

Think the nanny state is oppressive? Meet Big Mother



PIERRE LEMIEUX

There are many reasons why women must have the same rights as men. Reformulated in a non-collectivist way, this truth becomes: there are many reasons why all individuals should have equal rights. No libertarian could think otherwise.

Having the same rights can only mean having the same formal rights. If rights define material actions, they cannot be equal. For example, rights cannot be equal if some have the right to live off somebody else's toil. Similarly, if somebody has the right to be hired to a certain position because of his or her sex or race, then the person of the other sex or race who is hired from bidding for the job does not have equal rights.

In her first *National Post* column, published July 23, Sheila Copps asked, "Where are the women in [Paul Martin's] Cabinet?" Part of the answer may be that the women arc in the men, as the latter have become motherly totalitarians at work—or wimpy resistors at best.

But let me address Copps's fashionable (or is it outdated?) feminism by considering a related question she raises: "Why are experienced women and minorities losing ground, while hockey players rule?" In fact, women have been gaining ground in politics since the 19th century, with dire consequences. Writes Mark Thomson in *The Economics of Prohibition*: "Several leaders of the suffrage movement, such as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucy Stone,

were involved in the temperance movement." More generally and more empirically, a study published in *The Journal of Political Economy*, by John Lott and Lawrence Kenny, shows that the growth of women's political influence has been a causal factor in the growth of state expenditures.

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Many of the most dangerous contemporary fads—from gun control to speech control—have been under women's political influence. In opinion polls on public policy, women generally show more totalitarian leanings than men, and they usually support in greater numbers the more statist political parties. They often make the most dangerous politicians. Federal minister Jean Augustine declared, in the Don Cherry case, that "the government will not tolerate statements that create dissonance in our society and disrespect for others." In *Nineteen Eighty-four*, George Orwell wrote, "It was always the

women, and above all the young ones, who were the most bigoted adherents to the Party, the swallows of slogans, the amateur spies and nosers-out of unorthodoxy."

From a sociobiological viewpoint, this is understandable. Women are wired to be motherly, peaceful, caring risk-aversers. If they don't have a male protector, they will turn to the state for security. Especially with today's political orthodoxy, put naive women in power and you are on your way to Big Mother, who will oppress you for your own good.

Which minorities are losing ground? Certainly not the nearly 20 per cent of the labour force or more than 10 per cent of the population who are employed by the state (all levels of government) or part of its political apparatus. On the other hand, the ultimate, oppressed, invisible minority of those who just want to be left alone in their peaceful lives has certainly been losing liberties.

Guns, not hockey players, rule. If the cops did not have guns (while citizens are disarmed), few of the laws that Sheila Copps likes could be enforced against dissenting minorities. It is an interesting paradox that, when it comes to enforcing its laws, the motherly-love state still has to rely on big men who can fight hard and shoot big guns.

I apologize for attacking Sheila Copps, who is, after all, a woman. However, I don't like to be pushed around, and I am certainly not part of what she refers to in her column as "our men." Out of gallantry, I will grant her one field where the fair sex should occupy 100 per cent of available jobs: the police. Then let the motherly-love bullies in the government try to enforce their whims. ■

Pierre Lemieux is a professor and writer based in Montreal.

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