

The Pay-Equity Scam

We keep getting the message that Canadian women can't make it on their own. So government will help them.

"Equal pay is a right" trumpets Treasury Board President Arthur Eggleton, over a recent Ontario settlement that took 16 years to resolve. Public servants will be paid an extra \$74 million - in lump sums of \$58,000 to some!

Let me see... Here we have government employees, using government consultants, to mount huge claims against government institutions. It's a fiscal feeding-frenzy the hapless taxpayer is powerless to stop.

Most of this is the work of a small army of white, middle-class radical feminists claiming gender discrimination to lobby for wages they haven't been able to command on their own merits in a free market. They lead the march to an unfree society.

In a recent television debate, I argued that feminists have been trying to substitute a coercive political order for our free economic order. It's like demanding that an ounce of lead and an ounce of gold command the same price simply because they weigh the same.

With great excitement, my opponent, an Ontario Women's Directorate lawyer, declared, "Yes, that's it - as long as they weigh the same, they should have the same value!" Medieval authorities repudiated the market in the same way, demanding a "just price" and a "just wage" by law be paid to all. Economic stagnation was the result.

The foundation of the "discrimination" charge used to justify programs like pay-equity, is the so-called "wage gap." And indeed, there is a wage gap between the earnings of men and women. In fact, there are large wage-gaps between all sorts of social groups: the young and the old, the educated and the uneducated, the experienced and the inexperienced, the hard-working and the lazy, the married and the unmarried, and so on.

Almost all the women's wage gap is due to marital status. We know this because never-married women in Canada and the U.S.A. make exactly the same wages as never-married men. But when women marry, most quit, or scale down work to nurture children. Conversely, when men marry, they aggressively seek more pay. Averaging married men and women indeed produces a wage gap, and always will, but it's dishonest to use this as evidence for discrimination.

The offshoot, so-called "employment equity" programs, introduce an evil of their own. They force employers to hire "under-represented" women and visible minorities.

But if it's alright to force employers to hire certain under-represented minorities - doesn't it follow that in the interests of "balance" they should release, or refuse to hire, those from over-represented minorities? (Zap the National Basketball Association.)

I especially enjoy watching my liberal Jewish friends squirm when we debate this one. Jews are 1% of the Canadian population, and vastly "over-represented" in many business fields like finance and property development, and in all the intellectual and professional fields. Good for them. They have a strong work and family ethic. But let's follow the perverse logic of affirmative action.

The last time I looked, Statistics Canada prepared a survey (catalogue 93-154, 1986) giving a long list of the average incomes of ethnic groups in Canada. Here is just a sample of the findings, top to bottom: Jewish, \$40,093; Japanese, \$30,750; Scottish, \$29,393; Swedish, \$29,018; English, \$26,968; Polish, \$26,754; Chinese, \$24,073; Greek, \$21,972; Caribbean \$21,493.

Now, are we going to argue that Jews, a minority whose ancestors came here poor, and who have suffered vile discrimination throughout history, but who now outshine everyone by huge margins are discriminating against the rest of us? Can we not sensibly argue that there is a bona fide "Gentile gap"? A "Polish gap"? A "Greek gap"? If not, then we have to argue that discrimination has made Jews high earners, and therefore ought to make women high earners.

Indeed, cannot those of us making less than workers from other ethnic groups apply to the Pay-equity Commission for lump-sum payments? And if not, why not? About 10 million of us eagerly await our handsome cheques. Very eagerly.

In a riotous story, "Pastry Cook Pay Angers 800 Nurses" (Toronto Star, May 18, 1990), the full idiocy of these situations was revealed. After much precision and deliberation, the official job-handicappers of the state decided that a female nurse's job was equivalent to that of a male pastry chef. Well, the outrage! The scandal! The "unfairness"! Florence Nightingale - a pastry chef?

Pay-equity was invented (a carefully chosen word) to make pay more "fair" for women who had voluntarily accepted their wages (remember, men in low-paying jobs are not allowed to apply for relief). But once the fairness judgement was rendered for nurses, these same women went on strike with placards, demanding "Fair Pay Equity!"

The biggest pay-off for this plunder has been from claims against government itself. But now it's creeping into the private sector. It seems never to have occurred to these women that any sensible employer will try to hire the best work for the least wage, just as any shopper will try to buy the best food for the least cost. And if hundreds of women line up for low-paying jobs, they will get low pay.

Ah me...I suppose that we will soon see droves of women who want even more money for nothing, demanding "Fair, Fair Pay Equity." But the employers will all have left town.