

"optimistically open-ended view of human destiny" might be and how it might be intellectually justified. Hollander has shown, I think, that modern socialism itself is founded in an "optimistically open-ended view of human destiny" from the Enlightenment. I wonder if we do not need more attention to Augustine to understand precisely the intellectuals who choose the worst regimes as if they are the best. We deal here not with a sociological analysis but with a spirit-

ual deformity. Hollander's pursuit is at its best when it is on the trail of this perplexing phenomenon. We choose what we want to see, even when we are presented with *what is*.

A friend of mine was recently on a high level diplomatic mission to Peking. She told me her room and belongings were checked every time she was out of the hotel room and her group was told to assume that everything that they said would be heard. In other words, before com-

pletely abandoning the evil empire to its well-wishers, the folks from Cincinnati would do well to take a look at Hollander's book before landing in their sister city of Kharkov, just in case hints of the adversary culture still survive in their own hearts. ■

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The Family in Question

Robert K. Landers

Allan Carlson is a brave man. He stands foursquare for motherhood and the untrendy familial virtues. Radical feminists will not soon forgive him. Yet their disapproval can hardly be fatal to his cause. Motherhood is surely more powerful than the feminist sisterhood. Still, there is no denying that motherhood's joyful burden has become somewhat harder to bear in recent decades, for the well-known reason that many mothers have acquired the further burden of having to work at a paying job.

The statistics are familiar. Nearly 60 percent of married women with children under age six are now working or looking for work; in 1960, more than 80 percent were not. Among married mothers of older children, more than 70 percent are now in the labor force, compared with less than 40 percent in 1960. To be sure, most married women with children under eighteen still either don't work or don't work fulltime. But even leaving aside the increasing numbers of divorced and unwed mothers, the movement of women into the work force has been very significant, not least for the tens of millions of children left behind. It is difficult to avoid the strong suspicion that many of those children have been serious-

ly neglected (and not just by their mothers).

Sociologists Peter Uhlenberg and David Eggebeen have noted various indications of "the declining well-being of adolescents after 1960," and suggested that "an erosion of the bond between parent and child—one characterized by parental commitment and willingness to sacrifice self-interest—[has been] a significant cause." They take the influx of mothers into the labor force as one sign of that erosion.

The family in America, according to Carlson, president of the Rockford Institute, a conservative research organization, is now "actually in the throes of basic upheaval. A crisis point, in the sense of an unstable condition portending abrupt change, may have already been passed." He cites such statistical evidence as the 140 percent increase in the divorce rate between 1960 and 1981, the 59 percent decline in the rate of first marriage among women ages 20-24, and the fall in the birth rate from 118 (per 1,000 women age 15-44) in 1960 to 65.6 in 1978.

The 1960s and 70s, Carlson writes, were "an extremely ideologized era, and more than a handful of newly competing political persuasions were implicitly or explicitly hostile to family life. Partisans of the new left, Maoists, radical feminists, Neo-Mal-

thusians, sexual liberators, inhabitants of the counterculture and others all found a common enemy in the natural community and biological vitality of the universal family. Moreover, the

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cultural and economic arrangements, carefully constructed over a hundred years, which had protected the family from the full impact of radical individualism, unraveled during this period. In some combination, these developments created the family crisis which now marks this nation."

Carlson's main argument—which he elaborates in this collection of wide-ranging and well-researched essays—seems to me powerful and important, particularly as it relates to what he calls the "family wage" (or "living wage") economy. In that informal system, men were paid more than women, on the assumption that most men had a wife and children to support. Although the arrangement could hardly now escape having "sexist" spray-painted upon it, its breakdown

actually had little to do with radical feminism.

Early in this century, G.K. Chesterton noted that people who talked of freeing women from their domestic burdens so that they could pursue the "higher culture," seemed always themselves to belong to the monied classes and "to forget the existence of the working and wage-earning classes. They say eternally...that the ordinary woman is always a drudge. And what, in the name of the Nine Gods, is the ordinary man?" (Answer: Even more of a drudge.) By mid-century, however, the ordinary woman's manumission had been accomplished, and without the assistance of the sisterhood: Technological progress had curtailed her drudgery.

"The development of labor-saving household devices such as vacuum cleaners, electric washers, and refrigerators and the advance of new food processing and storage technologies reduced the amount of time to maintain a home," Carlson notes. As a result, women began to get out of the home. In the years after World War II, older women, who generally did not have young children at home, began to enter the labor force. From just over 30 percent in 1946, the proportion of women age 45-54 in the labor market increased to 50 percent in 1960. "Even as the popular media of the period reinforced the message that child care was the most important job a woman could have," Carlson writes, "the movement of women into the paid labor force began to accelerate." In the early 1960s, even as an unhappy Betty Friedan was revealing her great discovery that being a housewife in a suburban home was very like being an inmate in a Nazi concentration camp, ordinary women of child-bearing age started to enter the labor market in large numbers. By the end of the decade, nearly half of married women whose youngest child was age 6-17 were working or looking for work.

This movement of women into the work force—the result, as Carlson has noted in the Spring 1986 issue of *The Public Interest*, of "[the] solitary decisions of individual married women to go to work and the solitary deci-

sions of employers to hire them"—undermined the basis for the "family-wage" economy.

The system, which had "served to protect the family unit from the logical consequences of radical individualism," had rested on "a complex sexual division of labor," Carlson explains. "The mechanisms employed—including the crafting of the 'separate spheres' of home and work, the creation of 'men's' and 'women's' jobs, the skewing of compensation in favor of heads-of-households, and the normative expectation that men and women would marry and raise children—were the products of decades of trial and error. However imperfect, they allowed capitalism to blossom and prosper while preserving the basis for social life and human reproduction."

By the 1950s, however, "the hard lessons learned during the decades of industrialization had been forgotten," Carlson writes. "As the private demand for the labor of married women grew, no one bothered to calculate the social consequences. Passage of equal pay and civil rights laws in the early 1960s generated the same nonresponse: race was the hot issue, and the extension of liberal individualism into the domestic sphere occurred with scarcely a yawn."

During the 1970s, married mothers of very young children entered the labor force in increasing numbers. By 1975, about one in every three mothers of children under age three was working or looking for work; a decade later, one in two such mothers was in the labor force. Although feminism may have encouraged this development, perceived economic necessity seems to have been the driving force. Mothers went to work to offset declining family incomes.

By 1976, Carlson relates, only 40 percent of American jobs paid enough to support a family of five in minimal comfort, "not so long ago the standard measure of a fair wage." The figure now is close to 25 percent. "Today, the revolution is nearly over," he states. "The working or two-wage-earner family—the bane of the family-wage economy—is now the most

common family form in society." The old order is gone, replaced by a new one that, despite its self-righteous tone, results in the neglect of children.

Carlson is quite good at making us see what we have unwittingly lost. He is less good, however, at helping us cope with the permanently changed world that we have. On the subject of maternity or parental leave, for instance, he says that close analysis of the concept "reveals great mental confusion masking a strongly ideological agenda....The mind-twisting message [is] that the mother-at-home is not important and the federal government must therefore force all employers to grant parental leaves...." He does not notice that his own "message"—that the mother-at-home is exceedingly important, but that the federal government must not compel employers to grant parental leaves—is almost equally mind-twisting.

Carlson yearns for a restoration of the vanished order, for "the reconstruction, to the degree possible, of the natural family economy." His enthusiasm for "capitalism" and his inordinate antipathy for government serve to work against a moderate accommodation to the new reality of working mothers. That such an accommodation would benefit children and families is a fact of little consequence to Carlson. He is engaged in a great ideological war, and appeasement only encourages the enemy. The object must be victory for "the traditional family" and defeat for "social parenting." There is no room for compromise. But, of course, there is: Even the traditional family has sent its children off to school.

Yet, as unbending and at times wrong-headed as Carlson is, I think that his holding aloft in a serious way the standard of the family and its associated virtues is, in the main, quite admirable. There is, after all, at least as much a need to recognize the crucial importance of the family as there is to reshape the workplace in the family's behalf. ■

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