (momsformilk@ks.sympatico.ca)

Often their websites show their goals clearly

- Mothers are Women – www.mothersarewomen says “We are mothers who have chosen to be the primary caregivers of our children and believe that the ability to exercise this choice without the threat of social or economic penalties is part of the struggle for equality’
- Caring at home – www. momsnetwork.com – in the US – supports a US Congress resolution to acknowledge the importance of at-home parents. Their stated purpose is to make it affordable to be home with one’s own children and they include single parents and grandparents in this right.

**CHAPTER 12 – POVERTY**

The observations that child poverty is increasing, not decreasing and that there is a systemic feminization of poverty have been made by legislators, think tanks and even the courts. Some would run to deny the claim or at least lessen its severity by redefining poverty. Others punitively conclude that those who are poor deserve their poverty because they did not work hard enough, or because they chose roles that did not pay much. Some feel that a fair society does not allow children to be poor and that Canada’s signing of international convenants promises a basic provision for the wellbeing of our young.

Some claim there are fewer people living in poverty than is reported. It is a question of what is defined as poverty. If you lower the cutoff ‘poverty line’, then there are, suddenly, fewer people living in poverty.

John Kenneth Galbraith in his 1958 study of economies said that poverty exists when income even if adequate for survival falls below that of the community and the family cannot escape the judgment of the larger community that they are indecent. He said there are two aspects of poverty – the subsistence level that looks at basic needs only and then the relative poverty level related to community standards.
There are several ways to define poverty in Canada currently. The standard used matters to government because it would like to claim it has reduced poverty. One is the low income cutoff used by Statistics Canada. LICO looks only at income and in 2002 is a family income of $22,279 in rural areas or $32,238 in urban areas. However some felt that this called too many people poor.

Another measure, the Market Basket Measure was set up by human resources and development to more closely estimate the cost of living in various communities – and it was from $17,626 rural to $25,238 urban. By it, fewer people were poor. This cutoff notes how much income in a given community a family needs to buy food, shelter and some other basics.

Economist Dr. Chris Sarlo has proposed a third standard, a basic-needs poverty line which includes purchase of basic food, clothing and shelter but also furniture, public transportation, telephone and household insurance. By its 2001 figures, a family was poor if it earned under $19,962. By this estimate even fewer people were poor.

There are two categories of poverty. One is those on welfare. The other is those who make enough income to not qualify for welfare, but who do not make enough to meet all of their basic needs. These are known as the ‘working poor’ and some are caught in a catch-22, earning too much for special tax credits welfare recipients get yet not enough to make it without them. The number of people living on welfare is not always a good indicator of poverty If welfare benefits are cut by government so that fewer can qualify, there will then be fewer people living on welfare- but not really any fewer who are poor.

In Toronto in 2001 the number of children on welfare aged 0 to 17 dropped from 1994. However one main reason was that welfare cutoffs had been changed.

Many families live below the ‘poverty line’ The ‘poverty gap’ is the gap between what the poor really earn and what they would have to earn to reach that poverty line. This gap in Toronto since 1995 has been growing. The gap alone is between $7,000 and $8,000 Statistics Canada revealed June 22, 2001 that the average income of a low-income family slipped in 1997 43.7% below the low-income cutoff. In 1993 it had only been 42.4% below the line.

Poverty however hurts some types of families more than others. It hits hard single parents. It also hits hard single-income families. In 1997 Statistics Canada revealed that the incidence of poverty among single-earner families has increased by 54.2%, much higher than the poverty rate increase for two earner couples, which is at 13.8%. The poverty rate of single mothers had over the same period decreased 13.1%

It is important when discussing poverty to look at purchasing power. If salary goes up less than the cost of living, or if benefits like child tax credit are not indexed to the cost of living, actual spending power goes down. In Ontario the minimum wage in 1995 was frozen at $6.85 an hour. As the cost of living went up, minimum wage earners became poorer. A low income parent has been estimated to have lost $1352 in purchasing power
simply from that devaluing of income. Two parents on low income lost $2705 in purchasing power.

The state often assumes that the single income family is rich. In its reply to a claim of tax inequity at the United Nations, the Canadian government said in 1999 that it was fair to penalize the single income family to avoid the scenario of the ‘wealthy banker’s wife’. The state however errs in its assumption. The single income family is not rich. The single income family has consistently brought home less than the dual income family.

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What does it mean to be poor? A 1986 Canada: Family Expenditure Survey found that the poor spend 1/5 of their salary just to eat and one third for shelter. They only have 8% left for leisure. The rich, who probably already eat better and are housed more lavishly still spend only 1/10 of their salary on food and 1/9 of their salary on shelter. They have 36% of their salary left over for leisure. The rich eat out more and spend more on clothes. A Statistics Canada study of 1990 comparing weekly food expenditures found that the rich go on more trips and their food budget exceeds that of the poor by nearly 300%.

Dual earner families are more likely to own a dishwasher, microwave, VCR, home computer, two cars and to have a bigger house than single-earner families.

In terms of age, the poorest segment of society is often the young. Statistics Canada released a study July 1, 2002 finding that the lowerst average family net income was for those under age 24, who were 32.3% of the population. The second-lowest average family income was for those aged 25-34, 14.1% of the population, in other words for those having young children and many new expenses. The Canadian Council on Social Development revealed August 8, 2000 that compared to 25 years ago there are 1.3 million more poor households in Canada. Poverty is getting worse not better. The poverty rate has jumped from 22 to 46% for families headed by adults under 25.

One of the main factors for poverty then is having children and a second is the decision of a couple to have less than two full-time incomes to care for that child. In a 1992 court case Eliot vs Eliot an economist said the decision to be home with the children costs the woman $351,812 in lost income.

The main reason then that poverty is so prevalent for women and children is because the Canadian tax system does not value taking care of children. Caregiving is penalized – hence there is poverty.

In 1978 of all Canadians living in poverty, nearly 75% were women, most of them over 65 years of age. And since caregiving is traditionally a female role, the poverty that accrues to caregiving settles very solidly on women.

**Child poverty**
In 1989 the House of Commons passed a motion unanimously to end child poverty by the year 2000. The motion was made apparently in a very sparsely populated House of Commons as a tribute to then retiring NDP leader Ed Broadbent. At the time one in seven children was poor, according to Statistics Canada’s Low Income Cutoff. By 1997 however the goal was far from reached – poverty had gone up. One in five children was now poor (19.8% of children) Some have debated again, how child poverty is defined. By the Low Income Cut Off standard in 1995 36% of kids are poor. But by the Low Income Measure only 31% of kids were poor.

The United Nations 2000 study “Child Poverty in Rich Nations’ revealed that 47 million children in 23 of the wealthiest countries live in poverty. Canada ranked near the bottom of developed nations in the per cent of public dollars spent on social programs. Canada’s child poverty rate, at 15.5 % was more than ten percentage points higher than the rates in Sweden, Norway or Finland

What is the effect of child poverty? In 1997 the Canadian School Boards Association found that poor children are more likely to face feelings of deprivation that may lead to despair and social impairment. Campaign 2000, set up to help the state reach its goal of eradicating poverty, found that children in poverty are more likely to repeat a grade before age 11, and are more likely to have delayed vocabulary scores, to face physical and mental abuse and to have low resistance to infection .They are also more likey to live in poor neighborhoods and be exposed to toxic chemicals. But poverty became a controversial topic. Not only was it increasing instead of decreasing as the state had hoped, but its cause was unclear.

In the traditional male paradigm however, we had ignored some types of poverty. One type of poverty is financial. But there is also a poverty of attention, an emotional poverty if a child feels neglected. So if we force all parents to be away from their kids, we relieve financial poverty but we may increase emotional poverty.

A September 1994 meeting of the Canadian Medical Association found that poor children are twice as likely to suffer psychiatric disorders such as hyperactivity. Kids in homes with annual incomes less than $10,000 are more susceptible to anxiety, depression and impulsive behavior A 1995 study in Quebec by Tremblay found that the deeper the level of poverty, the higher the level of violence among children.

A 1997 study by social work professor Gordon Ternowetsky found that at the time there were 1.4 million children (20% of all children) living in poverty in Canada and that poverty was associated with higher mortality rate, lower birth rate, higher likelihood of disability, lower educational attainment, higher dropout rates, lack of nutritious food. At that time he noted that because of the clawback of child tax benefits for those on welfare, 60% of the nation’s poor children gained nothing financially from a program designed ostensibly to assist the poor.

However some of the stereotypes of child poverty were wrong. For one thing, the assumption a parent in poverty was a poor parent was unfair. Money has little to do with
ability to love. Alberta’s 1999 Task Force Children are Risk study found that most of Canada’s troubled children do not come from poverty but from the middle class. The report noted ‘The home is the most important influence on a child’s life, whether that home involves parents or other adults who are raising children’

It was commonly assumed that the highest rates of child poverty would be in lone-parent families. Indeed the rates are very high in such families, but if you look at all children in poverty, more are from dual parent families than from single parent families. In 1991 41% of all poor kids lived with a female lone parent but 54% lived with two parents. A report in 2001 by Campaign 200 studying Child Poverty in Toronto has found that from 1990 to 1995 child poverty increased 73%. ¼ of the city’s families with children were poor. For the single parent family with one child in Toronto, the median income was $11,100. For the corresponding dual parent family the media income was shockingly not much more - $11,900

In the summer of 2000 the Canadian government surveyed young people across the country with the help of Save the Children Canada. The resulting report “A Canada Fit for Children’ identified the top concerns of all types expressed by kids. The top one on the list was poverty. In May 2002 PM Chretien admitted that child poverty rate in Canada is still at 18.5%

Children are poor when families are poor. Eliminating poverty might be a pretty complex issue if the state continues policies that do not value parenting. It is no real surprise, given such policies, that child poverty did not go down but went up. What we see is the two paradigms hitting head on- the male paradigm of valuing only paid work and the traditional female paradigm of unpaid caregiving. If only the one side gets money, then caregivers will be poor and so will those they care for.

feminization of poverty

An April 2000 report by economist Monica Townson for the Canadian Centre for Policy found that women remain the poorest of the poor. There has been no improvement in poverty rates for women since 1970.

Women are poor for many reasons stemming mostly from this caregiving issue. They usually at some points in their life sacrifice salary. Second they incur costs to provide care of others and these costs are born from savings since no salary covers them. Third there is no tax help for costs of rearing a child or caring for someone sick at home while there is help for those who get the exact same care elsewhere, so there are no benefits from the state.

There is a tax penalty for couples which have less than two full-time incomes. And, the unpaid caregiver can’t contribute to the Canada Pension Plan or her own registered retirement savings plan for the caregiving years. Given these systemic problem women tend to be poorer than men.
A 1998 study by Statistics Canada found that registered retirement savings plans are now purchased by 32.9% of Canadians. However 2.8 million men have them but only 2.2 million women – and this means paid labor force women.

**Pensions**

The penalty of poverty is hard enough at the time of raising children. But the penalty does not stop there. Time spent caring for a child is not accounted for in pension plans as useful time so pensions for the rest of one’s life are reduced depending on caregiving years.

Currently all citizens, even caregivers can get old age security benefits once they turn 65. They need not have contributed. These payments are automatic. However the Canada Pension Plan is for those who mdae contributions from paid income so the unpaid caregiver only gets anything is he or she had paid work. The present Canada Pension Plan allows that 7 years of unpaid caregiving will count against someone in the calculation of pensionable earnings, but only seven years. This means that anyone who put in over 7 years will have a lower pension all of her senior years.

The pension provision for caretaking has been vaunted by the state as generous yet it should be examined closely. For one thing caregiving is not counted for you – it is just not counted against you. That means the state is not actually valuing it. There is a ‘dropout provision’ If a woman took seven years at home to be with a child, and during that seven years had a second child, which is not uncommon, the pension arrangement only allows her to spend 5 years with the second child, 3 years with the third and so on, depending on the ages of the children. The ‘dropout provision’ term itself besides implying that caregiving is dropping out of what is important just a students ‘drop out’ of school, creates an inequity between children and the amount of time a parent can take care of them.

Another problem is that the dropout provision cannot be extended, not even if the woman or man contributed to the plan. The Canada Pension Plan is based on contributions from employers and employees, jointly. The self-employed can contribute if they give both halves- employer and employee halves. However homemakers are not permitted to contribute at all even if they are willing to contribute both halves. The contributions are only permitted for those earning money. One could easily question whether this policy is fair because its effect is to deny women the ability to provide for their own financial wellbeing as seniors.

Women are often encouraged to not depend then on the Canada Pension Plan but to make private pension arrangements, such as registered savings plan contributions. But again there is a catch. Only people with paid income are allowed to contribute to those plans. A married man can contribute to an RRSP for his spouse if he chooses, but he has to use his own RRSP allowance to do so – he can make one pension spread over two people but he can’t create two full pensions. Women then are in a position of forced dependency.
A pension for homemakers is not a new idea. In 1907 on April 18 Sir Richard Cartwright spoke in a joint Senate and House of Commons debate. Asked whether government annuities were restricted to men, he said ‘any lady who likes may come in”. But the law was not changed to allow it.

In 1974 of 15,853 pension plans in force in Canada, over 400 were exclusively for men. In 1980 it was found that in Ontario of women ages 35 to 44 only one third had pension coverage and by age 64 only 44% had pension coverage. In 1983 the average pension paid to men was $6568 and to women was $3952 or just over half.

A 1983 report of the Parliamentary Task Force on Pension Reform observed ‘the problem of pensions is largely a women’s problem’ It suggested 19 amendments including a pension for homemakers. It further suggested that it should be assumed that homemakers earn half the average wage and that homemaker’s spouses should be allowed to contribute to the fund on their behalf. Contributions on behalf of low income homemakers would be subsidized.

Louise Dulude of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women commented in 1983 “Every report on pensions issued in the last few years starts off by declaring that women are the prime victims of the present system. Nearly all of them go on to recommend reforms that would benefit typical male workers and ignore women’s needs almost entirely” In 1984 pensions for homemakers were part of the election promises of the Tory party. From December 1985 to 1987 the issue was studied but never acted on. In 1985 the Quebec government promised homemaker pensions but by 1989 still had not kept the promise.

A 1986 Gallup poll found that 82% of Canadians favored including homemakers in the government pension plan. 16% said the family alone should fund the premiums for homemakers. 55% said government and the homemaker’s family should cover the costs of premiums. 22% said the government should fund the premiums for homemakers itself. I spoke on a talk show from New York City in 1999 and the host of the show suggested that just as war vets in the US get pensions provided by the state without contributions from the soldiers, a similar system could be envisaged for homemakers.

Women in Canada 2000 studied 1997 sources of income for seniors and has found that women depend more on the OAS than do men (38% versus 21%) and that only 13.2% of women get retirement pensions while 26.5% of men get them. Statistics Canada reported December 12, 2000 that in early retirement women get about 61% of what men get. Stats Canada admitted “women’s predominant role in unpaid work naturally affects the time they have available for paid work”

One of the ironies of keeping women down is beginning to surface however – women outnumber men now and our voices cannot forever be ignored. In 1921 according to the Women in Canada 2000 study, women were 48.4% of the population but in 1999 they
were 50.4 %. The projected population of Canada for the year 2026 is 36 million and of that it is estimated that 50.6% will be women.

In 2002 many feel the that due to the decline in birth rate and the graying of the population, the pension plan simply won’t be able to cope. Several strategies have been suggested to save the plan.

saving the Canada Pension Plan

Canada is justly proud of its universal social programs. All contribute so that all benefit as they have need. The ethical appeal of this caring community policy is very appealing. Yet some of our best social programs are threatened. When we ignored caregivers for so long, the birth rate fell and once it fell we lost around 1/3 of the projected contributors we’d planned to have to maintain our universal health care and our Canada Pension Plan. Returning to an era where the sick can’t afford medical care is abhorrent to nearly everyone. Returning to an era where the elderly are too poor to eat would be as bad. We must save these plans.

There have been several stop-gap proposals for the Pension Plan. One is to hike premiums. Another is to import immigrants to pay tax and contribute to the plan. A third is to delay retirement so people contribute longer before they start drawing off the fund. But all of these measures are short-term. The only long-term solution is to return to the original formula of the plan- to encourage a birth rate each generation to sustain it.

Recently Deputy Justice Minister Morris Roseberg predicted that mandatory retirement may well be eliminated. The number of Canadians aged 65 or more is expected to nearly triple by 2046. Doing away with mandatory retirement however has upset organized labor since many unions want to create jobs for younger people.

Economist William Robson of the C. D. Howe Institute has suggested in October 2001 in his study ‘Aging Populations and the Workforce’ that we should possibly consider a new formula for pension assignment. Currently the amount of benefits is calculated on the last few years’ earnings before retirement. He suggests that one way to keep seniors earning pay longer, which he feels is advantageous for national productivity, is to allow seniors to scale down paid work to only part-time or in several month blocks and to calculate their pensions not on the last 3 years’ earnings but on the best 3 years’ earnings.

Retirement ages vary internationally. For men, the retirement age in Japan is 68.5, in Finland is 59.6, in the US is 64.6, in Canada is 62.4. Yet forcing people to work for pay longer in order to qualify for a pension may not suit the needs of the sick. A better solution may well be to encourage births so new workers are coming on stream each generation.

Some have suggested making each employee pay higher pension plan premiums as a way to get more money into the fund. In 1966 employees paid 1.8 % of their income and the employer matched this with 1.8%. In 2002 the employee pays 4.6% of his or her income
and the employer pays 4.6%. The rate has more than doubled. For the self-employed it is even higher. Those who are self-employed must pay both halves of the premium – the employer and the employee half.

Making people work longer is not a viable solution for all. Many elderly are sick. Saving the pension plan is related to saving the health care plan for both are more taxed with an aging population, and are less funded.

saving universal health care

We can’t afford to institutionalize all of our sick or all of our elderly and the demands for eldercare and care of the sick are only going to increase. What can we do? We can look at the irony that not only do many people want care outside of institutions and in their own homes, but it costs us less to provide it there.

The original health care plan had as its first level of care, even before phoning the nurse or doctor, care by a family member. Someone was there to notice injury, to take the temperature, make the chicken soup, run to the drugstore, monitor taking of medicine. What has happened is we have been losing that first, and free, level of care. By pressuring all adults to be out of the home earning money full time, we have forced the sick and the elderly who need care to seek paid care, professional care, even institutional care, and that is a chief reason our health care plan is so cash-strapped. To save money we’ve sent people home from hospital early, even after giving birth, but often to empty homes and little family support and often their health deteriorates as a result, and costs us more.

One of the ironies of healing is that it is not just medical equipment that heals. There has always been recognized a component of healing that is psychological. What many patients want is to be near those they love and in their own homes. Allen Benson of the Stan Daniels Healing Centre in Edmonton has noted that for natives, elders in the community have a gift for healing. He says they in effect ‘carry PhDs”. A British report from the U of Leicester in the mid 1990s found that patients released to being in the home recovered faster than those who stayed in hospital. The study suggested the result due in part to return to normal routines in familiar settings. Home care even with a nurse for 24 hours costs $325 a day while one day in hospital costs $500.

A June 18, 2001 report in the Globe and Mail noted how cerebral palsy sufferer Danielle Harder who has been in an institution for many years at a cost of $185,000 per year, would like to move to a condominium to live outside the institution as an adult. However the province of Ontario refused to pay for her care there even though the care estimate would be much lower, at $120,000 per year. Oddly enough, provincial policies favoring institutional care actually cost the state more.

The Canadian Journal on Aging released a study Jan 25, 2000 finding that seniors put in institutions die sooner than those allowed to continue in their own homes doing day-to-
day tasks. A November 1997 study by the Canadian Aging and Research Network found that nearly half of all Canadians with income also provide elder care. Nearly 80% of caregivers in Alberta are women between ages 40-49. In fact the general study found that the average woman can expect over her lifetime to spend 17 years providing care of children and 18 years providing care of the elderly.

A Senate report published July 19, 2002 entitled “Quality End of Life Care: The Right of Every Canadian” has recommended that home care be increased with income protection of the caregiver, and coverage of costs of drugs and equipment.

A study by Janet Fast for Status of Women Canada March 2001 found that informal caregivers provide as much as 80% of all care of frail seniors. The replacement value of the 2.1 million unpaid formal caregivers in Canada would be more than $5 billion a year. This means simply that the state gets for free the services of millions of people and saves enormously in its health budget due to this unpaid sector. Yet when this unpaid sector is pressured to go out and get a paid job instead, the state is actually kicking itself in the foot.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN - FALSE STARTS TO FIX THE PROBLEMS

The decline in birth rate has been coming for some time. The drop in family income, the increase in child poverty – these are not sudden developments. And governments have noticed them and tried to fix them. But many of these solutions have been misdirected and have not worked. The state has tried raising taxes to cover declining tax base. The state has tried increasing pension premiums, bringing in more immigrants, making people work longer before retirement to save the pension plan. The state has tried sending people home from hospital earlier, de-insuring some medical treatments. It has even considered paying people to not get sick, to save the universal health care plan.

Some provinces are experimenting with universal daycare to increase the birth rate and to decrease job stress so women can earn money. Governments have tried cutting costs by reducing funding to schools and making kids pay for their own classes even from grade one. Tuitions for post-secondary have skyrocketed and when students could no longer afford them, governments have offered student loans, tying up young adults’ lives in debt for years.

Governments have recognized child poverty and poured money into distressed families but not by helping with money. Governments have sent programs of advice. Some have suggested a guaranteed annual income to correct poverty but others have felt it was just a handout discouraging work.

It is a good government that tries to fix problems. And I think we have tried a lot of solutions that did not work well. It is time we arrived at a more lasting one - to value caregiving itself. Let us examine briefly some of the false starts the state has tried.
Universal daycare as an experiment did not work well in Nordic countries and now benefits are being paid to parents who are at home with the child. Universal daycare in Quebec has resulted in strikes by daycare workers who wanted more pay than the $5 a day fees were permitting and has not increased the birth rate as was hoped. Universal daycare from 7 to 5PM does not meet the shift needs of many parents and dangers of lawsuits for flaws in large group care make the state nervous. The myth of ‘low –cost high quality care’ is being revealed – there may be high quality care available but it would certainly not be low cost. In terms of cost-effectiveness then also, other options have to be considered. Daycare yes, but not necessarily daycare.

Daycare lobbyists are a very determined passionate group. If they can frame the argument to be for the emotional pulls of wellbeing of kids, education of kids and all those good things, some feel that a universal program is still the way to go. And yet others notice that education happens everywhere and that the wellbeing of kids, brain development, health benefits of good care happen also in the home, at grandma’s and at the sitter’s. So the benefits of daycare often cited are benefits of good care everywhere. State funding preference for daycare then is illogical.

There are some who would claim that a few people ‘need’ daycare, single moms usually cited here, and that the program therefore is crucial for them. This also could be argued. Why need we force single mothers to leave their kids? Should their children not have the same right to bond with a parent as other kids have? Again, funding for all kids, in or out of daycare, presents more options for all.

Some would have us believe that universal daycare is the same as health care and public education – a universal benefit. And yet these are not the same. Health care is something we all risk needing, and we as a community cover the care costs of each other because we have the same likelihood of need, at the caprice of fate or genetics. In terms of childbearing we are not in the same position. With birth control and abortion rights having a baby is a choice not a freak of fate. The obligation to take care of a child is not visited upon an adult without warning. If society has a role to play in helping with the costs, and I think it does, it is because society benefits from the existence and wellbeing of our future adults and this benefit is for all kids. There is no particular reason to assume the state will only benefit from daycare kids. So there is no reason to favor them.

Care of young children is also not parallel to the public education system. The daycare setting does not necessarily provide more skills than maturation and good parental care would. Some educators have even argued that large group care deprives children of one-on-one attention vital to noticing and developing unique skills. So though one can definitively conclude that ability to read and write and do math are useful skills that traditionally only the schools offered, the skills that preschoolers need, toilet training, learning to walk, learning to eat with a spoon, are not skills restricted to a formal setting. Daycare is not the same as school.
The school system itself is now more open to home-schooling options and voucher systems so that funding flows with the child. If it is admitted that the parent is competent to handle formal schooling, and the state is willing to provide funds to support that choice, it is also logical to include home-based funding for preschoolers.

The argument against universal daycare is not necessarily against daycare. Often people confuse this point. It is against a forcing of that type of caregiving, excluding funding for all other options. Universal ‘access’ to daycare is not fair either unless universal access to nondaycare is as well funded.

**education fees in public school**

As the birth rate dropped and fewer new taxpayers came on board, governments cut costs. The provinces have jurisdiction for education in Canada although the federal government has historically helped with post-secondary institutions. However grants to all levels of education have dropped. Cutting funding to our schools is not a good way to save money, according to most educators.

The immediate result is that schools have to cope either by cutting services or raising their own funds. Cutting service is subtle- not buying new desks or repairing damaged roofs, not hiring a school caretaker, not buying new library books. More visibly some schools hire fewer teachers and have larger and larger classes. School districts don’t build new schools in bulging suburbs but have children bussed to old overcrowded schools in the inner city. Some cut back on guidance counselors. Many eliminate the position of librarian. Is this harming education or risking safety? Many feel it is.

Many school districts have fund-raising activities, bake-sales, sales of ham and poinsettias, spelling contests. Many schools partner with big business and contract to allow advertising on their buses or monopolies of product sales in their cafeterias. Most schools now levy fees per student, fees that violate a basic principle in a democracy of the right to ‘free public education’

The reduction in funding comes at the same time as an increasing pressure on school teachers to be more like parents, since parents are often unable to be home with the children. There is a requirement in most high schools to not only counsel students and give extra academic help as needed, but also to coach at least one team and one club.

The stress rate on teachers is skyrocketing as they find a breaking point when asked to ‘do more with less’. Many of the most gifted young teachers are leaving the profession. Many parents, fed up with the problems in the public system are moving to private schools, which usually only the rich can afford, to doing home-schooling.

Ultimately the ones who pay the price for lack of funding of education are kids. Cutting funding to education has backfired on all of us. Undereducation children become less employable adults pay less taxes and worst case scenario drop out of school and cost the state money rather than helping society.
There are already inherent education advantages to wealth. Having school fees only adds to them. The rich can afford the home computer to get ahead faster in studies. The rich can afford the field trips and extra courses that provide more experience. The rich can afford better school supplies even as simple as enough paper and pencils to create a report that might get a good mark. And as teens grow up and eat more and need more expensive clothing, it is only the rich who can still house them without feeling a huge shock to the budget at the new costs, so it is only the rich who can keep the teen in school dependably. Children of the poor tend to drop out.

**post-secondary funding**

Our failure to adequately fund post-secondary also harms our youth and by extension society’s future. The University of Toronto had its operating budget cut 15% in 1995. To offset the deductions the government deregulated tuition fees for professional and graduate programs in 1998. Now individual schools could try to make ends meet now by charging students more. A recent task force in 2002 from the University of Toronto has recommended that tuition fees at law school currently at $12,000 be increased over the next 5 years to ultimately be $22,000.

A Statistics Canada study of November 2001 found that the average undergraduate arts tuition has more than doubled since 1991 (from $1714 to $3452). In Ontario provincial budget cuts to education resulted in an average annual undergraduate tuition increase for arts students of 127%.

A Statistics Canada study August 28, 2001 has revealed that in Alberta undergraduate arts fees over ten years have jumped from $1522 to $3970. Dentistry students now pay over $8000. Medical and law students pay between $4,000 and $6,654.

Facing high tuition a young adult has few options that escape a heavy penalty A statistics Canada Report of December 8, 2001 found that in 1998 young people from low income families are 2.5 times less likely to get a post-secondary education than are those form wealthy families. The poor simply can’t afford an education.

When our most gifted young people from the lower and middle class can’t afford post-secondary we all lose something. We lose the skills of half the nation, we underemploy them, we don’t get their top contribution to our productivity or even our tax base. And because they are frustrated we may have added to our national medical bills. But worse still, we lose in the professions the perspective that the poor can bring. What lawyer will understand the needs of the poor if there are no lawyers who have ever been poor? A recent study of income levels across Canada found that the highest income level in the nation is in Ottawa, coincidentally the home of our national legislators. How then can they understand what it is like to be poor if they have not themselves known poverty? If we exclude the poor from becoming our doctors how will they have understanding and compassion for those dealing with poverty?
The student without money who desperately wants post-secondary schooling has to choose between several options, all punitive. She can work for pay several years to earn enough to go to college, putting herself back several years behind her wealthier colleagues. She can get student loans which put her thousands of dollars in debt before she even has her first day on the paid job, changing her freedom to accept low-paid public service jobs, and even her options about having children early.

She can work for pay part-time while studying, but the dual demands on her time will probably end her up with lower marks, so will exclude her from scholarships. Statistics Canada revealed in a study Dec 8, 2001 that the employment rate of full-time students has been rising since 1996. At that time around 38% of students aged 20-24 had paid jobs while attending school. By 2000 the number was 47%. We have made it very very hard for our young people to get the education we tell them they should have to succeed. We are the problem. They are not.

The federal government has started several programs that recognize education matters. These programs on the surface are laudable- an education savings program and a scholarship program.

But there is a catch. Parents saving for education get a 20 per cent grant on the first $2000 they contribute to a registered education savings plan, which means up to $400 annually by the 1998 budget. Parents can transfer a maximum of $50,000 to such a plan. The state not only won’t tax you on this money but it will kick in some money of its own to help.

However only those who have a spare $2000 - $50,000 can benefit from this plan. Kevin Hayes, economist at the Canadian Labour Congress has revealed October 3, 2001 that higher income families disproportionately benefit from the federal government’s education savings grant program. Households earning at least $80,000 were 3 times more likely to have reistered education savings plans. The federal government pays about $1 billion a year for nearly 1.5 milion children under the program, but Hayes has commented that this money “is going to those who need it least”

There is a millennium scholarship program that gives money, no strings attached, to those who get high marks. Starting in 2000 the federal government gave $2.5 billion to over 100,000 students. The scholarship average for a full-time student is $3,000 a year to a total of $15,000 over four academic years. Yet with high tuition fees most students need the money before the course, not after. And if they have part-time jobs during the course, as they may be forced to do, they likely can’t study the hours required to get high marks and a scholarship. It is a catch-22. Often only the rich have the leisure to study for high marks.

In some nations university education is paid for by the state. It is an investment. An educated population is more likely to get high-paying jobs and pay taxes and make a more productive nation. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in June 2001 revealed that most OECD countries have increased their post-secondary
enrolment by more than 15% but in Canada the rate has declined by 10% from years 1995-1999. Government funding here has fallen to 13% below its 1995 levels.

programs, advice

Another strategy the state has used to address the career-family dilemma is costly to the state but does not help at all with child poverty. It is free advice. For some reason there is a reluctance on the part of government to actually trust a parent with cash, so money is sieved through an intermediary, an ‘expert’ who then tells the parent how to parent, without providing any financial support, or who takes over some of the parenting tasks. The assistance to parents is not financial.

Here are some of the state’s costs related to children in the year 2000

Parenting information – brochures but no cash $29million
National Children’s Agenda $2.2 bilion over 5 years
Canada Health and Social Transfer $30.8 billion in 2002
fetal alcohol syndrome - $2.6 million
fetal alcohol syndrome in first nations - $1 million
Head start early education institutions - $46 million
Prenatal nutrition $27 million
Daycare for aboriginal kids $81 million
Bright Futures mental health for first nations $20 million
Any one of these programs is probably doing good work

In a way it is a question of trust. If this amount of cash is available, and poverty is the main problem families face, it seems odd to deprive the families of it but to have the money flow only to advice programs. Yet there is a reluctance to trust parents apparently.

Ironically we do trust people spend their salaries wisely and for those few who do not, we have laws that make purchase of some goods like illicit drugs, punishable. Not so with care of children. Apparently the state does not trust that a starving child’s parents, given money, will feed the child. So there are milk for babies programs that provide milk but not money. What then of toddlers who need milk? What of babies who are allergic to milk but need milk substitute? In other words when we run only programs and do not empower parents to make fine-tuning, we do not lead to equal benefit of all, a Charter right, and we deprive people of the liberty and autonomy of parenting. We are so afraid parents will do it wrong that we have as if a Monopoly sign on the maternity word ‘Do not pass Go. Do not collect money” The money has to flow through a third party.

And there is the problem. Foundations, organizations, and service groups believe they are doing great work for kids, and some doubtless are, but when they lobby for more funding, as they usually do, it should not be forgotten that they have a vested interest. Their jobs depend on the assumption their service is essential and they would be the last to want funding to go directly to parents, where in fact it might serve as well.
Centres of Excellence cost the state in 2002 half a million dollars a year and the budget is to increase to $4 million a year. These are high-intervention facilities with reams of highly paid staff to take care of kids, sometimes to whisk kids away from ‘at risk’ parents at birth, organizations dedicated in some ways to the theory that parents are incompetent.

A further way the state invests in children is a bureaucratic one - it studies them. The National Longitudinal Survey costs over $7 million a year just to study kids. Again, like daycare, like counseling of troubled parents, like extending maternity leave to CEOs, research is not an inherently bad idea. But these programs are lopsided. If no money goes to children in poverty, just studying poverty does not help even one child.

There are post-partum support programs and home visits of nurses for newborns which actually are of some use but they are not of financial help.

There are some small benefits like the GST credit which comes per child. It is $105 maximum. The cleverness of such programs is that when people who have been kept down for a long time get any small token help, they are nervous about complaining. Many fear they will lose what little they are getting. So small amounts are enough to quiet them. This has historically often been true for women, who are taught by an ethic of forgiveness that flowers or candy will about make up for any wrong. Yet surely women and men, motivated by the wellbeing of our kids, should not settle for tokenism.

Reducing taxes

When asked for financial help for caregiving, governments have in the past ignored the letters, replied by form letter or said they could not afford this though it is a nice idea. When they have acted, it has sometimes been to reduce taxes across the board.

They claim that a drop in tax for families has resulted so all is well. Sadly this is not true. If the tax policy was unfairly biased against some lifestyles, dropping the tax for all people equally simply continues the bias, only with different numbers. Sometimes the tax adjustment seems suspiciously to even by for show only, to be able to claim that there was a tax break, when in fact the other hand of government was sweeping in to increase costs. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has released a study July 8, 2002 in BC for instance finding that the Liberal government there slashed provincial income tax by an average of 25%. However it then raised costs for medicare premiums and child care so the net effect for those with low income was a loss. Statistics Canada released a study July 19, 2002 that the median net worth of families in 2000 was up 2.2% from the previous year. The top 25% of Canadian families had a 14% rise in net worth between 1984 and 1999 and a 40% jump in financial wealth. So was this true for all families? Hardly. The bottom 75% of families had no such gains. A typical low income family in 1999 had only $300 in savings for emergencies and should a huge financial crisis come, most could not even produce $6,000 if they liquidated all their assets. The poor remain not only poor but sometimes poorer by these cuts.
piecemeal solutions- shelters, food banks

Money problems are likely the source of most family stress, but it is only the outbreak of reaction to them that is treated. Spousal abuse, child abuse, family violence may erupt based on lack of self-esteem due to poverty, feeling backed into a corner without options due to poverty, or resentment for the poverty that marrying and having children has caused. Yet instead of treating the cause, governments treat the symptom.

Men who abuse their wives are counseled to control their tempers. Parents who abuse their children are sent for counseling. A Toronto help line for abused women, has reported in April 2002 that it is expanding since it receives 25,000 calls a year. Currently in Ontario there are 101 women’s funded shelters. It is estimated that 15,000 women and 13,000 children use these shelters each year.

The Canadian Centre for justice estimates that 70 women are killed each year in Canada by an intimate partner. The simple answer is arrest and punishment – but it could be argued that we are intervening too late. What led to this intense level of frustration? If it was poverty, what role did society play in creating that problem? This does not mean abuse is ever right or justified. It is not. But it is too easy to simply say the problem is with the abuser alone.

saving money by hiding benefits

Sometimes the state gives generous benefits on paper but only to those who hear about them. A 78 year old woman eligible for a guaranteed annual income supplement since 1989 was not aware of this so did not apply for it until years later. She asked that it be made retroactive and was refused so she went to court and ultimately received a $20,000 cheque. Independent analyst of government policy Richard Shillington has estimated in 2001 that there are about 300,000 seniors in Canada who also fail to apply for this GIS supplement. Most not been contacted to tell them they could get it.

A similar situation exists with the child tax benefit, a cash help which on the surface sounds very good for low income families. However they only get it if they know to apply for it. Unlike family allowance which used to come automatically, they have to make an effort to apply, even if they earn so little they do not have to fill out a tax form.

In Alberta the Alberta Child Health Benefit has been extended in July 2002 to more children in low income families. However the Calgary Herald estimated that only one-third of the children who are eligible actually receive the benefit.

The same problem exists for the goods and services tax rebate. You only get it if you know to apply. These programs then which claim to benefit the poor and which make the state look good on paper, end up costing the state very little because they are administered in ways the keep many people from accessing them.

guaranteed annual income
Some organizations have suggested poverty could be fixed with a guaranteed annual income. It is suggested that this program would allow caregivers in the home to have financial security, independence, and to contribute to their own pension plans. But, and the suggestion is flawed. A guaranteed income for homemakers, the same as for those who do no work paid or unpaid, does not recognize caregiving. As a guaranteed annual income for all citizens, it would go also to those who do not provide care, who do not have the extra costs of this care – it would be the basic allotment to those who really do ski all day or sleep all day. And in that respect it would not advance the recognition of what is useful work for society.

Guaranteed annual income programs have been proposed from time to time through history. In Manitoba there was even a functioning pilot of it called MINCOME. It was a minimal assistance for all, therefore not seen as charity but as a right. It was for laid-off factory workers and others and it acted as a minimum cash benefit per family. It was reduced depending on income so once there was family income of adequate size, it was eliminated. It was paid in monthly instalments not once a year so it functioned in some ways budgetwise as a paycheque. And it was easy to integrate with the positive tax system at the time.

Some had feared that by this program the poor would quit low paying jobs and just live off of it. In fact this did not happen. There was only a 1% reduction in the paid work for men, 3% for married women and 5% for single women. There was a fear that women with independent means now might leave their husbands and the divorce rate would skyrocket. That too did not happen. But it did have the disadvantage in that it continued to treat a caregiver of the sick, young, handicapped or elderly, putting in 18 hours days 7 days a week serving others, the same as unemployed.

in the absence of the parent -overlegislation

What has happened, when parents can’t be there for the kids, and kids in droves resist going to daycare after age 12, is that many kids are left alone for several hours a day. It is legal but kids, unsupervised have been known to stray. To protect kids we now have a super-legislative wariness. It is inconsistent. There are appeals to more closely monitor your child’s use of a seatbelt, your child’s use of the public park, you teen’s surfing of the Internet, and yet without a parent there to provide this monitoring, parents cry out for the state to make accidents and straying somehow impossible. A June 22, 2001 Media Awareness Network study found that 80% of Canadian students aged 9-17 have Internet access at home and surf the net at least an hour each day. When asked, only 16% of these students said their parents knew much about what they were doing and 38% said their parents knew nothing of what they were doing.

So we have blocks on computers to keep kids from porn sites and we have security checks on any adult who coaches a child or volunteers at a school.
We have policies now governing some of the most innocent and normal parts of a child’s life just in case there is a tiny risk of a problem. A school yard squabble is now labeled a bullying incident. Teasing is verbal abuse. Someone who picks the child up from school is suspected as a potential abuser. Strangers are ‘danger’.

And parents are not trusted. A littlespanking on the bottom of a toddler is now cause for a legal case of physical abuse. Parents who send the child to his room without dinner risk a complaint of child abuse. Teens are warned to report on instances of abuse in the family and the definition of ‘abuse’ has become very wide.

Kids can’t bike now without helmets. Roller bladders need helmets and kneepads. Kids in canoes need lifejackets. Kids in cars need carseats. There is nothing wrong with any of these laws and yet we also are protecting our children in an insulated world risk –free so when they want to take risks, as most teens do, to break away, we have made the stakes higher. Did we allow them to learn caution on their own under our watchful eye?

In the absence of parents we are putting kids in a very scary world because we are scared of the world for them. And we are inconsistent about it. We tell them to not trust strangers but to run to any stranger with a ‘block watch’ sign on the door. We tell them to not get in the car with anyone they don’t know and we wonder why they hesitate to get into the police car that came to rescue them. Maybe if we simply spent a bit more time with our kids, supervising them ourselves, reasoning with them and answering their questions as they come up, we’d create for them a less sinister world and one in which they felt individually competent.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN - OTHER LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

Other historical liberation movements can serve as role models for those wanting rights for caregiving. The civil rights movement in the US amazes me at how long people endured oppression before they dared object. But then I remember that the first to object were summarily whipped or even killed. Even Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. It took courage to object and it took a network. The civil rights marches brought numbers to the argument and the power of numbers. And yes there were the ordinary powerful moves of gutsy people like Rosa Parks who objected to the bus regulation about where blacks could sit. It took a long time for the movement to make headway and it did take ‘reverse discrimination’ or ‘affirmative action’ for a time. It took policing of the schools so blacks entering formerly all white schools would not be harassed and stoned. I was born in 1949 and have had the privilege of watching one of these most powerful tides of liberation.

And the struggle is not over. We have not yet seen a black president. I study with interest how blacks got entry into the mainstream, first one might notice through the arts. Sidney Poitier finally got his Oscar for a lifetime achievement, just this past year in 2001. It took a long time. They got entry through sports – Jackie Robinson. In fact one of my daughters observed that for a time in the sports world in the US there was an associated class and race structure to each sport – tennis and golf were for middle-class white
males. Football and baseball however featured many black athletes. Basketball was the entry sport for blacks in poverty. And then in 2000 we had Tiger Woods who changed the face of golfing.

It interests me how we first let the underclass in, and where. It took rich women to help poor women. For instance in the women’s movement the Famous Five in Canada who got rights for women to serve in the Senate were actually all middle-class. It has even been said that for any subjugated group to gain equality requires the good will of someone in the oppressing group. And true enough in the women’s movement also, there have had to be a few key men who believed in it. Sir Richard Cartwright argued for women to have pensions, back in 1904. Men have shied away from advocating for women in the home lately because they feared being mistaken for keeping women in the home, oppressively, dominating them. They were often afraid their respect for their wives’ roles there, and their feeling of the complete equality of the two’s contributions, would be misunderstood as veiled chauvinism so few spoke out.

Ironically it has taken a combination of women daring to admit they preferred to be in the home to clear the way for men to admit they respected whatever the woman chose. But what has advanced the movement faster has probably been the entrance of men into the home caregiving role. As soon as dads admitted that sometimes they were the home care provider while the wife earned money, and this system worked for them, men started to understand the penalties society visits on the caregiving role.

The irony of an oppressed people is that they start to consider themselves second-class. I am still concerned that in the black community there is apparently still an insult between each other of ‘nigger’. It is as if they establish a hierarchy of class and ‘nigger’ is still the bottom. And sadly, you hear a parallel still in the women’s movement, despite all of our politically correct rewording of ‘man’ to ‘person’ in legislation.

In movies and in locker rooms and jokingly between each other on the street, men will playfully insult the weakest among themselves as ‘girls’. It takes a long long time to break a tradition of an underclass. The oppressing group finds it hard to change the stereotype – and even the oppressed group finds it hard. One early feminist noted this same tone in women. You hear it even today. A homemaker who says ‘Well I don’t work’ is part of the problem – she needs to be informed she indeed does work and her work is vital. She has been held down so long economically that she has started to believe the lie. One early feminist said “Any woman who does not think well of herself makes life hard for all women’

I have become quite an admirer of the gay rights movement, not just because I believe what two consenting adults do privately is not my business, but also because the movement has been so very astutely managed. Gays faced huge obstacles in nearly every aspect of life a few decades ago and the leaders of the movement wisely decided to chip away at the obstacles one at a time, patiently, starting with the least offensive. So over time they have won inheritance rights on death, ability to contribute to the other’s RRSP, the right to deduct the other as a financial dependent, ability to adopt, until now they are
working on the more contentious ones of getting recognized officially in a marriage-like recognition or civil union.

Oddly enough those biased against gays sometimes claim they are out to destroy marriage. What these critics may have not noticed is that gays are endorsing marriage. They want the trappings and entanglements of marriage. They want the protection and obligation that go with a public commitment and there are many obligations involved including loss of GST tax credit, loss in child tax benefit, loss in interest gained on a tax return, loss in deductibility of the principal residences, loss of rollover of goodwill on transfer of business, loss of ‘equivalent to married’ credit for first child, loss in deductions for personal and living expenses and a higher tax as a couple than if they were two singles. They are willing to make these sacrifices just as those in heterosexual marriage have made them. I think they are courageous in the legal commitment.

Gays in Quebec can now declare a civil union June 2002. A gay teacher’s fight for approval in elementary school of books about two dads or two moms has hit the Supreme Court June 2002. Polls have shown that the public is actually very open to gay rights. A study conducted by Strategic Counsel and funded by Focus on the Family in June 2002 revealed that 46% of those asked thought homosexuals should be allowed legal marriage and only 44% were against. 55% of those under 40 felt children of same sex couples are likely as happy as any other children. 55% said gay couples should be entitled to the same tax, pension and other benefits as heterosexual couples.

Gay rights parades may still be scorned by those over 60 but there is a growing tolerance out there and this is if I may comment, all to the good. The public wants equal rights as a basic tenet of democracy – and this principle may well extend to the lobby for equal rights for unpaid labor.

It does seem that any movement starts as a trickle and then if it catches a magical connection surges forward into a torrent and then a flood. It is the magic moment which is not clearly discernible looking backward but the gay rights movement clearly is a huge wave now. The Constitutional Court of Germany has ruled in 2001 in favor of allowing same-sex unions, giving them official recognition and common surnames, and allowing a foreign partner to join the one in Germany. The law does not give gay couples the same tax advantages as heterosexual couples or allow them to adopt children. By August 2002 4500 gay unions had been officially recognized under the new legislation. Similar laws have been passed in several Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, Portugal and France.

It would appear that Canada looks closely at what other nations are doing. UK’s Tony Blair had only to announce the downgrading in that country of possession of marijuana as a criminal offense and Canada’s Justice Minister July 2002 was already speculating openly about making the same move here.

The public is in favor of choices and tolerance. The 2002 study by Focus on the Family cited above also found that attitudes to single mothers and common-law unions are
changing. 76% did not care if a child’s parents were legally married as long as the home was safe. 76% said children of single parents are as happy as other children. And 71% said the current tax system makes it difficult for families to have one parent at home with kids.

The real point about equality rights is to give respect to the options and not make a legislated superiority of one choice over another. In gay rights. In marriage versus common-law rights. In abortion rights. In school voucher rights. And ultimately hopefully in the rights of how to raise your child in or out of daycare and how to care for your sick, handicapped or elderly relative- at home or in an institution.

In such movements of big social change there is an intriguing rhythm. It has been analyzed various ways. One is ‘first they ignore you, then they mock you, then they endorse you.’ In Hollywood the stages of fame are parallel--Who is James Cagney? Get me James Cagney. Get me a younger James Cagney. And “Who is James Cagney?”

Movements of vast social change have been likened to jumping through the ice of prejudice. They have been likened to a tunnel and seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. Martin Luther King spoke of his vision of a tunnel and seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. The point is, there is an inexplicable element to what makes some idea in history have no credibility for a long time, be held only by a few viewed as weird and outcasts, and then suddenly that takes off, that ‘comes into its own’ that breaks through that wall and becomes accepted.

The switch is gradual at first but the last few stages are amazing. The public sensing a wave does seem to jump on, and ‘bandwagon’ images have been used akin to the surge in popularity of rock stars or new clothing fashions.

The difference between the flavor of the month fad and a genuine social change is that the genuine lasts. The public is slow to change an idea and then once it has it, slow to reject it. Good government leaders always keep an ear to the ground, surveying the public to sense when these waves are actually coming. And this means that though we elect those who govern us based on their ideas, they also to stay in power have to listen to us and themselves keep on top of where we already are heading.

There is a saying’ I must follow them. I am their leader”. Governments are often, like parents of teens, the last to know. It is then of no real surprise that polls show endorsement of recognition of caregivers in the past decades, while government policy so far has not yet changed. But pollsters have their effect, commercial marketing notice trends, think tanks do unbiased studies and slowly doors are opening to at least hearing what the public already is thinking.

Here are some of the polls that are revealing a new public mood.

✓ In 1988 the Vanier Institute found that if both parents are in paid labor, the preferred child care arrangement for kids was 17% daycare, but 18% relative care and 18% wanted spouses taking turns
A 1991 study by the Federated Women’s Institutes of Canada found that among rural parents, 69% said that if economic conditions permitted they would prefer to be home to care for their own children.

A 1992 poll by the National Post and Homemakers’ Magazine found that 78% of women say family is more important to them than career.

A 1994 Angus Reid poll found that 70% of parents who worked outside the home said if they could they would choose to have one parent at home with the children.

A 1995 General Social Survey found that 59% of men and 51% of women felt that children may suffer if both parents are away from them at paid jobs.

A 1996 Canadian Council on Social Development study found that many parents go to extraordinary lengths so that one can be at home when the children are young, often living below the poverty line to do so.

A 1997 Ontario Compass poll found that 92% of Ontarians believe that parents themselves are the best child-care providers for infants and preschoolers.

A 1997 Global Communications study by Shea Warrington found that 75% of Ontario parents feel children raised with a parent at home are happier than if they are raised in other places.

A 1998 Southam Compass Poll for the National Foundation of Family Research and Education found that 86% of those asked want change in tax law so young families can afford to have a parent at home.

A 1999 Canadian Policy Research Network study found that a majority of parents want economic supports for parents during the first 3 years of life so the parent can choose to be home with the children as an option.

A 2000 Angus Reid poll found that 77% of Canadians want parents not the state to provide care of the children.

The Globe and Mail newspaper on Nov 5, 2001 announced a survey finding that 76% of those asked felt children’s well-being is sacrificed if both parents have paid employment.

These polls parallel US polls

A 1990 LA Times poll found that 70% of American women with paid income would quit their jobs if they could, to stay home with their children.

A 1990 Virginia Sims poll showed that 60% of mothers with paid employment said their dual role of career and family balance puts them under stress.

A 1995 poll by Louis Harris and Associates conducted with the Whirlpool Foundation and the Families and Work Institute found that if they had enough money to live as comfortably as they would like 15% of women and 33% of men asked said they’d work full-time for pay, 33% of women and 28% of men said they’d work part-time and 20% of women and 17% of men would choose volunteer work.

A 1996 Poll of Parents with children at home by Penn & Schoen for the National Parenting Association in the US found that 94% of parents surveyed endorsed tax incentives to encourage family-friendly policies by employers such as benefits being extended to part-time workers and flexible working hours.
- A May 1996 Parents Magazine Poll Reader survey found that 43% of mothers would like to be home, nearly twice as many mothers as had felt that way in 1989. 68% of mothers with income said they did not feel they had enough time with their families.

- A 1996 National Study of Women’s Awareness, Attitudes and Opinions conducted for Concerned Women for America found that 8 out of 10 American women agreed with these statements: “If I could afford it, I would like to stay home and be a full-time mother.”

- A 1997 Pew Poll in the Baltimore Sun revealed that 81% of women say it is harder to be a mother today than a generation ago. 25% of mothers with children under age 18 said that if they had a choice they’d not work outside the home, 29% said given a choice they would work full-time outside the home while 41% said given a choice they’d work part-time outside the home.

- A 1999 poll by Parenting Magazine Report on Childcare Survey, found that over a third of those asked ‘wished they could stay home’ with their child.

- A 2001 issue of Future of Children by Dr. Kathleen Sylverster cited US polls showing that the American public believes parents should be the primary influence in their children’s lives and it is best if mother can be home to care for the very young.

What leads an idea out of the wilderness into mainstream? Some think advertising does it – and certainly ads for recycling, ads against drinking and driving, even ads against smoking have had a real social effect over a generation. Some think it is role models, a few people who dared to speak out such as Martin Luther King, or Gandhi. Some think it is just accident – a lucky break, like the sudden popularity of the happy face logo or the quick sweep a new expression has in the language, like ‘phat’ or ‘she’s a babe’.

In 2002 there is I believe a movement that is surging, kind of like a big wave gathering up power in the ocean, about to crest on the beach. Streams are flowing into this ocean from many sources – medical research about kids, medical research about adult stress, sociological research about the ethic of care, legal research about equality rights, economics research about the long-term productivity of nations, and feminist research about traditional roles. And together these currents are forming a huge wave that I predict will crest sooner rather than later.

I hope I live to see it.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN – HOW OTHER NATIONS ARE ADDRESSING IT

In 2001 the world population of children under 15 reached 1.8 billion. The UN takes great interest in children’s wellbeing and has stated in the Rights of the Child the right to presence of an adult with whom to form an attachment, the right to appropriate language stimulation and the right to the presence of an adult who can understand and respond to the signals of that child.
The UNICEF 2001 study of the state of the world’s children set out goals of empowering parents and caregivers, of allowing parents increased time to meet child-rearing responsibilities and encouraging family-given child-care, recognizing that ensuring women’s rights is basic to ensuring children’s rights. The report suggested using existing strengths of communities, families and social structures and acknowledged the strong desire of parents to provide the best for their children.

Most nations notice the problems discussed in this study because of the poverty that comes with ignoring kids. Child poverty is not a quirk of the economy but a built-in consequence. If you deny financial support to those who have children, children will be poor.

**United States**

The US has high rates of child poverty directly related to its devaluing of the work of child-rearing. A March 2002 study of US children by the National Centre for Children in Poverty found that 37% of American children (27 million) live in low income families. 9 million are under age 6. The US child poverty rate is 2-3 times higher than that of many other western industrialized nations. In America the child poverty rate is even higher for certain races, compounding what may be a lingering paid workplace job discrimination with this unpaid work discrimination in tax policy. Children in African-American households or Latino households make up for 58% of those children in poverty in the US.

In addition the US has other problems. Though it offers a tax rate that allows income-splitting, there were as of 1999, 66 separate provisions in the Internal Revenue Code that penalized marriage. Many lobby groups worked hard to eliminate what had been called the ‘marriage penalty’. If a married couple files jointly they pay lower tax off the top but they get fewer deductions. For instance a single person could deduct $4400 in 1999 but a married couple together could only deduct $7350.

The tax brackets differ also for individuals or couples. The lowest bracket, at 15% is for individuals earning $26,250. One would think on the married scale, the 15% rate would be for incomes exactly twice that, since they combine income and share it, at $52,500. But in fact that rate kicks in for couples earning $43,850. This marriage tax penalty deduction was defeated in 2000 but other areas of problem remain.

In the US there is a large lobby for national daycare. But parents, as in Canada, continue to vote with their feet. In 2000 the American Psychological Association’s Dr. Danie Dodge noted that 40% of young children were still in parental care and that 21% were in care of relatives. The daycare lobby does not speak for all parents.

The US gives token endorsement without money support to at-home parenting. In February 1998 Congress unanimously passed resolution 409-0 saying that the federal government ‘should acknowledge the importance of at-home parents and should not discriminate against families who forego a second income in order for a mother or father
to be at home with their children” However the resolution involved no actual changes in the law.

President Bush of the US announcing in March 2001 that he wants to help families rear children, doubled the child credit to $1,000 per child. Yet daycare preferential funding continues. US maternity leave remains at 6 weeks only but has been questioned recently (July 2002) after an international study found that breastfeeding must last at least 16 months over a woman’s lifetime to give her the medical advantage of a decreased risk of breast cancer.

Figures from the US Census bureau in 1996 found that 49.9% of mothers care for under 5s at home and 3% care for them on the paid job, 7.8% of parents tag-team and 1.5% are cared for by dads at home and 12.3% are cared for by relatives. 75% of US kids under 5 are not in daycare.

The 1997 Census Bureau Current Population Survey found that 25.9% of families have a mother at home. Of the 74.1% of families who have both parents employed for pay 46.3% of paid mothers work for pay part-time only. Tallying full-time at home or part-time at home moms, the total is 60.2% of all US mothers.

In the US Mother At Home (now renamed Family Home Support Network) lobbies to expand tax credits for nondaycare children, to encourage home-based business, to promote parental time off at paid work, to change divorce law to not penalize homemakers.

The US has an increasing number of dads raising kids at home. In 1988 the figure was 15% of all families and in 1991 it was 20% according to Barbara Vobejda and D’Vera Coh in Washington Post May 20, 1994. Two million men are the principal child care.

United Kingdom

In the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair has proposed a Child Trust Fund of cash for every child at various points of childhood. The proposal is for every newborn to receive 250 pounds and then for this amount to be augmented by 50 pounds at ages 5, 11, and 16 years. Children in poverty would get double those amounts.

In the UK in 2000 the much vaunted policy of maternity leave was questioned since it was noted that it excluded 3.3 million parents simply because their children were born after Dec 15, 1999. The firm challenging the law was the one the Prime Minister ‘s wife works for.

In March 1999 Tony Blair vowed to eradicate child poverty. However to do so he did not aim directly at poverty per se but at encouraging parents to earn money. This approach is parallel to initiatives in other western nations and continues the unfortunate neglect of children in home-based care. Blair instituted a National Child Care strategy, parental and paternity leaves, and encouraged people to move from welfare to paid work.
He increased child benefit allowances 80% since 1997 and started a Sure Start program, similar to the Head Start program in the US. However a study April 2002 by Lisa Harker of the Institute for Public Policy Research in the US has found that child poverty in the UK is not decreasing as had been hoped. In fact now there is a rush to redefine poverty. Harker suggests a measure that not only includes relative income but nonmonetary deprivation. She would like a scale to measure how many essential items people lack such as two pairs of a shoes or a warm coat.

The National Assembly of Women has however continued to express interest in the movement for unpaid caregivers. British economist Anthony Atkinson has suggested that caregiving work is work of social relevance and that money for this is ‘participation income’

**Other nations**

Australia’s tax policy contains similar clauses to those of US and Canada in that welfare benefits for single mothers are often suddenly withdrawn if the woman marries. The assumption that now the man’s income will cover them and they don’t need the money forces them into a financial dependency. President George Bush of the US is seeking to remove such restrictions in his country since the policy discourages women from marrying the fathers of their children.

According to a 2001 study eleven Western European countries provide paid nursing break of at least one hour to new mothers in paid employment.

In fact the European movement seems to be advancing well. The European Federation of Women working in the Home in July 2002 circulated an international petition over the Internet requesting the UN Commission on the Status of Women focus on women’s traditional caregiving work. The commission asks for recognition and quantification of economic and social value of such work, inclusion of such work in satellite accounts and core GDP accounts, and the right of every woman to a basic pension valuing unpaid caregiving time.

1991 statistics from Doris Anderson’s “The unfinished revolution: the status of women in twelve countries” summarized women’s movement advances.

Greece- women did not get the national vote until 1952. As of 1983 divorce is based on mutual consent after one year and women get 1/3 of the assets and do not get part of the husband’s pension. Child support is not enforced

Spain- women got the vote in 1931, lost it in 1936 and regained it in 1977. 2/3 of children aged 3-5 go to publicly funded primary school 9-5 daily but can recoup some of the fees which are adjusted based on income. Breastfeeding time off is allowed. Equal property division on divorce is legislated but child support is not enforced
Italy - women got the vote in 1945. 42% of women with child under 10 have paid employment. There are no tax deductions for child care but over 87% of children aged 3-5 are in publicly funded primary school open 8-10 hours a day with parents paying according to income.

France - women got the vote in 1944. The state gives incentives to raise the birth rate. 1985 divorce law splits marriage assets evenly. Child care costs are deductible from income tax. Most parents use private child care. France runs state-run free nurseries but it also provides an unconditional bonus per child universally.

Hungary - gives a grant for the parent to be home or the child to be in a nursery, till age 3.

Belgium – women got the national vote in 1949. A tax deduction of 10,000 francs (US $362 in 1991) is permitted a year for all children under 3. Belgium allows parents who don’t use daycare to also claim a deduction for costs of child-rearing.

Britain – vote for women since 1928. Most women use care of 5-10 year olds by relatives and friends or home care after school. Maternity leave is tied to paid employment.

Norway – vote for women since 1913. Parents pay 20% of daycare costs. Family allowance increases with each child. Payments are given to women who are home with their children.

Denmark – vote for women since 1915. 54.5% of women are not in paid labor force. Publicly run kindergartens exist for ages 3-6 years. There is family allowance for all children under age 16. Child support is strictly enforced.

US – vote for women 1919, 44.8% of women are in the paid labor force in 1991, 26% of them part-time. ¾ of all children are looked after by neighbors and relatives. 2/3 of divorced women get no child support.

Canada – vote for women 1918, 44% of women are in the paid labor force in 1991, 20% of them part-time.

Sweden – vote for women federally 1919, 50% of women are in paid labor, 43% of them part-time. Fees for daycare are on sliding scale based on income. Government pays bonuses and housing subsidies directly to families. A mother gets 485 krona (US $92) per month per child and more after 2 children. A father who fails to pay support is pursued by the state which in the interim pays it for him. The Swedish model of a ‘daycare on every corner’ has existed since 1991. Costs are $14,000 per child per year to the state of which parents pay $1200. Family Campaign Foundation of Sweden notes that the government has deleted the word ‘family’ replacing it with the words cohabitation or household. One of Sweden’s largest firms, Ericsson increased family benefits recently to encourage more men to take parental leave for 12 months at 80% salary.
Sweden, often cited originally as a model of daycare was found in a study by Brngt-Erik Andersson to have unique features often ignored. Daycare lasted only 5-6 hours a day and parents often work only part-time away from the kids in order to spend the other 18-19 hours a day with them. The parents also have the option of being home with the child without loss of pay for up to a year. In fact in 1999 a woman who has two or three children can be paid and at home for as long as 5 years. In Sweden as of 2000 over 50% of children under age 3 are in parental care.

Daycare in western industrialized nations is quite a different story. A study by the Vanier Institute of the Family in the 1990s found that if a child enters full-time child care at age 6 months in Canada, that child will likely spend between 10,000 and 12,000 hours in nonparental care by the age of 6 years. That is equal to the number of hours the child will spend in both elementary and secondary school combined.

In the Soviet Union there were supplementary pensions for women who have over 4 children and if a woman had a large family she got money to be home with them.

Denmark- An article entitled Women in Denmark was distributed at the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995. It concluded that the universal daycare program there had not worked. The report said that though she had achieved equal pay, free abortion, child care institutions and maternity leave, ‘the Danish woman has nevertheless suffered from increasing dissatisfaction for there is also a list of negatives” which included increased stress. The government reacted to the stress and guilt in 1994 offering a year’s parental leave per child under 9 years of age after which ‘mothers streamed home in the thousands’.

In New Zealand in the mid 1990s a complaint was lodged by a women’s group helped by economist Marilyn Waring of Massey University. It asked the NZ Human Rights Commission to look into discrimination against homemakers.

Give that most industrialized nations address these issues, how do they resolve them? Kathy O’Hara of the Canadian Policy Research Network in 1998 found that of 9 countries studied, France supports both parents at home and daycare, the Netherlands supports parents with part-time paid work and flexible hours, Germany supports parents at home with money, tax incentives and pension benefits. Norway and Sweden support long parental leave, income support, part-time paid work, flexible hours and family leave while the UK, US and Canada more or less leave parents to cope on their own.

Spending by governments on social programs differs widely. Spending as a percent of GDP was tallied in 1989 by the Washington DC Population Reference Bureau. In that study current trends suggested the US and Canada would be spending 17% of their budget on social programs in 2010 while the UK spends 24%, Japan spends 26%, France spends 32% and West Germany spends 35%. It’s a matter of priority and apparently in Canada, children are a low priority. In Sweden where there is heavy spending on social programs, unemployment rates are low. Poverty actually decreases when there is help for the poor.
One analyst has noted an irony in international policy. Countries that are anti-abortion would be, one would assume, very endorsing of funding child-rearing. Yet countries that are anti-abortion turn out to often offer very little for children. Poland, Ireland and many Latin American countries were cited as examples.

Statistics from 2000 show that Canada has 17.7% of its families living in poverty while the number for the US is higher at 25.4%. It is only 4.7% in Sweden. Canada as of 2000 extends maternity benefits only to women in the paid labor force but for a full year and at 55-60% of earnings. Germany however gives maternity benefits even to women not in the paid labor force.

A lone mother on welfare is treated quite differently in different countries. In the Netherlands she gets 75% of the net pay of an average worker. In Sweden she gets nearly 100% of such net pay. In Canada she gets 45-74% of income at the poverty line.

**-family allowance**

Many nations offer a universal funding for children. Canada does not. A 1998 study by O'Donoghue and Sutherland has surveyed EU countries’ family policies and found that universal child benefits of some kind are given in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden. They are not given in Ireland or Portugal. However in those two countries there are tax credits for children. But even where it is offered, the mechanisms and administration differ. Some nations fund it through the tax system and others through businesses more directly. Some extend it to older kids, even those in their twenties if they are in school. Some increase its amount depending on family size.

Birth grants are given in Belgium, Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Finland, and France.

France set up a family allowance of 22% for basic wage for a second child but 33% for each additional child. Australia, Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Israel, Norway, UK give more family allowance per child if the child is in a large family.

In 1975 family allowance continued if the recipient was till a student to age 15 in Czechoslovakia, 26 in Yugoslavia and Italy, 21 in Switzerland.

Polls of what women and men prefer for child-rearing consistently show a preference for choice. A poll in the summer of 2000 in the UK found that 81% of the 2000 mothers asked would prefer to be home to take care of their infants.

**-vouchers**
Some countries provide money for the parent in the home as a cash allotment, to offset costs and salary sacrifice. Why do they do this? In some nations the universal daycare experiment had proven too costly to maintain and it was actually cheaper to have parents home if they wanted to be there. And for many the parental backlash was considerable if the state did not endorse anything except state care. So Norway some years ago started a cash bonus of $300 a month per child under age 3 with the amount increased to $570 a month if the parent was at home with the child.

Austria provides parental benefits that flow with the child, in home based or institutional care. Germany has announced in January 2002 a KIA Card which is a voucher, whereby parents can choose style of child-rearing.

The voucher can mean different things. A child care voucher is already available in some US states, but it is for choice of daycare only, not for home-care also. The move for vouchers in public education has gained popularity even as recently as June 2002. Parents in Sweden, Denmark, Australia, the Netherlands and Chile join the more than US 34 states that allow such vouchers. Those who argue for school vouchers could logically make a parallel argument philosophically for preschool vouchers.

The idea of a ‘voucher’ for child-rearing in Austria had several dissenters at first. It was suggested in 1995 but critics feared it might cost too much, it would discourage women from using their paid labor skills, it would result in loss of money for daycares.

However the results in 2001 are that crèches universally would cost even more so it is not costly. Since women got benefits even if on the paid job, many stayed on the paid job and there was no disincentive for those who wanted to be there. Many new mothers wanted flexibility of part-time paid work and found the legislation empowering not debilitating. Since those using daycare now could afford it, daycares also had a more secure financial footing. In addition the voucher program reduced family poverty, provided a basic income, secured the future of the human resources of the nation and corrected gender imbalance since male or female caregivers were not penalized.

**Suggestions made in Canada**

MP Paul Szabo of Canada actually recommended pay for homemakers in 1998. He suggested $50 a week, totaling $2600 a year, a monthly cheque providing independent income to the unwaged caregiver. It was a groundbreaking suggestion because it would help offset income sacrifice and would finally value the role. However is it the correct mechanism? Most said no, not because it was philosophically wrong but because it was administratively inefficient. For instance who would inspect and decide what to allot if the homemaker had part-time income? Administration of such programs would be cumbersome.

Secondly, is the amount appropriate? If minimum wage is $10,400 a year in 1998, is $2600 a year a good way to solve the problem? Many would say not.
The same year the Reform Party of Canada proposed a refundable child care expense credit which would actually end up being even less money. It would be $850 a year for children under age 7 and $510 a year for children 7-12. So the idea of recognition was good but the amount and means were flawed.

other solutions

Some countries adapt the paid workplace to family needs. So if a country for instance Germany has huge populations using daycare, what often is not reported is that the paid work day there may only be 5 hours long and that there may be a long lunch hour during which parents see their kids. The time away from a parent is not nearly the same as in some western daycare arrangements where a child may be dropped off at 7AM and not picked up again till 6PM. Surely these arrangements are very different from the point of view of the child. Options for part-time work to still get full pension, for family leave, for longer parental leave also are legislated in Norway and Sweden.

Many countries encourage the baby to be on the job site. Nursing breaks for an hour day are paid in Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden by 2001 statistics. These arrangements clearly are only possible if the child-rearing arrangement is on site or right next door to where the mother is, at all times and this arrangement of quick accessibility is doubtless of huge benefit in case of child illness or emotional upset. These are rarely parallel situations to daycare arrangements in the west where the mother may be miles away downtown while the baby is in the suburbs. This simply means that when we read statistics of daycare use in European nations we should not assume those countries are buying into our North American equivalents, or that we should move farther in our current western style because Europe finds it works for them.

France in 2000 legislated a maximum 35 hour work week on large companies. By February 2002 it was found that 6 million people in France are now working less for the same money. The weekend in many households starts Thursday or ends on Tuesday and many workers stop paid work at 3PM to go home and be with children. Many mothers can be home with their children on Wednesday. Some critics have worried this is economic suicide for the nation but the move has actually created 285,000 jobs and reduced unemployment to an 18 year low. The rest of Europe is taking notice. Belgium is nudging toward a 35 hour week. Volkswagen has slashed its German plant hours to 28.8 per worker per week. Johnathan Gersburny of the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Essex University has observed that when work hours are reduced people have more time to consume and leisure spending actually goes up.

Though Canada often looks to the US as a role model, it is European countries which have moved faster to value unpaid labor and caregiving. In fact the US picture for valuing this facet of life is still minimal. A November 2001 study by the US Child Care Advocacy Newsletter of the Children’s Defense Fund noted that in all 50 US states there is some help for low-income families but the cutoffs are very low. In 40% of the states you don’t
get help if family income is above $25,000 for a family of 3. In 7 states the cutoff is even lower, at $20,000.

President Carlos Menem of Argentina has announced in winter 1998 a retirement pension for housewives. Two Argentinean organisations, the Housewives’ Union and the Housewives’ League pushed for this scheme as part of a health care system. Italy also has legislated pensions for homemakers.

Many nations also enhance the affordability of all ways to raise children by leaving the decision in the hands of households about how to be taxed. The Canadian government refuses to consider household tax but taxes per individual only. It does not admit to or allow for income sharing.

Allowing for income sharing or splitting permits the option of a household tax. This is already possible in Germany, Greece, Luxembourgh, France, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. This area of tax equality may in fact be the most crucial one of all.

In summary, many countries have addressed the issue of caregiving and given more financial support than Canada gives. Household not individual tax, family allowance funded through payroll, birth grants, homemaker’s pension, monthly vouchers for child-rearing are all options other nations have chosen that Canada so far has not.

CHAPTER 16 - RECOMMENDATIONS

So what exactly is it that you want?

a. Statement of problems

1. exclusion of unpaid caregiver in categories of professions or lists of ‘work’
2. misleading and insulting terminology in government documents relating to ‘work’, ‘working mother’, ‘working couple’ to exclude unpaid caregiving work
3. misleading and exclusive terminology that restricts funding for ‘early childhood education’ to only those in institutional settings, not children learning at home
4. exclusion of unpaid caregivers in consultations by government over policies that affect them
5. exclusion of home-based and informal caregiving arrangements in federal programs that are for ‘child care’ or care of the elderly, handicapped, sick or dying
6. disincentives and penalties to the caregiving role including higher tax for the single and 1½ income couple than for the equal earning dual income couple
7. restriction of maternity benefits to mothers with a certain profile of paid labor
8. exclusion of unpaid caregivers from ongoing participation in the Canada Pension Plan
9. terminology that treats a spouse doing caregiving as ‘dependant’ rather than interdependent with the earner
10. -lack of equality in deductions for a caregiving spouse such that spousal deductions are not as much as personal deductions for earners
11. -unequal benefit by the nation’s children in child tax credits, making these unfairly based
12. on irrelevant criteria and administratively denying them often to those children most in need, those on welfare.
13. -exclusion of unpaid labor from national accounts

b. Main principles of proposed changes

1. -all children are of equal value
2. -having children reduces ability to pay tax
3. -the state has a role to play in supporting equally all parents as they care for children
4. -caregiving of small children benefits society, saves money and ensures future national productivity
5. -early childhood education and child care occur wherever there is a child
6. -benefits the state provides for care of children should flow with the child and be independent of marital status, race, gender, sex or sexual orientation of parents or of economic status of the parent
7. -recognizing the caregiving role advances the women’s movement to give equality to both paid and traditional unpaid roles and gives dignity to whatever balance men and women choose in meeting both family and career obligations
8. -men or women who take time from paid work in order to provide care to others have the right to dignity for this choice and equal benefits with others who use professional care for their caregiving needs.
9. -men or women at all stages of their lives have a right to contribute their money to the Canada Pension Plan to provide for their own retirement without condition of current paid employment status.
10. -maternity benefits should be based on maternity alone, available to the caregiver of the newborn child, usually the birth mother but in some cases the adoptive mother and should have no other condition on them such as paid employment status of the mother
11. -maternity benefits should be funded through general revenues or a special business tax and should not be linked to ‘unemployment’ criteria
12. -caregiving of the sick enables the paid labor force to regain health and keep productive
13. -caregiving of the handicapped, elderly and dying is an essential service in a caring society and those who do this essential work are vital contributors to the ability of the paid labor force to continue its efforts without these other concerns.
14. -caregivers are vital to an economy and to a nation’s mental health and emotional well-being.
15. -child poverty can only be reduced if money flows with the child
16. -the feminization of poverty can only be addressed if financial support is given also the traditional caregiving role in the home and pension benefits accrue to it
17. -in a democracy the people have a right to make lifestyle decisions about how and where to care for their loved ones, without state favoritism of any of the options. Stress and health disorders are reduced when people have genuine choices.

c. Proposed changes

1. -change the terminology in all government documents to refer to women in the paid labor force, not ‘working women’, and to dual income couples not ‘working couples’ and to mothers caring for their children in the home, not ‘mothers who don’t work’ or ‘mothers who stay home’
2. -change the terminology of ‘child care’ to specify whether the laws in question are for receipted or paid child care or unpaid child care.
3. -change the terminology for ‘early childhood education’ to clarify whether the laws are for only institutional settings or for all children before school age.
4. -equalize benefits for all children before school age not just with access to advice but with actual funding paid to the parent or principal caregiver, money flowing with the child.
5. -under the Income Tax Act change the spousal deduction to a full personal deduction and call it a deduction for caregivers (not a dependent deduction)
6. -permit all adults to contribute to the Canada Pension Plan, with no criterion for paid employment. Consider having the state provide the ‘employer’ portion of the premium for those taking care of the young, sick, elderly, handicapped or dying
7. -make the child tax benefit dependent on individual income of the caregiver, not on family income and possibly amalgamate it with the universal tax credit below
8. -change the child care expense deduction to a universal refundable tax credit for children
9. -make the value of the universal child tax credit equal for all families and of increasing value as the child ages, to age 18.
10. -fund maternity benefits through general revenues or a special tax, not through the employment insurance plan but possibly through either a corporate tax or a beer tax and make the benefits equal for all those caring for newborns, with no criterion for paid employment qualification and no adjustment to income of mother
11. -include unpaid work in the Gross Domestic Product
12. -for care of the sick, elderly, handicapped or dying, have the benefits flow with the person receiving the care so that unpaid and paid caregiving outside of institutions is given adequate support

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN -CONCLUSION:

This paper has analyzed the present Canadian government policy towards those who provide unpaid care of others, to see financial consequences to the family and the society, and to note implications in sociology, medicine, economics, feminist theory and law.
It raises the argument that to reach its stated goals of elimination of child poverty, full equality of women with men, and optimal national productivity, social policy must be adjusted to give financial support and social status to the traditional caregiving role.

Specific aspects of this adjustment are mentioned, including changes in terminology, in tax, divorce and child care law with options also scrutinized in international examples.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN- TIMELINE OF CAREGIVING

Socrates – 470-399BC – spoke of educating children under age 6

Aristotle 384-322 BC – believed in educating the young and noticing individual differences

1000 – Anglo Saxon laws gave women independent status in marriage. There were precise economic values of child-bearing and child-rearing – Susan Atkins- Women and the Law 1984)

1200- men had power and were the ones allowed to hold land and inherit. Women were important only for the provision of legitimate heirs.

Middle Ages – children were quickly absorbed into adult world, apprenticed between ages 7 and 12 to learn a trade

1388- Statute of Labourers – Britain- men got paid more than women regardless of degree of skill. Women earned money from home industry to augment farm salaries of married men

Martin Luther 1483-1546 – Martin Luther in Germany believed girls should be allowed to go to school

1628 – John Comenius wrote “School of Infancy” in Czechoslovakia, suggesting that children at the ‘school of the mother’s knee’ learn the foundations of all knowledge

1600s – little prestige was given to child-rearing. Rich women often used wet nurses to breast-feed their children.
1665 – British economist Sir William Petty defined income as annual worth of labor plus wealth (services not just goods)

1680s – boarding schools were set up in France emphasizing a child’s moral training. Childhood was recognized as a separate stage of life not a small version of adulthood

1693 – John Locke in England wrote “Some Thoughts Concerning Education” emphasizing natural methods of education, not harsh discipline

1700s- a current of thinking argues that children are inherently bad

1762 – Jean Jacques Rousseau in France wrote “Emile” about a child educated a new way, apart from other children. He suggested that children are inherently good and have inside themselves abilities to enhance their own learning. Pestalozzi in Switzerland applies these principles .

Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel (1782-1852) in Germany believed that play was the germinal centre of all later life and that early education was crucial to success

1776 – Adam Smith in “Wealth of Nations’ defines productive labor as labor that adds value to the subject. He considered services unproductive saying ‘the labour of a menial servants ..adds to the value of nothing’ (viewing household work as unproductive)

1789- Olympe de Gouges publishes the Declaration of the Rights of Woman during the French Revolution to protest exclusion of women in the Declaration of the Rights of Man

1792 – Mary Wollstonecraft in “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman- says women are equal to men and should not be subservient. She says girls should go to schools with boys and should not be emotionally or financially dependent on them.

1801 – In Canada women could make wills in which to dispose of their assets as they wished, whether married or not.

1830 – Speenhamland system – married men got increased wages if they had family to support

1840s- In Britain women were often paid in kind rather than in salary A major part of the wage was board and lodging.

1842 – Mines and Colleries Act – Britain – women and children were no longer allowed to do underground mining.

1844 – Factory Act – Britain – regulated hours of women’s work in factories. A Factory Bill of 1847 notes the dangers to young babies of mothers doing factory work during pregnancy.
1842 – William Beveridge says that women are doing vital unpaid service in the home when they care for the sick and elderly

1848 – Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott open the first Women’s Rights Convention in the US

G Stanley Hall (1844-1924) to understand human development studies children’s play

1850 – the tradition of the ‘family wage’ exists on the theory that money for the man supports the family, increases commitment to the employer and increases purchasing power

1850 Barbara Welter – proposes the idea of True Womanhood vaunting child-rearing as important to society

1851 – the first daycares open in Montreal and Toronto

1859 – Darwin in the “Origin of the Species” writes that there are innate differences between the sexes. Darwin says that babies inherit characteristics for behaviors such as throwing toys

1851 – Elizabeth Oakes Smith recognizes the dilemma of household finances saying “I even know of one woman who proposed to do the labor of one of her servants provided her husband would pay her, the wife, the price of service”

1859 – John Dewey advocates against authoritarian education and in favor of humanistic teaching of kids, along with active experimentation so kids can learn. He believed in early education having some self-direction, an emphasis on science. However he did not believe in unbridled permissiveness as was later believed. He says in “New Education” that children should not just rote memorize.

1860 - Blanche Glassman Hersh in “The True Woman and the New Woman in Nineteenth-Century America” tries to relate new freedoms and rights to old roles saying that woman’s highest and most sacred duty is to the home and that woman are the moral guardians of the nation. Some feminists suggest that once the parenting job is done however women should be free to enter public affairs or any other endeavour. Antifeminists argue against women having equal rights because that might make them fall from True Womanhood

1861 – a woman teacher in Toronto is paid 41% of the salary of a male counterpart

1869 – Virginia Penny in “Think and Act” says that wives by their labor and economy in domestic matters earn on an average as much as their husbands (this is an early idea of interdependence not dependence, and of income splitting)
1867 – BNA Act – (Constitution Act) in Canada – federal government gets jurisdiction over marriage and divorce. Women are ‘not persons in matters of rights and privileges’.

1870- in France a married man is paid more if he supports a family.

1870 – Britain – Married Women’s Property Acts – married women could retain and acquire assets separately and need not automatically depend on husbands financially.

1870 – US Census notes that 68% of women are homemakers but does not call this an occupational category. They are considered not gainfully employed because their labor produces no wage or product.

1871 – 50% of the paid workforce in light manufacturing was made up of women and children.

1878 – Association for the Advancement of Women in the US notes that the 1870 census there err’d because to neglect the home economy assumes that women’s work has no effect on the causes or increase of wealth.

1872 – Married Women’s Property Act – women for the first time had the right to their own money.

1881 – Susan B. Anthony argues that woman has been the great unpaid laborer of the world. She is frustrated by the ignorance and indifference of the majority of women about their status and rights.

1884 – in Ontario a married woman could now own property and sell it without consulting her husband.

1888 - in the US the Society for the Study of Child Nature was formed. It was believed that raising children is not just a matter of supervision or of instinct but skills are required.

1883- Lillie Blake suggests that women who rise early, cook, wash, clean, mend, do housework still face struggles when their husbands talk of supporting the wives.

1882 – Toronto Labour Council supports equal pay for equal work.

1884 – Ontario Factory Act – a maximum 60 hour work week is established for women and children.

1885- Dominion Franchise Act – No women could vote. Eligible voters had to be male and property owners. Later unmarried female property holders won the right to vote. Married women with property did not get this right until 1888 (married women are a historically disadvantaged group even among women).
1893- New Zealand granted women the right to vote.

1893 – The National Council of Women forms in Canada (NCWC) as a nonpartisan organization ultimately arguing for fairer taxes and in 1990 for housework to be included in the census

1893 – Domestic science was a public school course in 32 Canadian cities. McGill University offered a degree of Bachelor of Household Science in 1918 (homemaking was viewed as a skill)

1895 – Amelia Bloomer in “On Housekeeping- Woman’s Burdens” argues that the coking, washing and sewing be done cooperatively to relieve mothers of these burdens and to ‘give them time for self-improvement and the care and culture of their children”

1895 – Toronto school board refuses to hire women over 30 or married women.

1896 – Harriet Beecher Stowe in “The Minister’s Wooing” argues that woman is the spiritual overseer of the family and she should be selfless

1896- Dr. Holt in “The Care and Feeding of Infants’ says that raising children requires training and that instinct is not enough.

1897 – in the US the National Congress of Mothers forms- mothers learn from experts how to parent. Mrs. Theodore Birney, president says that intelligent parenthood is vital for the race and that’ to attain it is as well worth our effort and attention as the study of Greek, Latin, higher mathematics, medicine, law or any other professions”

1897 – in the US the National Congress of Parents and Teachers formed to improve education about parenting

1897 – Adelaide Hoodless of the Women’s Institute, Canada argues that girls need an education in order to be good homemakers

1897 – in Ontario a married woman for the first time can sign contracts whether or not she owns property

1898 – Charlotte Perkins Gilman writes “Woman and Economy”. noting that the labor of women i the home enables men to produce more wealth She feels that women are economic factors in society. Others however treat housewives as only consumers of goods, parasitic on society.

1898 – Elizabeth Cady Stanton in “Eighty Years and More’ says that mother hood is the most important of all professions but not enough attention is given to training women for it.
Karl Marx – argued that women should be out of the home earning wages. He wanted mundane household chores to be socialized. When the birth rate dropped among the poor workers however, he added in 1900 an allowance for those who had children in order to give them maternity leave

1900-05 – in Canada SC vs Mabel French- the court ruled that Ms. French could not become a barrister because as a woman she was not a person

1900 – In Canada unmarried women may vote for school trustees in some provinces. (married women remained a historically disadvantaged group)

1900 – Married Women’s Property Act – the wife is seen as jointly responsible with the husband for the support of children (the term ‘support’ may include services and child-rearing)

1901 – 70% of the paid workforce in teaching, dressmaking, housekeeping, millinery and nursing is made up of women

1902 – Australia gives women the vote

1905 – In England – Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were arrested for unfurling a ‘Votes for Women’ banner and causing a disturbance. They accepted a prison sentence rather than paying a fine. Emmeline Pankhurst mother of Christabel, joined with her daughter to form the Women’s Political and Social Union

1906 – Finland gave women the vote

1907- Julia Ward Howe argued that women deserve higher education and roles in public life and that women are especially gifted in helping others. She said that raising children expands a woman’s potential for happiness

1907 – The Senate and the House of Commons in Canada debate whether to allow women to participate in the national pension plan and Sir Richard Cartwright argues for inclusion but does not win.

1907- Maria Montessori in Rome organizes a small school for children who have been left unsupervised in a tenement. She designs material to develop the senses, language, reading, writing.

1908- first pension legislation in Canada – for families of soldiers injured or killed.

1910 – the first woman’s pilot’s license is given out – to French Baroness de Laruche
1911 – Marion Crane in “Women in Canada” argues that domesticity is work and that women who do not get decent working conditions should have the right to leave and men or husband.

1911 – in the US a Mother’s Pension was instituted for widowed women so they could still be home with their children. (Illinois recommends that children of parents of worthy character, suffering from temporary misfortune and children of reasonable efficient and deserving mothers who are without support of the normal breadwinner should be kept with their parents, such aid being given as may be necessary to maintain suitable homes for the rearing of children (the state pays so mom can be home. In 2002 the state takes care of the kids and mom has to leave the home to earn money)

1911 – Alberta’s Dower Act requires that on the death of her husband, a woman gets one third of his estate

1913 – violent clashes in Britain between suffragettes and the law result in the death from a horse trampling of Emily Davison. Members of the Women’s Social and Political Union in Britain shout, chain themselves to railings, smash windows of government buildings and stage noisy protests. Some refuse to pay taxes or recognize court authority.

1913 – H. M. Swanwick in “The Future of the Women’s Movement” says that women’s equality involves equal opportunities to do the things women want to do and includes in this ‘their peculiarly feminine work, the work which men cannot do’. For such work she argues for more help, more training and more expenditure of public money.

1913 – Rural Municipalities in Canada allow women to vote but only men can hold office

1914 – organized labor groups in Canada argue for equal pay for men and women because of the disturbing trend of some employers to not hire men because women are cheaper

1914 – President Wilson of the US proclaims the first Mother’s Day to honor the work done by all mothers. Anna Jarvis has argued for such a recognition to bring families together after the Civil War.

1914 – Ellen Key in “The Renaissance of Motherhood” says a professional paid caregiver is not as good as the natural mother who is more attentive to the child’s development and who provides greater emotional support.

1915- Nellie McClung in “In Times Like These” argues that no home can e happy when the poor mother is too tired to smile. She argues for help with chores so women can have the time and strength to raise their children. She notes’ We hear too much about the burden of motherhood and too little of its benefits” (she addresses the distinction between housework and child-rearing responsibilities). McClung also notes that many women are too self-effacing and do not claim their rights, saying “Women who set a low value on
themselves make life hard for all women” McClung argues for old age pensions, mothers’ allowances and public health nursing with free medical and dental treatment in schools.

1915 – Theodora Youmans of the Woman’s Suffrage Association of the US notes with anger government claims that women in the home don’t work, saying ‘The assumption that women however hard they work in the household do not support themselves but are supported by their husbands, that they earn nothing and own nothing – that assumption upon which all our property laws are based is so abominable that I cannot find words to express my opinion of it”

1916- Manitoba passes the Mothers’ Allowance Act – If a father is absent due to jail term, death, disability or insanity, the state provides funding so the mother can still be home to raise the children. Saskatchewan, Alberta, BC and Ontario soon after pass similar legislation

1916 – Marjory MacMurchy in “The Woman Bless Her” says that in Canada also homemaking and raising children have economic and social value. She notes “Although note yet recognized as occupations by the Census, the two most important women employments are homemaking and the care of children’

1916 – Singe mothers are given a small allowance in some Canadian provinces as long as they were at one time married and have more than one child

1917- a minimum wage law was established for women in Alberta

1917 – In Saskatchewan women with property could hold public office (rights to women were originally based on property, age, character and marital status. These conditions were only gradually withdrawn)

1917 – By the Wartime Elections Act in Canada the vote was given to women who had close relatives in the armed services

1918 – Canada – an income tax deduction is created for employees with dependent spouses (this is a shift from the assumption employers offer a family wage. It also is gender neutral. However the term’ dependent’ suggests the unpaid spouse is not contributing anything, even services)

1918 – British women win the vote is they are over 30 and own property. 8 ½ million British women are thereby eligible to vote, but few take advantage of the right at first.

1918 – Marie Stopes in Britain writes “Wise Parenthood” advocating birth control. Marie Sanger in “Family Limitation” advocating birth control was charged with disseminating obscene literature.

1918 – women in Canada (except in Quebec) get the right to vote
1918 –30 Many employers in Canada paid an allowance to married but not single employees, instead of a general wage allowance. This fund helped pay for family-related expenses. Later employers were required to pay into a fund that was used to help pay birth bonuses, nursing allowances and family allowance.

1918- Canada – by the Child Tax Exemption some costs of child-rearing were recognized, as was the social value of parenting

1919 – the British National Bureau of Economic Research defines income in the market economy as requiring money to change hands but it does include the value of the food produced in the home. (omission of unpaid labor. The principle that money must change hands continues in 2002 in Canada where child care also is not valued unless money changes hands)

1919 – Britain – by the Sex Disqualification(Removal) Act – women could now enter professions formerly for men only

1920 – in Canada a mother’s allowance is established in many provinces but only for mothers in distress.

1920 – in the US by the 19th Amendment, women got the right to vote

1920 – Dr. Augusta Stowe Gullen in “Should Husbands Pay Their Wives Salaries?” writes that the homemaking work of a wife increases a man’s earning capacity and that she is in effect his ‘business partner’. She lobbies government to declare a wife an equal partner in a marriage, with a definite income. The National Council of Canada debates the issue.

1920 – in Alberta under the Infants Act – for the first time mothers as well as fathers become joint and equal guardians of their children. In Saskatchewan mothers are automatic guardians of children under age 14 and fathers are guardians of children over age 14)

1920 – Eleanor Raylor warns that women’s movements that ignore mothers’ rights invite failure.

1921 – in BC- maternity leave is granted, for 6 weeks.

1922- Alberta’s Married Women’s Act for the first time gives a woman absolute independence in her own financial and legal dealings (this may have been for unmarried women only)

1923 – Arnold Gesell in “The Preschool Child” emphasizes early childhood as a pivotal time for education
1923 – By Canada’s Bank Law the amount of money a married woman could deposit was raised to a maximum of $2,000.

1923 – UN passes a 5 part Declaration on the Rights of the Child

1923 – an amendment to the constitution to give ‘equality of rights’ to women, the Equal Rights Amendment, is introduced but not passed. It has been introduced in nearly every session of congress since, but by 2002 has still not passed.

1925- Agnes MacPhail, Canadian Member of Parliament states that women must be given economic freedom within the home. (the mechanism of such recognition varies. Some argue for salaries for wives)

1926 – Jean Piaget in “The Language and Thought of the Child” tracks development of intelligence through four main stages from zero to 15 years

1926-30 New Zealand has a minimum salary to cover expenses of the earner supporting a family with two children. Extra bonuses are given for more than two children.

1927- Canada passes a pension act to assist provinces to give a pension to the elderly at age 70.

1928 – Dr. John Watson in “Psychological Care of Infant and Child” argued that mothers may not be the best ones to raise their own children. He questioned whether children should even know their parents and advocated instead a ‘scientific’ way of raising children, “programming” the young to fit into the culture. He argued that parents should not hug or kiss their children.

1929 – Five Canadian Women (Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby and Henriette Muir Edwards) refuse to accept the Supreme Court ruling against them and take their plea to the Privy Council in England which rules that women are persons and can take roles in public life including in the Senate. The recognition of women as legal ‘persons’ became known as the Persons Case. (Edwards v. A. G. Canada)

1929 – Hildegard Kneeland observed that letting women enter the paid professions with men did not solve the dilemma back home of assuming homemakers were financially dependent,

1929 – in Canada a committee is set up to study having a national Family Allowance

1930 – in France a wage allowance is paid to encourage mothers to remain at home to care for their children. It is to recognize ‘la mere au foyer’
1930 – in Canada married women were for the first time allowed the right to control their own wages and not have to consult with their husbands

1930 – New Brunswick allowed women to hold elected office.

1930- in the US the Social Security Act Aid to Dependent Children provided a mother’s pension of sorts so war widows could still be with their children

1938- the League of Nations tallies numbers who are gainfully employed and ignores housework

1935 – the US passes a Social Security Act to help families with dependent children

1933 –45 – in the US nurseries are funded to encourage women to enter the paid work force during the depression

1938- public assistance to the poor is given not in cash but in food and clothing and is provided on an emergency basis only, usually by private charities and local municipalities.

1939- In three days in Britain nearly a million children were moved from British towns and cities to safer rural locations. Some went with mothers and others went alone. Those who provided accommodation for such children were paid an allowance per child. (rights for women, when granted were also granted piecemeal- right to vote, to hold public office, to own property, to manage one’s own money, to be legal guardians of children)

1939 – Child care centers were set up to encourage women to join the paid labor force during the war. In the US women were encouraged to work in defense plants. In Canada in 1942 the federal government passes an order in council to have cost sharing with the provinces to establish such daycares.

1940’s Betty Friedan observed that it was suddenly common to blame a mother’s influence for ‘every case history of the troubled child, alcoholic, suicidal, schizophrenic, psychopathic, neurotic adult, impotent, homosexual male, frigid promiscuous female”

1940- John Bowly, British psychiatrist argues that each child should have a warm and continuous relationship with a parent or parent-substitute in order to have mental health

1940 – Harriot Stanton Blatch in “Challenging Years” argues that motherhood but be given an endowment “Setting her free will repay the world”

1940 – Unemployment Insurance act in Canada keeps benefits at 50% of the lowest paying job in order to encourage recipients to re-enter paid work soon. This proves however to be a hazard to health of recipients who are in long-term need. (the amount is raised in 1971 to 2/3 of wage)
1940 – Unemployment Insurance Act clarifies division of powers so that the provinces are responsible for the unemployed who can not be expected to find paid jobs, the ‘deserving poor’ such as seniors, single parents, the disabled – while the federal government has responsibility for the employable community. In 1956 federal government shares 50% of costs of administering unemployment benefits.

1943- Dr. David Levy suggests that bad parenting can consist of extremes of overprotectiveness or overpermissiveness. He suggested that people likely to look inside baby carriages of others are likely to be overprotective parents.

1943 – the Marsh Report in Canada suggests that children deserve social security.

1944 – Family allowance was started in Canada as an alternative to raising the general level of wages and to ease the transition from war to peace in terms of a family’s purchasing power. The Earl of Athlone, Governor General says it is “to aid in ensuring a minimum of well-being to the children of the nation and to help gain for them a closer approach to equality of opportunity in the battle of life”. The allowance was given to families with incomes under $1200 per year and amounted to $5 per child per month under age 6 and $8 per month for older children to age 16 (the family allowance existed in Canada until the mid 1990s. It has been replaced by a child benefits package which is quite different- non universal, clawed back for those on welfare, of decreasing size not increasing as the child gets older, and based not on the number of children but on total household income regardless in some cases of number of children ) In Quebec the cheque originally was sent to fathers until pressure from Therese Casgrain forced the premier to change this so mothers got the cheque.

1944 – March recommends family allowance be universal so children have the basics of shoes and clothing and to give parents leeway to make decisions about expenditures. Charlotte Whitton argued that family allowance should only go to the poor and that benefits should not be cash, but rather low-cost housing and health care.

1945 – Gertrude Williams, economist praised women who returned from the paid work force saying that “rearing babies through happy health childhood to independent maturity is even more important than wiring airplanes”

1945 – in Britain, universal state Family Allowance as begun, paid to mothers, after a campaign led by Eleanor Rathbone

1946 – The Commission on the Status of Women is established at the United Nations, to eliminate discrimination against women

1947 – the United Nations adopt a convention concerning maternity protection and extends coverage to women wage earners working from home. Employers must allow mothers time for nursing at paid work. (not all member nations sign this convention however and it is only for women with paid employment)
1948 – the first female US Senator, Margaret Chase Smith is elected

1948- the UN passes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) affirming equal rights of men and women and ‘the family’ as the fundamental group unit of society and one entitled to protection by the state.

1948- Ontario gives a Mothers’ Allowance to women who have been deserted over a year (the state helps with money and does not pressure the woman to leave the home to get paid work)

1949- Margaret Mead in “Male and Female” observes that women should be valued not only for work outside the home but also for work in it, noting ‘when the home itself is undervalued then also women will cease to enjoy being women and men will neither envy nor value the female role”

1950 Family allowance is proposed in the US but not enacted. It is supported by John F. Kennedy.

1950- Dr. Jessie Bernard in “The Future of Motherhood” writes that during this period no longer married mothers are expected to get a job in the paid labor force even if children are very young. Mothers on welfare in the US are expected to leave their children to get a paid job.

1952- in Manitoba for the first time women got the right to serve as jurors

1953 – the United Nations introduces a system of national accounts to monitor the financial output of a nation’s economy. It uses gross national product and ignores unpaid household labor.

1955 – La Leche League forms in Chicago, to promote breast-feeding and research its emotional and immunological benefit to children

1955 in Ontario unwed mothers and deserted wives are eligible for financial assistance

1958- in Canada a married man can deduct one third of his income of $3,000 to support his wife in the home (the value of spousal support progressively shrunk and by 1998 is about 1/7 of a standard income)

1959 – the UN passes the Declaration of the Rights of the Child giving children special protection and opportunities (In 1989 these rights are made legally binding)

1959 – Dr. David Goodman researched infancy and finds that babies wither and die despite good food, shelter and medical care, if they lack love. He notes the human need for ‘loving arms to cuddle and comfort’
1960 – the Canadian Bill of Rights recognizes the right of individuals to equality before the law and protection of the law. (Later PM Chretien expands his to equality under the law and benefit before and under the law). (Later discrimination challenges will question whether gays, homemakers and other disenfranchised groups get such equal benefits)

1960 – Professor Milton Friedman in the US proposes that for those with very low incomes there should be a negative income tax so the state would provide them with assistance

1960 – in the US it is found that families with many children often fall below the poverty level. the US launches what it calls its ‘war on poverty’ since ¼ of American children live below the poverty level

1963 Betty Friedan in “The Feminine Mystique” observes that details of her experience of motherhood as positive even though she understands the feminist movement to allow other roles. “Don’t get me wrong. I haven’t gone back to the feminine mystique. I don’t think having a baby is absolutely necessary or even sufficient for any and every woman’s fulfillment. Chosen motherhood is the real liberation” She notes however a sense of dissatisfaction in some young mothers and urges women to say ‘no’ to the housewife image. She claims that it is not hard to combine paid work and motherhood.

1963- US – President Kennedy’s Task Force on Manpower Conservation finds that a third of the nation’s children are in families with four or more children. The comment is raised that American wage structure does not provide sufficient income for parents of large families

1964 Benjamin Bloom in “Stability and Change in Human Characteristics” notes that the early years are crucial to character development

1965 in the US rather than assisting the poor with money, they are assisted with programs of health and nutritional and education experiences provided by the state. Project “Head Start’ is begun and quickly spreads for children aged 4 and 5.(the services of Head Start eventually spread to grade 3)

1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights promotes ‘equal pay for work of equal value” (the application however is restricted to the paid labor force and does not address valuing unpaid work) It also ensures that the ‘widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family while it cares for and educates dependent children”

1966 – Canada –Carter Royal Commission on Taxation proposes using the family as a unit of taxation option to that of an unattached individual. It is never enacted.
1966 – National Organization for Women forms in the US to eliminate discrimination on the basis of sex. In 1967 New York Radical Women is founded by Shulamith Firestone and it later demonstrates against the Miss America Beauty Pageant

1966 – Canada Assistance Plan focuses on federal and provincial sharing of costs to low income parents get daycare (no parallel help for parents who do not use daycare)

1966 L’association d’éducation et d’action social forms in Quebec joining 25,000 members to focus on social issues and lobby for change

1968 Canada - Divorce Act entitles either parent to apply for maintenance or for child custody, thereby removing gender assumptions. (However it does not recognize unpaid labor as a contribution to ‘support’ of the child)

1968 – 52 countries now have some system of family allowance, but the US does not. The US has an Aid to Families of Dependent Children, which is only for families without two parents.

1969 – Margaret Benston in “The Political Economy of Women’s Liberation” writes that women whose work is not paid are not deemed to do real work ‘and women themselves who do this valueless work, can hardly be expected to be worth as much as men, who work for money’ She notes however that when a man is paid his wage buys the labor of two people.

1970 – the US Children’s Bill of Rights includes the rights to nurturing by affectionate parents, the right to be educated to one’s full potential, the right to be born healthy and wanted throughout childhood

1970- Child welfare legislation in Canada requires that children under age 12 be supervised by an adult.

1970- The Toronto Visiting Homemakers’ Association expresses concern about the ‘low status which society accords to women within the home”

1970 – In Canada the Royal Commission on the Status of Women recommends that the family be the unit of taxation. It also recommends a ‘substantial cash allowance’ of possibly $500, in monthly installments for dependent children to age 16, taxed for wealthy families, but universal. “No tax receipts would be required as evidence of child care expenses because the child care allowance would be paid to all mothers...The contribution made by mothers who stay home to care for children would be recognized and fewer mothers would be forced to work outside for financial reasons (it is never enacted) The Commission also notes that child development requires a stable relationships with an adult during the first three years. It quotes Benjamin Bloom’s study which found that 50% of an individual’s intellectual development takes place before age 4.
1970- a Royal Commission on Taxation in Canada again recommends income splitting, but is not enacted.

1970- in Manitoba a tax experiment called Mincome is enacted, as a guaranteed annual income. It has good results and is not abused but is quietly ended in 1979.

1970- Farm wife Iris Murdoch is denied half of the assets of the family farm upon divorce. She challenges the courts and loses. There is a national protest after which Murdoch is given a lump sum amount in 1975.

1970- Dr. Paul Adams in “The Infant, The Family and Society” suggests that children should not be put in institutions in their first year of life. He calls separation of mother from child in that interval ‘maternal deprivation’

1970- in the US Daniel Patrick Moynihan suggests that money be paid to mothers of small children ‘not as welfare with all the stigma attached to that status” but as a return to the policy of the mother’s pension – payment for the services these women perform.

1970- Phyllis Schlafly in “the Power of the Positive Woman” argues against feminism and equal rights for women in the US, establishing an organization known as Eagle Forum.

1970- in the US the Homemaker’s Equal Rights Association aims to improve the legal status of its members, stating that the principle underlying the law that regards the wife as the property of her husband places the homemaker in a precarious position under the law. “We believe that laws should homemakers’ nonmonetary contribution to the family welfare as being of equal value to that of the wage earner and that the married woman should be recognized by law to be a full and equal partner to her husband”

1971 – Canada introduces a child care expense deduction, for single parent families only. It is $2,000 per child till age 14 (it eventually extends to dual parent families but only if they are dual income, and its value increases to 4,000, 5,000 and in 2002 7,000 per child till age 7 and 4,000 per child till age 16. It cannot be claimed however by those using care arrangements other than daycare)

1971- a Statistics Canada report estimates that household work represents 41% of the Gross Domestic Product.

1971 – In Canada the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) forms to press government to implement recommendations of the 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women. (it goes from a grant of $50,00 in 1971 to a budget of nearly half a million dollars in 1985 but shrinks seriously in the 1990s as women express less interest
in its focus. At no point does it argue for the 1970 recommendations to value caregivers in the home)

1971 – Newman, Berkowitz and Owen in their book “How to Be Your Own Best Friend’ suggest that children are an obstacle to freedom and that it is wise not to have any.

1971 – Canada Labor Code provides 17 weeks of pay while a woman is giving birth and taking care of a newborn. However the benefit is provided only to women in the paid labor force.

1971 – Act Respecting Married Women in Manitoba permits a husband to control the earnings of a wife but allows her free decision-making about property she owns. She is only permitted her own earnings if the husband is cruel or insane. (In 1972 in Ontario however a married woman can control her own earnings)

1971 – US White House Conference on Youth declares rights for those aged 14-24 including the right to preserve and cultivate ethnic heritage, the right to adequate food, clothing and a decent home (yet does not provide funding to help parents meet those obligations)

1972 – Selma James in England starts the Wages for Housework Campaign. It becomes an international movement. James claims that women’s work not only provides services but provides the future labor force. (however it does not distinguish between housework and caregiving, a distinction some feel is crucial since housework is deemed for self but caregiving is for others)

1972 – in Canada the child care expense deduction is permitted only to those using receipted daycare, not to parents or family of the child, and is proposed only to assist mothers to ‘work’, meaning to be in the paid labor force, or to be students so they can be in the paid labor force. (it does not focus on the child)

1972 - Johnnie Tillmon in “Welfare is a Woman’s Issue” writes that a woman should be able to choose whether to work outside her home or in it, to care for her own children all of the time or part-time.

1973 – in Canada the Family Allowance Act changes family benefits so the coverage is no longer universal and is indexed to the consumer price index. The parent claiming it has to report it as income and by 1974 pay tax on it.

1973 – the US Supreme Court legalizes abortion

1973 – the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women is formed to advise government on issues of concern to women. By 1993 it had a $3 million dollar budget. (At one point it endorses choices for women about how to raise their children .Funding for it is suddenly stopped in the mid 1990s)
1973 – in the US the National Organization for Nonparenthood forms with 2000 members saying that people do not deserve honor and respect simply for having a baby.

1973 – in England Suzie Fleming in “Family Allowance: the Woman’s Money” argued to have family allowance continued and extended. She said “We want to keep the family allowance as paid automatically- never mind whether the men are working or not working, on strike or supplementary benefits. It’s paid at all times, through sickness, unemployment, strikes or breakdown of marriage. This is the only money we can rely on” By 1977 it was extended.

1973 Mary Lee Stephenson in “Housewives in Women’s Liberation” suggested that women should not be home full time because they became too intensely involved emotionally with their children. She promoted daycare.

1974 – the American Federation of Teachers proposes the federal government fund universal childcare (daycare)

1975 – The UK sees its first woman jockey and first woman jet airplane captain. The PM of Britain is a woman, Margaret Thatcher

1975 Housewives for ERA forms in the US and in 1979 changes its name to Homemakers’ Equal Rights Association. It strives’ to work for the betterment of the homemaker’s legal and social status in all areas”

1975 – The US Children and Youth Bill of Rights passes and names as one of the rights ‘the right to be part of a family’

1975- the UN holds its first World Conference on Women, in Mexico. One of the goals for the next decade was to recognize the economic value of women’s work in the home, in domestic food production and in voluntary activities that are not traditionally paid.

1975 – a Gallup poll finds that 49% of Canadians favor a salary for housewives

1975 – the Calgary (Canada) Housewives Association forms (and disbands in 1987)

1975 – Tish Sommers in the US coins the term ‘displaced homemaker’ to describe women who have been homemakers all of their lives, who upon divorce are ‘forcibly exiled’ from their role and without income. They are ineligible for unemployment insurance because they had not made the contributions only paid workers can make, and they are ineligible for welfare if their children are 18 and not disabled. They have a hard time finding jobs because employers feel they are too old.

1975 – Betsy Warrior and Lisa Leghorn in “Houseworker’s Handbook” suggest that women in the home get salary to eliminate their economic dependence on men and their insecurity.
1975 – Suzie Fleming and Wendy Edmont in “All Work and No Pay: Women, Housework and the Wages Due” argue that mothers in the home produce people and labour power. They claim the right to money of their won to recognize that their unpaid work keeps everyone functioning to do their paid work.

1975 – Justice Lamer of Canada’s Supreme Court notes that after divorce there is a social problem of women unable to fend for themselves. He suggests this should be the responsibility of government not of the former husband.

1975 – Us Department of Health in “The Economic Value of a Housewife” evaluates cost of hiring someone to do the tasks a woman does at home as well as of the money foregone because her labor was not paid.

1975 – Angry welfare mothers protest when their family allowance are deducted from their welfare cheques saying “We would like to know how we are expected to do our jobs- the most important we believe- mothering- without the proper monies.

1975 – Messier v Delage – in the Court of Appeal of Quebec a nonearning spouse on divorce received spousal support which her ex-husband wanted to terminate once she upgraded her education and found paid work. Though her present income was not large, the court was asked to consider her anticipated future income. Justice J. Chouinard says that it should not be that ‘one spouse can continue to be a drag on the other indefinitely or acquire a lifetime in idleness at the expense of the other’ (this negative view of the woman’s role is a setback).

1976 – Arlene Rossen Cardozo in “Woman at Home” notes with alarm that women’s lib to this point has now forced women to be out of the home and that this is a dangerous nonliberation.

1976 – Law Reform Commission in Canada suggests that on divorce both spouses should get paid employment regardless of childrearing obligations. They say ‘everyone is ultimately responsible to meet his or her own needs...eventually to become self-sufficient”

1976 – Betty Friedan in “The Second Stage” suggests that the new stage of the feminist movement should be too have ‘some very simple aids that make it possible for mothers (or father) who want to stay home and take care of their children to do so with some economic compensation that might make the difference’ (her words go unheeded).

1976 Statistics Canada begins collection of data on unpaid labor but does not include this data in the census or the GDP.

1976 Dr. Jessie Hartling, economics professor, noting that work done for one’s own family is required to be unwaged, suggests that homemakers hire each other to qualify for social benefits.
1977 – The Canadian government incorporates equal pay for work of equal value in the Canadian Human Rights Act (homemaking and child-rearing are however still deemed to have no value)

1977 – in the US a Conference on Women passes a resolution that homemakers should be given dignity when on welfare and what money their receive in transfer payments should be called a wage not welfare.

1977 – Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women suggests that child care credits be made refundable to all mothers at home because it only when child care benefits are ‘substantially increased and made available to homemakers that mothers of young children will have a true choice of working inside or outside the home” (her words go unheeded and her organization eventually is stripped of its federal funding)


1977 – the Canada and Quebec pension plans allow splitting of pension credits as part of a divorce settlement (however homemakers still do not get their own pension, just half of the ex-spouses, making both poorer than they would be will a full pension each)

1978 – John Kenneth Galbraith in “Almost Everyone’s Guide to Economics” writes “Economists would get a very sudden increase in the GNP by discovering and including the unpaid labor of women”

1978 – Statistics Canada publishes “Estimate of the Value of Household Work in Canada” (however this monetary tally does not in fact allow money to be given for the tasks. It is just a tally of the money foregone by the family or, viewed another way, a tally of the value of the labor the state benefits from without paying)

19780 Margrit Eichler in “The Unpaid Work of Homemakers” suggests society has a responsibility to help with costs of childrearing and that mothers should get financial recognition for this task so they would be free to decide whether to participate in the paid labor force.

1978 – Francine Lepage in “Etude sur la condition economique des femmes au Quebec” suggests that money be paid to parents of preschoolers and that the amount be equivalent approximately to the cost of having these children cared for by paid caregivers.

19878 – Quebec Conseil du Statut de la femme suggests that family allowance cheques be increased as a sort of wages for child-rearing, to recognize the ‘public service’ homemakers perform in having babies and to give the woman some financial autonomy so she could hire outside childcare if she so chose, including ability to contribute to her own unemployment insurance and pension plan.
1978 – Child Tax Credit is given in Canada for low and middle income families but is reduced depending on income and eliminated completely after a cutoff point of $18,000. It is based not on income of the caregiver alone but on entire household income (some feel this ignores individual work of the caregiver and forces a financial dependency)

1978- Monique Proulx in “Five Million Women- a study of the Canadian Housewife” examines unpaid labor. (federal policy continues however to penalize homemaking as a career option and in a few years there are only 3 million homemakers)

1979 – in Bliss v. Attorney General of Canada a woman denied unemployment benefits because of pregnancy lost her case to have these instated. However the case was reversed later, noting that discrimination against a woman based on pregnancy was analogous to discrimination based on gender, and was not allowed under the Charter of Rights (later the federal government funds an entire maternity leave package in the employment insurance program – limited however to women with paid income)

1979 - Canada signs the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women endorsing the right to free choice of profession, the right to equal remuneration and equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, the right to social security especially in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age (the implications of this signing for homemakers are not admitted) The convention does however note that maternity is a social function and considers the need to care for children as an incapacity to do paid work.

1979- Canada’s largest women’s group, NAC, refuses membership to the Wages for Housework organization

1979- Alan Roland and Barbara Harris in “Sociohistorical and Psychoanalytical Perspectives on Career and Motherhood” note that some feminists who favor careers for women believe ‘that the women’s movement has unwittingly identified with pro-dominant male values in denigrating the importance of child-rearing whether by women or men” They observe the movement to achieve a balance where child-rearing and career are each accorded full worth

1979- Developmental psychologist Penelope Leach in Britain in “Who Cares?” notes that despite a mask of sentimental rhetoric society places very little value on child-rearing

1980 The UN calculates that women do 2/3 of the world’s work for 5-10% of the income and 1% of the assets. The UN holds its Second Conference for Women in Copenhagen. It is proposed that women’s work in the home and on the farm be included in the GNP. and that the definition of worker be broadened to include women who do such work. These changes are however not approved

1980- by an amendment to the Income Tax Act in Canada a married man cannot pay his wife to help raise their children but he can pay her to help run a farm or small business or to do his secretarial work if he is self-employed (The notion of family relationship
precluding monetary transactions is therefore reversed, opening the door to recognizing autonomous nature of all adults)

1980 In the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child children entitled to ‘love and understanding and an atmosphere of affection and security in the care and under the responsibility of their parents whenever possible’ (the focus on family bonding is inconsistent however with other national movements to encourage only care by third parties)

1980 Dr. Chris Bagley, professor at the University of Calgary proposes an end to daycare funding and instead a payment directly to parents so they can choose how to raise their children under age 5. His proposals are not implemented

1980– Saskatchewan Federation of Women notes that the present system provides incentives only to go to paid work and does nothing to ensure the rights of those who would prefer to care for their own children. The federation proposes a child allowance to match the day-care subsidy.

1980– Roxy Bolton of Florida notes that the current feminist movement has wrongly implied that every woman must work outside the home. “Increasingly a sizeable proportion of women who have remained at home have begun to rail against this diminished social image of themselves, against what they perceive as unjust discrimination”

1980– the Senate prepares a report entitled “Child at Risk” finding that the chief predictors of criminality are removed if a child under age 3 has the same caregiver every day and that caregiver loves the child.

1981 – Moge v. Moge – A divorced woman who had trouble finding paid work won continuation of support payments. The court under Justice L’Heureux-Dube observed the social forces disadvantaging women after divorce and the impact on the feminization of poverty. A principle was established at looking not just at equality on paper, but at equality in practice – substantive equality which took into account residential moves, inferior housing, diminished funds for recreation, social dislocation, loss of familiar networks for emotional support.

1981 – Betty Friedan in “The Second Stage” observes that it is harder than she had thought to balance career and family and that radical feminists erred in having an anti-family agenda

1985 – In Canada the MacDonald Commission recommends a universal income security program (UISP), a guaranteed annual income for all families. It is not enacted.

1981 – Canadian MP Margaret Mitchell in “Federal Action for Canada’s Children in the 80s” suggests that the parent at home with the child receive tax credits for the job of child-rearing.
1981 – Rae Andre in “Homemakers: The Forgotten Workers” notes the shift among feminists to now give attention too both sides of the career-family choice model.

1981 – In China Maw’s communist government wants all women in the paid labor force. Nurseries are collectivized.

1982 – Canada suffers form double digit inflation, double digit unemployment and double-digit interest rates. Requests for more social support for children and those who raise them are responded to with ‘we can’t afford it’

1982 – the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association is formed to be an ‘effective united voice to pursue daycare issues” (eventually the movement for daycare is relabeled a movement for universal child care though its lobby is only for tax breaks for children in nonparental care)

1983 – the European Federation of Women Working in the Home (FEFAF) is founded with the aim of informing women of their economic, legal, political and social rights and to create awareness of the needs of children.

1983 – Realistic, Equal, Active, for Life of Canada (R.E.A.L. Women) forms as a women’s lobby group for equality. (over the years it becomes associated however not just with the movement to value women’s work in the home but also with right-wing concerns of anti-gays, anti-abortion and it loses public favor)

1983 – the Holy See in “The Charter of the Rights of the Family” recommends that the work of the mother in the home be recognized and that there be a family wage so mothers will not be obliged to work outside the home”

1983 – Federal Minister Responsible for the Status of Women notes that we need to find ways to strengthen the family by reconsidering benefits for all types of families. (Her words are not acted on)

1984 – Mothers Are Women (MAW) forms as a national group to advocate for mothers primarily those who are at home with their children It ultimately joins NAC the umbrella lobby group, in 1992, and does research on unpaid labor.

1984- the Canadian Labour Force Survey excludes housework or child-rearing as ‘work’

1984- 81% of Canadians in a national poll support homemakers be included in the Canada /Quebec Pension Plan (this is not acted on)

1984 – Royal Commission on Equality in Employment recommends a Child Care Act focusing on the needs of women in paid labor to have childcare. It recommends national standards and adequate pay for daycare workers. (it does not focus on needs of parents who do not use daycare)
1984 – the PC party promises pensions for homemakers but drops this from its election strategy later.

1985- in the Supreme Court the Pelech Trilogy cases find that after a divorce, if the financial circumstance of one party improves significantly the court may exercise its relieving power, but that otherwise, if there has been an economic pattern of dependency the obligation to support the former spouse is the communal responsibility of the state.

1985- Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is amended to say ‘every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination, and in particular without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, age, sex, or mental or physical disability (later court challenges find that pregnancy and sexual abuse are also included, as analogous to sex. In the 1990s others argue that discrimination should also be banned based on economic condition, sexual orientation, marital status or choice of career. The legal status of unpaid caregivers is questioned under this section in a request for an appeal for a Supreme Court reference in 2002)

1985 – Canadian Advisory Committee on the Status of Women lobbies to get pensions for homemakers but is not successful

1985 - Selma James in “The Global Kitchen” notes that women’s equality must focus on the value of unpaid work. The International Women Count Network is formed linking 22 nations and 2000 non-government organizations to measure unwaged work.

1985 – the Quebec government promises to include homemakers in its pension plan (but eventually withdraws this)

1985 - the UN holds its third World Conference on Women in Nairobi asking that unwaged work in agriculture, food production, reproduction and household activities be included in the GDP of every nation


1985 – Daycare is promoted as the real answer to women’s liberation and government is encouraged to massively fund it as its chief children’s strategy. Fredelle Maynard writes “The Child Care Crisis” The BC human resources ministry alone pays $18.6 million to subsidize daycare for children in that province. Finance Minister Michael Wilson in 1986 reflects the current federal view that daycare is a cost of earning income, akin to a business expense, in his explanation of why nondaycare parents are excluded.

1985 – the Canadian Master Tax Guide continues its exclusion of childrearing costs incurred by families not using daycare. “Expenses will not qualify if the services are provided by the child’s father or mother, any supporting person of the child, any person
under 21 years of age who is connected by blood relationship, marriage or adoption with the taxpayer or his spouse’

1986 - Statistics Canada conducts its first time-use survey as part of a General Social Survey. (the strategy of noticing how much unpaid work is done in the country is however divided by gender and some interpret the crisis as simply getting more men to do housework. The value of unpaid labor is not itself recognized)

1986 – a National Child Care Study estimates that unpaid child care is worth over $20 billion dollars in Canada (this is the amount the state saves by not having to subsidize such care, or the amount families pay out of pocket despite sacrificing income to provide such care)

1986 – Dr. Katie Cooke, heading a Task Force on Child Care, recommends Canada have a universal program of free daycare till age 12, at an estimated yearly cost to the state of $11 billion. There is no parallel funding recommendation for nondaycare arrangements.

1986 – the UN includes women’s unpaid work in its own system of national accounts

1986 – Beth Shaw in “Maternal Health News” suggests that money be allocated by the state per child, paid monthly to the mother as mother’s income and then used as the parent chose 'perhaps on daycare, perhaps not”

1986 – the MacDonald commission recommends a guaranteed minimum income for all, being a basic annual payment of $2750 per adult under 65, and for the first child of single-parent families, and $750 for other children

1986 – the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia start a monthly allowance program for children, with salaries for mothers of children under age 2

1986 – the Ontario minimum wage is $4.45 an hour ($9,256 a year) Spousal deduction, or recognition of value of an adult who does unpaid caregiving is less than half of that.

1987 – Kids First Parent Association of Canada forms to lobby government to recognize costs of raising children in or out of daycare.

1987- a Special government Committee on Child Care, entitled “Sharing the Responsibility” recommends daycare moms get $3,000 per child per year credit till age 13 and that mothers in the home get $200 per child per year till the child is 6. (this policy in fact becomes official, though the benefits for daycare users ultimately increase to $7,000 for young children and $5,000 for those to age 16. Benefits for parents in the home do not increase)

1986 – a Gallup Poll find that 82% of Canadians favor giving pensions to homemakers
1987 – le conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille (Quebec) lobbies for a tax credit for all children till the age of 18.

1988 – New Zealand economist Marilyn Waring in “If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economics” suggests that economists re-evaluate calculations in order to include unpaid contributions of household and volunteer work by women.

1987 – The YWCA of Metro Toronto in its study “Women and Employment” observes that the Canada Pension plan discriminates against women who work at home.

1988 – Ann Finlayson in Whose Money is it Anyway?” notes that the Canada pension plan is in jeopardy partly because it was designed for a birth rate of 2159 per 1000 females and that this rate has fallen to 1669. Failure to value child-rearing has had a serious impact on child birth rates and ultimately pension plans.

1988 – a refundable child tax credit for the poor is adjusted so fewer can qualify to receive it. (the cutoff level per family is $23,500 when it was $26,330)

1989 – the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is passed, including the right to an adult with whom to form an attachment, the right to stay home or use child care, the parental right to choose how to care for the child. The Convention notes in Article 18 “States shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities”

1989 – In Elsom v Elsom The Supreme Court rules that the contribution of a spouse in the home, in the form of childrearing and household management qualifies for division of family assets upon divorce.

1989 – all MPs in the House of Commons vote to seek to achieve the goal of eliminating child poverty by the year 2000. (the relationship between child poverty and state policy to not value caregiving of children is not noted and the goal is not reached by the year 2000)

1990 – the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women’s Affairs agree to recognize the paid and unpaid contribution of women and to promote their equitable share in the rewards and benefits accruing to the economy

1990- in Ontario survivors of a woman murdered are refused compensation by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for economic loss due to no longer having her to perform parenting and household tasks (awards of up to $25,000 can be given) However a $4,000 compensation is given for loss of her pay as a waitress.

1990- Dana Mach in “The Assault on Parenthood” writes that in the US parents are becoming inventive combining paid work and parenting, by use of telecommuting, tag-team parenting. She observes that many mothers resent economic and social pressures compelling them to have paid work away from their children.
1991 – Saskatchewan homemaker Carol Less refuses to fill out a 1991 Canadian census form which requires her, as a homemaker, to state that she ‘did not work’. She faces a jail term but government, facing public uproar, decides not to press charges. She founds The Canadian Alliance of Home Managers and holds a national conference on unpaid labor.

1991 The National Farmers Union successfully lobbies Census Canada to reword a question about who operates a farm to include all family workers paid or unpaid.

1991 – a single mother in Quesnel BC wins a brief reprieve from being forced to seek paid employment, saying that care needs of her young child precluded her from ability to get a paid job.

1992 – in Quebec AFEAS hosts a forum “Making Invisible Work Visible” and presents a petition in 1993 to the Quebec government asking for an income tax credit for all children, whether at home or in daycare. They also ask that at-home caregivers be allowed to contribute to the Quebec Pension Plan.

1992 – In The Value of Household Work in Canada, by Chris Jackson, it is found that household work requires a sacrifice of income (opportunity cost) of Canadians of $159 billion. Tallied in terms of hiring some one to do the work (replacement cost) the value of such work is $198 billion. These estimates are over 31% of the GDP.

1993- in the Supreme Court Moge v Moge – it is ruled that spousal support must take into consideration the economic contribution of the unpaid caregiver in raising the children during the marriage. The requirement for divorced parties to make a clean break and become economically self-sufficient quickly is rejected.

1993 – Canada ends its universal family allowance program

1993 – Women’s groups in Canada join to focus on unpaid work as work, in their “Work is work is Work ‘ campaign to get unpaid work included in the census. They are Mothers are Women, BC Voice of Women, Women to Women Global Strategies and the Canadian Alliance of Home Managers and they are joined later by others including Kids First.

1994 – authors focus on the number of women opting to not have a powerful career but to be home with their kids. Elena Newman writes “More Moms are Homeward Bound” and Julia Lawlor writes “Executive Exodus”

1993 – Peter v. Beblow – the Supreme Court rules that common law wives also have the right to an equal share of assets upon ending the relationships, and that child-care and household services are worth recognition.
1993- MP Guy St-Julien enters one of several private members’ bills he will offer over the next several years suggesting a salary for homemakers.

1993 – a Calgary couple challenges the Income Tax Act by having a man pay his spouse to be home to raise their children. The Income Tax Court of Canada disallows this action but admits that parents in the home are victims of a discrimination. (Kids First who helped fund the challenge has inadequate funds to launch an appeal)

1995 – in Thibaudeau v Canada the court admits that there are hidden costs in the custody of children and rules that a woman need not pay tax on child support payments. (previously the ex-spouse could deduct these payments from his taxable income, but the recipient had to pay tax on them)

1994 – Statistics Canada’s fourth study of The Value of Household Work in Canada’ finds that unpaid labor now has a value between $210 billion (opportunity cost) and $318 billion (replacement cost) amounting to 31-46% of the GDP

1994 – the Conference Board of Canada surveys 7000 employees and finds that 6% provide care to an elderly, disabled or infirm family member.

1994 – the National Council of Women, others are Women, AFEAS and the Canadian Home Economics Association hold a “Women as Family Caregivers’ symposium and recommend that homemaker/home manager/ caregiver be designated as an occupation in the standard occupational classification dictionaries.

1995 – the UN Human Development Report announced that women’s unpaid work is worth $11 trillion annually and notes that though ¾ of men’s work around the world is paid, only 1/3 of women’s work is. Dr. Mahbub ul Huq notes “there is an unwritten conspiracy on a global scale to undervalue women’s work and contributions to society”

1995 – Monica Townson reports to the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women that middle-aged women who were home to raise children often face poverty in old age because of lack of financial recognition for their work in the home.

1995 – The UN holds a Conference on Women in Beijing and 181 member states including Canada sign the Platform for Action to begin determining the value of unpaid work A report from Denmark notes that a universal daycare program there has not been successful and that the government there is now considering paying an allowance to mothers who raise children at home

1995- The BC Supreme Court rules that the tragic death of a mother entitles the family to a compensation of about a million dollars for loss of her unpaid contribution and her parenting

1995 – The Supreme Court in M. V H rules that lifestyle choices predicated upon personal beliefs are protected under the Charter. (the issue in question is gay rights but
the choice of how and where to raise one’s children is also a personal lifestyle choice and may be analogous. The court also redefines family to recognize interdependence and economic partnerships which are in the public interest. (the recognition of sharing, not of dependency heralds a new status for unpaid caregivers)

1996 – Sociologist Tom Langford of the University of Calgary observes that the US pro-family movement continues to be linked to anti-gay, anti-abortion, pro-Christian, anti-feminist strategies, under people such as Jerry Fallwell, Dan Quayle and Pat Buchanan but that the Canadian pro-family movement has a more centrist position, without religious or political affiliation and is post-feminist. He singles the views of Beverley Smith as ones more academic, focusing on secular social science.

1996 – The first Canadian census to mention and tally unpaid work is distributed

1996 Marilyn Waring in “Three Masquerades” continues her study of unpaid work internationally and observes “When I see a woman holding her child, I know I am watching a woman at work”

1996 – the Canadian Council on Social Development notes in “The Progress of Canada’s Children” that contrary to stereotype, not all parents want daycare and not all using at home care are wealthy. It finds “many parents go to extraordinary lengths so that one can be at home when the children are young, often living below the poverty line to do so”

1996 – MP Paul Szabo enters a private member’s bill to have a universal child-tax credit.

1996 – Cindy Ramming in “All Mothers Work” notes that those who work in the home save the family money by doing their work unpaid (others argue that only those with paid income work and that they have huge costs to earn, such as daycare, so only they deserve tax breaks. There is even a suggestion that families be taxed on the unpaid labor they benefit from if one parent is at home)

1997 – Canadian homemaker makes a formal complaint at the United Nations that Canada’s tax, divorce and child-care laws discriminate against parents in the home. She is supported by 3 Canadian women’s groups as well as groups in England, Italy, France and Australia to confirm this trend internationally. The Canadian government replies to the complaint denying any problem. The UN in 1999 responding to this complaint expresses concern over violations of economic rights, legal systems discriminating, and women and children being victims of poverty and it notes the absence of women in decision-making

1997 More feminist writers observe a need to value the home side of the career-family balance. Elizabeth Perle McKenna writes “When Work Doesn’t Work Anymore”. Iris Krasnow writes “Surrendering to Motherhood” and Katie Roiphe writes “Fruitful: Living the Contradictions”
1997 – the Fraser Institute reports that on some household incomes the single-income family pays 150% of the tax of the dual-income family. The issue of tax discrimination against the single-income family becomes an area of national press focus culminating in spring 1999 in a close but defeated vote in the House of Commons to eliminate the discrimination.

1998 – The federal budget introduces a tax credit of $400 per year for caregivers. However it is extended only to those who care for the elderly or disabled, not to those who care for the young.

1998 – Isabella Bakker of York University publishes “Unpaid Work and Macroeconomics” She raises public attention to the existence of the third level of the economy, the unpaid sector, which is often taken for granted as she puts it, as a well that is never expected to run dry.

1998 - Betty Friedan in “Beyond Gender: The New Politics of Work and Family” suggest that women’s liberation should not be won at the expense of men and that feminism made a mistake when it ignored motherhood.

1996 – parents of young children are lumped together with unemployed singles under the Employment Insurance plan and are expected in several provinces (Quebec, New Brunswick, Alberta and eventually Ontario) to do community service 17 hours a week in order to qualify for welfare benefits. The ‘workfare ‘program does not recognize obligations for caring for children and does not teach new skills or provide child-care.

1998 – the value of civic and volunteer work in Nova Scotia is tallied by GPI Atlantic at $2 billion annually or 10% of the GDP.

1998 a tax subcommittee under MP Paul Szabo recommends a universal child tax deduction of $2,000 per year or a nontaxable caregiver benefit.

1998 MP Paul Szabo introduces a private member’s bill to pay mother at home $2600 a year.

1998 – a Southam News Compass poll finds that 86% of Canadians favor changing tax law to allow a parent to be home with a child

1999- GPI Atlantic reports that volunteer work has declined 7.2% since 1987 and suggest this is evidence that the volunteer sector cannot compensate for pubic sector budget cuts (the argument that the paid economy requires the unpaid in order to function is strengthened noticing that when the unpaid sector is discouraged, the paid sector suffers)

1999 – Mothers Are Women publishes a research document of unpaid work ‘When Women Count”
1999 – The Canadian Policy Research Network finds that a majority of parents want economic supports for parents during the first 3 years of life so parents can choose to be home with their children.

1999– the Subcommittee on Children and Youth at Risk notes that Canada is now the only G7 country to lack a universal recognition of costs of rearing children.

2000 – Canadian government signs an Early Childhood Development accord with the provinces and territories, promising massive funding for healthy pregnancy, and parenting and family supports, but all flowing to organizations, none to families directly.

2000 – Canadian Policy Research Network finds that provinces vary widely in income supplements for the poor and suggests instead a universal tax credit for raising children.

2001- The European Observatory on Family Matters notes that Norway now provides a cash subsidy to parents at home, and that Belgium allows parents to deduct some expenses not incurred at daycares.

2002 –Hamburg Germany creates a KIA card voucher to let parents use whatever type of child care they prefer, including care in the home. Austria adopts a similar program with benefits flowing with the child. The movements are a response to the doping birth rate and to survey results that parents want choices in child-rearing.

2002 – Beverley Smith asks the federal government for a Supreme Court reference to see if current laws for unpaid caregivers are consistent with the Charter of Rights. The government denies her request for this review.

2002 The federal government extends maternity leave benefits under its Employment Insurance program to a full year. However these benefits are only eligible to new mothers with paid employment outside the home over 600 hours in the preceding year, thereby excluding new mothers with fewer than 600 paid hours, employers, the self-employed and new mothers who were not employed outside the home the preceding year.

2002 The Action Democratique de Quebec party wins 51% of popular support in a June popularity survey. It proposes a voucher system so parents can choose how to raise their children in or out of daycare.
RESEARCH SITES FOR CAREGIVING:

http://researchoncare.tripod.com – monthly international newsletter about caregiving issues – free subscription

http://workisee.tripod.com – study of how nations are beginning to notice unpaid caregiving labor and other formerly ‘invisible’ work

http://kidsareOK.tripod.com – a look at claims to address what matters for care of children – standards, room sizes, ratios, skills taught, staff credentials, seamless provision of service, cost and free choice

http://dataforuse.tripod.com – childrearing stats in Canada

http://worldkidquilt.tripod.com – childrearing stats around the world

http://beverley_Smith__1.tripod.com/thecaregiverscase application for a Supreme Court reference in Canada to determine if present laws about caregiving are consistent with the Charter of Rights

http://unitednatcomplaint.tripod.com – copy of UN complaint lodged by Beverley Smith that Canada’s tax, pension and childcare laws discriminate against some styles of caregiving

http://vuthruotherseyes.tripod.com – comparison of the caregiving movement to other large social movements such as the push for women to get the vote, civil rights and gay rights liberations

http://sharingincome.tripod.com – analysis of tax policy changes that would recognize caregiving

http://bestinterestsofchild.tripod.com – research about what produces best incomes in care of children

http://unpaidcaregiving.tripod.com – survey of the world organizations that are active in the caregiving movement

http://fundthechild.tripod.com – equality movement rallies and recent work

http://bevgsmith.wix.com/labour-force-stats
   - a humorous spoof on budgets and what a budget might look like if it valued unpaid work

http://www.canadiansocialresearch.net/caregiving.htm
http://www.payequityreview.gc.ca/docs/bsmith.pdf
http://petitiononline.com/kidcare/petition.html
Beverley Smith

Beverley Smith is a Canadian homemaker, mother and teacher who has spent most of her adult life advocating for women's and children's rights and caregiving labor. She has spoken to legislators, before government committees, has taken part in research and advocacy, in rallies and formal complaints to human rights commissions in efforts to advance women's equality. She has headed a national charity and spoken to UN delegates and nondelegates on this issue and currently edits a free international online newsletter on caregiving.