

Faith *in the* Family

ADVOCATE

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Farewell to the family? page 5

News Review page 3

Age of Consent: What really happened page 11

Lambeth Conference page 15

Faith *in the* Family Project page 16

Rhetoric and reality

“In their Green Paper, *Supporting Families*, the Home Secretary and his Ministerial Group on the Family have attempted to pilot a middle course, a ‘third way’:

“Neither a ‘back to basics’ fundamentalism, trying to turn back the clock, nor an ‘anything goes’ liberalism which denies the fact that how families behave affects us all, is credible any more.”¹

The most significant statement in *Supporting Families* is that “marriage is still the surest foundation for raising children and remains the choice of the majority of people in Britain.”² This is qualified by the comment that “many unmarried couples remain together throughout their children’s upbringing and raise their children every bit as successfully as married parents.”³

Nevertheless, the Government states its belief that “marriage provides the most reliable framework for raising children.”⁴ To most ordinary people this is a plain statement of fact; yet the reaction against it in some quarters has been intense.

The Independent labelled the Government’s belief “eccentric” and lamented: “the urge to moralise is just too irresistible for this government”.⁵ The *Daily Mirror* featured a caricature of the Home Secretary, Mr Straw, donning the robes of Moses and commanding, “Thou Shalt Wed Like This”. One *Mirror* journalist attacked the Home Secretary as patronising and his Paper as “an insult to the thousands of single parents who already feel alienated by this Government”.⁶

Polly Toynbee of *The Guardian* welcomed the new policies on child care and help for low income families but deplored “backward looking” comments on marriage which sailed “dangerously close to back to basics”.⁷

In reality, whilst *Supporting Families* does ‘talk up’ marriage in some paragraphs, there is a danger that the Government will fall into the same “excess of rhetoric” for which it criticises the previous administration.⁸

■ Marriage - time to climb off the fence

There are many institutions in our society which should uphold marriage and the family. Tackling family breakdown is by no means solely the responsibility of Government. But one thing is clear: marriage *should* be promoted in public policy. This means hard choices.

Supporting Families admits that “In almost everything that government does, we can help families, neglect them or even do them active harm.”⁹ How true: implementing the last Government’s no-fault divorce reforms will harm families. So too will tax incentives for the commercial use of childcare. Stay-at-home-mums who look after their own children will continue to be penalised through the tax/benefits system. And the rise in child benefit will be funded by tax increases for married couples.

Counselling is much in evidence in the Green Paper. The key question is: what values will the counsellors promote? Will couples whose marriages are in difficulty be offered ‘non-directive’ counsellors who view marriage merely as one of many options and who therefore lack any real determination to save the marriage?

Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act bans schools from promoting homosexuality. Labour has long been committed to its repeal. In preparation Government policy now states that “nobody in authority should promote *any* specific type of relationship”¹⁰ [Emphasis added]. Marriage should therefore not be promoted in schools. Rather, it should be presented as just one option amongst many - including (soon) homosexuality.

Lowering the homosexual age of consent will not only put teenage boys at risk, it will also send out the message to the young that heterosexuality is just an ‘option’.

If marriage really is the “surest foundation” for raising children, then for the sake of children, marriage must be promoted in public policy. Yes, the Government can help, neglect or harm families. Sooner or later their rhetoric will be tested by reality.

Colin Hart

Colin Hart - Director of *The Christian Institute*

■ References

- ¹ *Supporting Families*, Home Office, The Stationery Office, 1998, Introduction para 11
- ² *Supporting Families*, Introduction para 8
- ³ *Supporting Families*, Para 4.7
- ⁴ *Supporting Families*, Para 4.3
- ⁵ *The Independent* 5 November 1998
- ⁶ *The Daily Mirror* 5 November 1998
- ⁷ *The Guardian* 4 November 1998
- ⁸ *Supporting Families*, Introduction para 15
- ⁹ *Supporting Families*, Introduction para 10
- ¹⁰ Letter to Simon Burns MP from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 14 October 1998

Turning back the tide of divorce

Pro-family advocates in the US state of Louisiana scored a tremendous victory last year with the advent of a new 'opt in' system of 'covenant marriage'. Every state in the US currently operates 'no fault divorce' where any marriage can be ended by one of the parties simply giving notice. (A similar system was introduced in the UK in 1996 and is due to come into force in 2000.) But in Louisiana, in addition to the existing form of marriage, they now provide for 'traditional' marriage, which can only be ended on proof of fault. Couples can choose to enter into a marriage which can only be ended by proving one party guilty of adultery, desertion or domestic violence.

It is almost 30 years since the introduction of 'no-fault' divorce in the US, which saw divorce rates rocket by 34% in 10 years. Nearly half of all US marriages now end in divorce. Pro-family campaigners say this is the first step towards reversing America's 'divorce culture': "We have lost our understanding of what commitment is. What we have to do is break the cycle of divorce" says Louisiana State Representative, Tony Perkins, who steered covenant mar-

riage onto the statute book. "Covenant marriage is not about eliminating divorce" Perkins says, "it is about making marriage more successful... It is simply a recognition by the state that the institution of marriage is important, and the permanence of that relationship is vital to the well-being of society".

Thousands of already-married couples are expected to 'opt in' to the new system. And supporters expect the new arrangements will become widely accepted for newly-marrieds, not least because would-be marriage partners will find it difficult to justify choosing a form of marriage that does not imply a lifetime of love and commitment. The Bill introducing covenant marriage sailed through both Houses of the Louisiana state legislature, attracting only a single contrary vote. At least 22 other states have since started looking at covenant marriage.

Sources: Focus on the Family *Citizen*, Vol.12, No.4, April 1998 and *The Sunday Telegraph*, 29 June 1997.

The Queen's Speech



■Family Taxation

As expected there is to be major legislation to bring in the Working Family Tax Credit (WFTC). The Government argues that families on low incomes will be helped by this move and that it will help make

work pay. Working families are to be guaranteed a minimum of £190 a week. Child benefit is to be raised by 20 per cent (£2.50 a week). This is to be paid for by reducing the married couples' allowance. There is to be a childcare tax credit to "encourage partners of those receiving WFTC to become second earners". This will be up to £70 per week for one child and £105 per week for two or more children.

The WFTC is likely to be controversial because of the way it affects single-earner married families. There are now one million children living in single-earner married families where the income is below half average income. The amount of WFTC paid will be based on total household

income, hours worked and number of children. But WFTC takes no account of there being two adults instead of one. There is also an anomalous effect for two earner-families where one spouse, usually the mother, takes on a small amount of part time work to supplement the family income. Under the WFTC part time work paying less than the personal allowance (£4175) will no longer be tax free. Because of lost family tax credit, it will effectively be taxed at the rate of 55% .

■A Government Age of Consent and Abuse of Trust Bill

will reduce the age of homosexual consent from 18 to 16. There are expected to be some safeguards to prevent adults abusing their position of trust over young people in children's homes and schools.

■**Repeal of Section 28** was dropped from the Government's legislative programme for this year. This law currently bans the promotion of homosexuality in schools. There have been widespread reports in the press that the Government decided against trying to repeal the law until after the abolition of hereditary voting rights in the House of Lords. The Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, has affirmed that the Government is committed to repealing the law.

■**Bills will also be introduced** to allow widowers to claim the same benefits as widows, and to make provision for pension sharing on divorce.

EOC calls for laws on “sexual orientation discrimination”



The Equal Opportunities Commission has recommended to the Government that there should be laws against ‘sexual orientation discrimination’. On 5th November the EOC issued a document calling for “legal protection against discrimination for lesbians and gay men”.

The call came at the same time that homosexual campaigners were making another attempt to get a Sexual Orientation Discrimination Bill on the statute books. Baroness Turner of Camden succeeded in steering this Bill through the House of Lords, but at the end of the session it lapsed in the Commons. The Bill would have added “sexual orientation” to the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act with far-reaching consequences for employers. Campaigners are keen that homosexual people and those who have had sex-change operations should be given special legal rights throughout the employment field and beyond.

The Equal Opportunities Commission shares this view, though it has chosen not to press for homosexual rights as strongly as it is pressing for transsexual rights. Their report calls for transsexuals to be covered in a new wide-ranging Sex Equality Act. The EOC argues that homosexuality should be dealt with by separate legislation. Homosexual campaigners are therefore angry. Angela Mason, Director of the leading homosexual campaign group, *Stonewall*, urged her members to complain to the EOC, asking why homosexuality was not included in the proposed Sex Equality Act. She argued: “We need the force of the law to say loudly and clearly that nobody should be able to treat someone less favourably because they are lesbian, gay or bisexual - or indeed transgendered. We need the force of the law to say that society has to change.”

Sources: *Equality in the 21st Century: A New Sex Equality Law for Britain*, Equal Opportunities Commission, November, 1998; *Stonewall Magazine*, Vol 6 Issue 2, page 7, September 1998; Stonewall Press Release 4 November 1998; *The Daily Mail*, 6 November 1998.

Government to consult on parental right to discipline children

A recent ruling from the European Court of Human Rights prompted renewed calls to criminalise parents who smack their children. The Strasbourg court ruled that a step-father who beat his unruly step-son with a garden cane had breached the boy’s right against “inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”.

The step-father had been acquitted by a UK jury after it heard evidence about the punishment and of the boy’s behaviour, which included stealing and threatening his two year old brother with a knife. Strasbourg awarded the boy £10,000 and legal costs of £20,000¹.

Although the case (known as the “A” case) concerned a very particular set of circumstances, a 140 group Alliance, including Barnardo’s, the NSPCC, Save the Children, the National Children’s Bureau and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, issued a statement on the day of the judgment calling for the outlawing of all corporal punishment of children. The Alliance rejected the idea that only caning should be banned, saying: “We believe it is both wrong and impracticable to seek to define acceptable forms of corporal punishment of children. Such an exercise is unjust. Hitting children is a lesson in bad behaviour.”²

Janet Convery, co-ordinator of the “forum on children and violence” at the National Children’s Bureau, said: “We welcome the judgment and hope that the Government will take the opportunity to ban physical punishment and give children the same legal protection that adults have.”³

The then Health Minister Paul Boateng MP announced that following the case the Government would consult on changing the law to define what parents can and cannot do in disciplining their children. Mr Boateng said: “This new Labour Government believes in parental discipline. Smacking has a place within that, and our law will not change in order to outlaw smacking. We are determined to ensure that our laws protect children against abuse. But we are equally determined to ensure that nothing undermines a parent’s right to discipline a child within a caring and loving environment.”⁴ He also stated that, “the overwhelming majority of parents know the difference between smacking and beating.”⁵

Many fear that any change in the law will interfere with ordinary parental discipline. Ann Widdecombe, Shadow Health Secretary, warned that the European decision would restrict the ability of parents to punish wrongdoing and to teach right from wrong.⁶ Even ‘enshrining’ the parental right

to smack in law, which had been suggested last year, would still cause problems for ordinary parents. They may become wary of inadvertently breaking the law and thereby risking social services involvement with their children or even imprisonment.

The Government consultation on the discipline of children by their parents is set to begin early in the new year.⁷

The organisation *Families for Discipline* is encouraging parents to “voice their support for loving, reasonable and responsible physical correction in appropriate circumstances”. Further information can be obtained from Families for Discipline, 173 Frinton Road, Kirby Cross, Frinton-on-Sea, Essex, CO13 0PD. Telephone and Fax (01255) 671 616.

■References

- ¹ A v The United Kingdom (100/1997/884/1096) Judgment 23 September 1998. See also *The Daily Mail* 24 September 1998
- ² *The Guardian*, 24 September, 1998
- ³ *The Independent*, 24 September, 1998
- ⁴ *The Times*, 24 September, 1998
- ⁵ *The Independent*, 24 September, 1998
- ⁶ *The Times*, 24 September, 1998
- ⁷ Hansard: House of Lords, 12 January, 1998 col 118 WA

A 'third way' on the family?

Colin Hart takes the first of a two-part look at "Supporting Families", the Government's Green Paper on the Family.

■ The battle of ideas

For some people marriage is a controversial issue.

Amongst the "family experts" in the think tanks, research foundations, universities and much of the media, the *avant garde* thinking on the family of the 1960s has become the establishment.

What Norman Dennis has called the 'social affairs intelligentsia'¹ has held the view that alternative 'family arrangements' of adults and children are just as good as marriage. It is therefore argued that public policy should not prefer one lifestyle over any other. The family is not deteriorating only changing. They say public policy should adapt to ease this change.

Journalist Polly Toynbee has argued that "Instead of guilt and worry, there should be a celebration of divorce, the single greatest liberator of this century. We are living in the midst of a social revolution whose ending we do not yet know."² Such views are not untypical amongst the social affairs intelligentsia. The Govern-

ment has implicitly acknowledged the battle of ideas on the family by stating that the new *National Family and Parenting Institute* will embrace "a wide range of opinion."³

■ The disputed territory

Broadly speaking, members of the social affairs intelligentsia tend to make at least four assumptions about the family:

- 1 The family is only changing not deteriorating;
- 2 A mother's place is in the work force;
- 3 Low income has more impact on children than whether they live with two parents; and
- 4 Public policy should not privilege marriage or restrict divorce.

These perspectives are accepted, with variations, by many on the left and right of the political spectrum. Rather than focusing on economics, some on the political right have argued that ending parental conflict by divorce is more important for children than having two married parents. The second assumption uses words which

few could bring themselves to say, though they might agree with the sentiment. Employers are faced with the costs of having to train new staff when women leave to have a family. Big business can therefore see reasons for teaming up with those pressing the case for mothers to have greater access to childcare.

This article will consider the first two assumptions in the light of the consultation paper. The next edition of *Advocate* will look at public policy on marriage and divorce and the outcomes for children.

■ 1. 'The Family is only changing'

Mr Straw states in his foreword: "There never was a golden age of the family. Family life has continually changed - and changed for good reasons as well as bad."⁴

To say that "Family life has continually changed" is a statement that on one level is bound to be true. There have always been changes in family life. The change from an agriculturally-based to a manufacturing-based economy certainly led to important

The Government's Proposals on the Family

- A National Family and Parenting Institute¹
- Pre-marriage contracts which make financial arrangements for divorce²
- Improved provision for marriage preparation³
- Greater role for registrars of marriages⁴
- Secular baby-naming ceremonies⁵
- Enhanced role for health visitors⁶
- Minimum 15 days notice of intention to marry⁷
- £540 million on the 'Sure Start' programme for local projects on childcare, early learning, and family support⁸
- Phasing out of married couples allowance to pay for uprating in child-benefit⁹
- Acceptance of the last Conservative Government's no-fault divorce law¹⁰
- Tax credits for child care¹¹
- Up to 3 months unpaid leave when parents have a baby or adopt a child¹²
- A telephone helpline for parents¹³
- Reform of pre-divorce information meetings¹⁴
- A fairer system for the division of property on divorce¹⁵
- Consultation on parents' right to physically punish their children¹⁶
- Consultation on teenage pregnancy¹⁷

¹ Para 1.6

³ Paras 4.19ff

⁵ Para 4.39

⁷ Para 4.27

⁹ Para 2.6

¹¹ Para 2.11ff

¹³ Para 1.20

¹⁵ Para 4.44ff

² Para 4.20ff

⁴ Para 4.26

⁶ Para 1.26ff

⁸ Para 1.40

¹⁰ Para 4.42

¹² Para 3.15

¹⁴ Para 4.29ff

¹⁶ Para 5.9ff

¹⁷ Para 5.28

changes in family life. So did the right for a married woman to own property.

But all of these changes and many more have taken place *without altering the fundamental stability of the family*. Until comparatively recently children have almost universally been born in marriage and brought up by married parents who stayed together for life. The move away from this is a massive change.

To say that the family life has changed *continually* is unquestionably false when it comes to three major statistics of the family: children born outside of marriage; cohabitation; and divorce. For centuries each of these behaviours were committed by a tiny minority.

Supporting Families admits that “Family structure has become more complicated” but as Norman Dennis has pointed out the situation has changed almost beyond recognition during the living memory of most adults⁵.

Illegitimacy

For most of this and the last century, illegitimacy has been around 4 or 5%. In 1952, 5% of children were born outside of marriage.^{5a} Even in 1971, the figure had only risen to 8%. Ten years later the figure was 13%. Today the figure is 36.7%.^{5b} A truly dramatic change.

Cohabitation

In 1966, only 2% of couples cohabited before marriage. Five years later the figure was 7%. Five years later again, in 1976, it was 19%. Today the figure is 70% for first marriages.^{5c} Once again a truly dramatic change.

Divorce

The number of divorces did not exceed 10,000 a year until 1942. Divorces peaked shortly after the war, then fell again. After a blip in 1951 there was a further fall. In 1959 the number of divorces per year started to rise slowly. In 1961 there were

The cost to society

Illegitimacy and cohabitation have gone from being rare to being commonplace in the space of just 30 years. The same has happened with divorce over a slightly longer period of time.

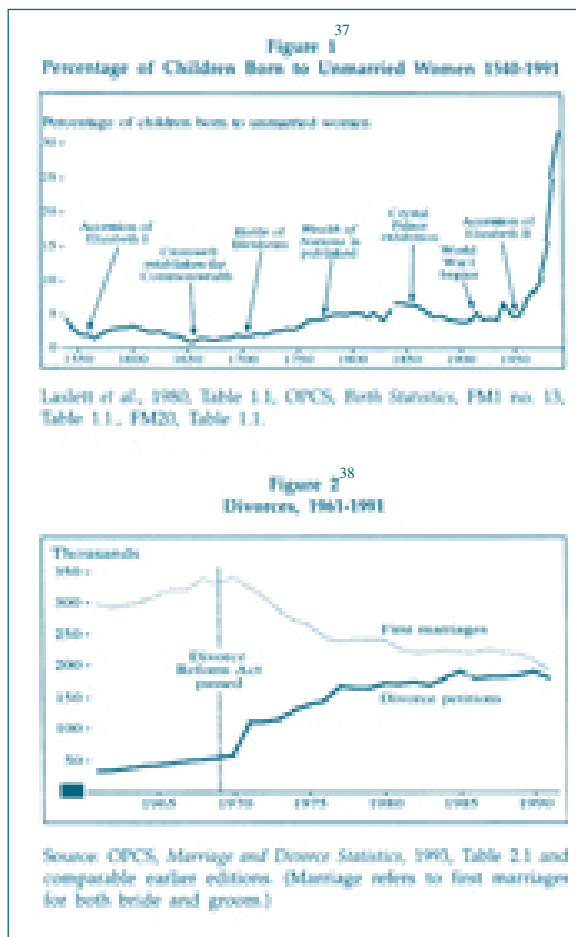
Such figures are all without precedent in the modern era. These changes can hardly be described as changes for the better. Even in purely financial terms. The breakdown of the family was estimated as costing the taxpayer £5 billion in benefits and other costs according to figures for 1994-95 calculated by the House of Commons Library.⁶

Then there are the other societal problems linked to the breakdown in the family. *Supporting Families* acknowledges that “Rising crime and drug abuse are indirect symptoms of problems in the family”.⁷

Crime figures have grown dramatically in the last 40 years. In 1960 1,742 crimes were committed for every 100,000 head of population. By 1970 it was 3,221. By 1991 there were 10,007 crimes committed per 100,000 population.

The family can only be said to have ‘changed’ in any meaningful sense in the last 40 years. Marriage was previously the stabilising factor and no new alternative has been created.

It is still true that the overwhelming proportion of children will live with their two natural parents in a relationship of marriage.



32,000 new divorce petitions filed. In 1971, (the first year of operation of the 1969 Divorce Reform Act) the number of divorce petitions rose sharply to 110,000. One legal change after another has made a divorce easier to get. Today there are around 175,000 petitions every year.^{5d} Another truly dramatic change.

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THE TIMES

The Times Editorial 5 November 1998

“It took courage, in the face of progressive protests, for Labour ministers to admit that marriage is the best way for two adults to raise their children.”



Polly Toynbee, *The Guardian*, 4 November 1998
 “They didn’t have to do this. And if they are wise, they will now stop doing it. This ragbag document tries to package up quite disparate policies, some of them banal and trivial, in the same parcel as some of the government’s most important social policy big ideas. Civil baby-naming ceremonies may or may not become popular, but they will hardly change the culture of family life. But tax credits for child care so that women can work may well make a real difference to the wealth and happiness of many families.”

But the difference today from 30 years ago is that many children's parents will only marry *after* they are born and that one in four children will see their parents divorce by the time they are aged sixteen.⁸

Seventy per cent of children live in married households.⁹ Only 7% of children live in cohabiting households.¹⁰ With most lone parenthood being created by divorce and marital separation,¹¹ and divorce ending over a third of marriages, divorce is the 'big issue'.

Professor A H Halsey, Professor of Social Policy at Nuffield College, Oxford, has summarised why these statistics are so important for children: "No one can deny that divorce, separation, birth outside marriage and one-parent families as well as cohabitation and extra-marital sexual intercourse have increased rapidly. Many applaud these freedoms. But what should be universally acknowledged is that the children of parents who do not follow the traditional norm (i.e. taking on personal, active and long-term responsibility for the social upbringing of the children they generate) are thereby disadvantaged in many major aspects of their chances of living a successful life. On the evidence available such children tend to die earlier, to have more illness, to do less well at school, to exist at a lower level of nutrition, comfort and conviviality, to suffer more unemployment, to be more prone to deviance and crime, and finally to repeat the cycle of unstable parenting from which they themselves have suffered... The evidence all points in the same direction, is formidable, and tallies with common sense."¹²

■ 2. 'A mother's place is in the work force'

The second assumption made by the social affairs intelligentsia is that the mother's place in the work force. Again, there have been changes, but not to the degree suggested. Mothers are still the primary providers of care for their children.

In the UK, women with a single part-time job work on average 18.0 hours a week. For women with a full-time job the figure is 40.6 hours.¹³ (Both these figures are for all women, whether they have children or not.)

There is little published research which compares the number of hours worked by mothers according to the ages of their children.

A mother with school age children working 18 hours part-time a week might be able to do so for just over 3½ hours a day during school hours. Of course this would not be possible with pre-schoolers.

To say that a mother's place is in the work force is as much an unacceptable stereotype as saying that a mother's place is chained to the kitchen sink.

Stay-at-home mums make up nearly half of mothers with pre-school children, a third of mothers with a child aged 5 - 9 and a quarter of mothers with a child aged over 10.

As children reach school age more mothers tend to go out to work. But over the past 20 years the situation has changed very little for women with children over 5.

For women with children aged 5 - 9, the situation has been fairly static from 1973 to 1996 with the percentage of women who are working only rising from 61% to 62%.¹⁴ For women with children aged 10 or over the percentage who are working has risen from 67% to 74% in the same period. This rise is solely due to the increase in part-time work.

Economic activity status: Percentage of women (aged 16-59) by age of youngest child.

UK : 1996 General Household Survey¹⁶

	Age of youngest child			No children	All women
	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 +		
Working full-time	16	21	30	45	35
Working part-time	33	41	44	24	30
Unemployed	4	4	3	4	4
Economically Inactive	47	36	23	26	31

Providers of childcare 1996-7 for children of women aged 16-69.

Great Britain : Family and Working Lives Survey, Department for Education and Employment¹⁹

	Pre school	School age	School age
		term time	holidays
Female respondent	82	78	77
Partner	15	10	12
Mother/Mother in law	11	7	12
Registered Child Minder	6	2	2
Other relative	3	2	5
Private nursery/creche	2	-	-
Nanny/Au pair	1	2	3
Friend/neighbour unpaid	1	1	-
Work nursery/creche	1	-	-
Friend/neighbour paid	1	2	1
Children look after selves	-	5	5
Child's older sister/brother	-	2	2

Women's pattern of work

Over the past 30 years men and women have got married at a later age. Women tend to work longer before having children and many more women do not have children at all. Most mothers who work do so part-time and many are able fit their work around school hours and school holidays.



Hugo Young, *The Guardian*, 5 November 1998
 "Quite a bit of the programme - the helplines, the mediation meetings, the new home-school contracts solemnly signed by parents - seems like wishful thinking, organised on glossy paper, to reassure the world that there's an answer to every problem. That there should be an attempt to collect together such a policy, however, has to be admirable... Too many other people are affected, in their pockets or their homes, by the failure of family relationships, for ministers to stand transfixed into silence by a fear that they might be invading private space."



Melanie Phillips
The Sunday Times, 1 November 1998
 "...Ministers deserve great credit. That declaration [in support of marriage] in itself takes courage, given the venomous hatred of marriage among their own colleagues and the fashionable circles in which they move. It is also important. Talking down marriage, which popular culture has long conspired to do, is self-fulfilling. Talking marriage up is accordingly an important rhetorical step in the right direction. But it is only rhetoric."

Mothers with pre-schoolers

Though the proportion of mothers with children of school age who are working full- or part-time may not have changed that much for women over the past 20 years, there has been a significant change for women with pre-school children.

The proportion of stay-at-home-mums with children under 5 has fallen from around three quarters in 1973 to just under one half in 1996. In 1973, 27% of women of working age with a child under five were economically active. In 1996 this figure was 53%.¹⁵ In this period the percentage doing full-time work has risen from 7% to 16% and the percentage working part-time has risen from 18% to 33%.

Childcare

Supporting Families states that “Not all parents can work or wish to do so, and we support and value those parents who want to bring up their children full-time.”¹⁷

Fine sentiments. However, it also goes on, “But we also want to help those who do want to work.”¹⁸

In fact, *Supporting Families* does much to encourage the view that mothers really ought to be out working. But there is a surprising amount of evidence that shows most women do not share the Government’s enthusiasm for childcare outside the family.

A major Government study of mothers has found that childcare is overwhelmingly carried out by mothers themselves, their husbands or their cohabiting partners or relatives. For those mothers with pre-school children only 6% reported using a child-minder, 2% used a nursery or creche and 2% paid a nanny, friend or neighbour (see table on p.7).

The Government study found that “in an ideal world... the vast majority of women with children would prefer to care for their child themselves, irrespective of their children’s age.”²⁰

Some 87% of mothers with pre-school children preferred to look after their own children.²¹

British Social Attitudes (BSA) studied *working mothers* and found little enthusiasm for commercial childcare.

The researchers found that of those who used childcare 62% used a relative, 23% only worked while the children were at school, and 15% used a childminder. Only 6% used a day nursery and even fewer (2%) used a work place nursery.²²

BSA found that the provision of childcare does not on its own get women to go out to work. The overriding issue is what women see as their role in the family. The study concluded that “there are many mothers for whom economic instruments (such as childcare subsidies or changes in the benefits system) would not, on their own, cause them to return to the labour market or work more hours. Rather, whether or not mothers go out to work appears to be a social *choice* which reflects women’s values about the role of women in work and the family... Furthermore, it must be recognised that, even among those mothers who *do* work, many would prefer childcare to take place within the family or at home and may be reluctant to use any subsidy to purchase childcare outside that context.”²³

the vast majority of women with children would prefer to care for their child themselves, irrespective of their children’s age²⁰

Department of Education and Employment
Family and Working Lives Survey

BSA²⁴ found that if women could have the “childcare arrangement of their choice”, only 17% of part-time workers would work full-time and 9% would work more hours whilst still being part-time. Some 7% of part-timers said they would work fewer hours. Only 7% of full-time working women would work more hours, whereas 31% of these women would work fewer hours (presumably because their ‘childcare of choice’ would not cost as much).

The finding that has been leapt upon by some is that non-working housewives given the “childcare arrangement of their choice” would work full-time in 24% of cases and part-time in 55% of cases.

The Government claim that the cost of childcare is “a major obstacle to work”²⁵.

BSA question this claim because:

“Most working mothers say they would prefer their children to be looked after by a relative or their husbands. The *supply* of such childcare is not inexhaustible. Indeed, it may have already reached saturation point. If so, and if women will not return to work unless they have their preferred form of childcare, then no amount of childcare subsidy will make a difference to them.”²⁶

The New Deal for Lone Parents

In Wisconsin in the United States lone mothers are forced to go out to work once their baby reaches 12 weeks old.²⁷ If they refuse to work, their benefits are simply stopped.

Clearly there is such a thing as welfare dependency which the Government is right to discourage. But Wisconsin’s cruel practice goes to the other extreme and deprives pre-school children of what they most need - their parents’ time.

The UK Government has adopted some US ideas in its “Welfare-to-work” programme. Under this *voluntary* scheme lone parents with a child of primary school age are assigned a personal advisor to help them find a job. The “New Deal” scheme outlined in *Supporting Families* implements what was set out under the Welfare-to-work programme in January 1998.

Incentives

Baroness Blatch, Opposition spokesman on Education and Employment, said in a recent debate that “For many women the welfare-to-work proposals are a real concern. There is some evidence that there are coercive practices to force women against their will to go back into the workplace”.²⁸

There are certainly strong financial incentives to persuade mothers to go out to work. On offer is the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC), the “New Deal for Lone Parents” and new employment rights. Following the European Parental Leave Directive²⁹ employers will have to grant three months unpaid parental leave to a man or a woman when they have a baby or adopt a child.

Employees will also be given the right to have time off for urgent family reasons. Maternity leave will also be extended to 18 weeks.³⁰

A further incentive for mothers to go out to work is provided within the Working Families Tax Credit scheme. Additional money is to be made available to pay for childcare up to a maximum of £70 per week for families with one child and £105 per week for families with two or more children.

Supporting Families makes clear that the new tax credit system is designed to “encourage partners of those receiving WFTC to become second earners”³¹. A whole chapter of the consultation paper is devoted to balancing work and home. But it is clear that the balance the Government wants to see is firmly in favour of mothers going out to work: “people who are able to balance work and caring commitments find it easier to provide quality care within the family and, through good quality childcare, outside the home. Working parents can give their children a higher standard of living and provide role models for adult employment”.³²

The term “Family-friendly employment” is deployed by the consultation paper to mean jobs which better enable mothers or carers to go out to work through flexible working arrangements, childcare and parental leave.

The Prime Minister argues that the children of lone parents bear the brunt of poverty if their parent does not have a job.³³

Supporting Families argues that enabling mothers to work will bring wide benefits to the women themselves and their children. Amazingly it claims that divorce and crime may even be reduced:

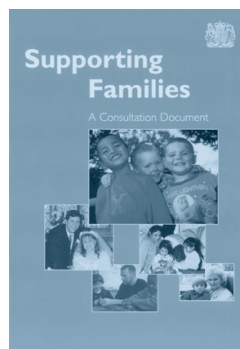
“Family-friendly policies can help to boost the economy by: enhancing financial independence, especially in women....
...Family-friendly employment policies may bring wider social benefits through more stable families; fewer broken relationships between parents; children who are better supported in their education; reduced delinquent behaviour and criminality among young people; and a

better quality of life for sick and disabled relatives.”³⁴

Supporting Families recognises that many families have “intense pressures on their time”.³⁵ One of the page headings in the Paper is “We need to make it easier for parents to spend more time with their children”³⁶. But mums wishing to stay at home are not offered any new initiatives.

■The ‘Third Way’?

So what is New Labour’s Third Way for marriage and the family? It is not the libertarian view - ‘family’ obviously does matter otherwise there would be no Green Paper called *Supporting Families*. But then it neither promotes what it says is best (the married family unit) nor promotes the very childcare most sought by mothers with young children - that provided by themselves or within the immediate family. It is a bundle of policies which talk of the importance of the family but risk undermining the family, and which talk of making it easier for parents to spend more time with their children but then encourage mothers to go to work and pay someone else to look after their own children. The ‘Third Way’ is a road to nowhere in particular. The noble rhetoric on marriage must be turned into reality.



■Taking part in the consultation

Supporting Families is available from all Stationery Office bookshops priced £5 or on the internet at www.homeoffice.gov.uk In the event of difficulty please telephone the Home Office on 0171 217 8545. Responses to the proposals should be made by 31 January 1999. The address to write to is: Katherine Bramwell, Voluntary and Community Unit, Room 230, Horseferry House, Dean Ryle Street, London, SW1P 2AW.

■References

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- See Dennis, N *Social Irresponsibility: How the social affairs intelligentsia have undermined morality*, The Christian Institute, 1996
 - The Independent* 20 March 1996
 - Para 1.14
 - Foreword, page 2
 - See Introduction para 5. The official figures on illegitimacy, cohabitation and divorce are taken from Dennis N, *Who’s Celebrating What?*, The Christian Institute, 1995, pages 3 - 6, 15 - 17. These are supplemented by ^{5a}Murray C *Underclass: The Crisis Deepens*, IEA, 1994, page 6 ^{5b}Population Trends (92), Summer 1998, ONS, page 61, Table 8 ^{5c}Haskey J in David M (ed) *The Fragmenting Family: Does it matter?*, IEA, 1998, page 23 ^{5d}Marriage, Divorce and Adoption Statistics 1995, ONS, 1998, page 95
 - The House of Commons Library, Research Paper 96/42, *The Family Law Bill [HL] - Divorce Law Reform*, page 74
 - Introduction para 2
 - See *Children who experience divorce in their family* in Population Trends (87), Spring 1997, ONS, page 9
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 - Loc. Cit*
 - See *One-parent families and their dependent children in Great Britain* in Population Trends (91), Spring 1998, ONS, page 13
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 - Social Trends* 28, ONS, 1998, page 83
 - Living in Britain: Preliminary results from the 1996 General Household Survey*, ONS, 1997, page 33, Table A15
 - Loc. Cit*
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 - Para 2.15
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 - Social Focus on Women and Men*, ONS, Table 3.22, page 39
 - Family and Working Lives Survey*, Department for Education and Employment, 1996, Data Source Book Volume 2, page 236
 - Ibid.* page 237
 - British Social Attitudes 12th Report*, Social and Community Planning Research/Dartmouth, 1995, page 72
 - Ibid.* page 83
 - Ibid.* page 74
 - Para 2.11
 - BSA, Op. cit.* page 74
 - Hansard: House of Commons, 19 December 1997, col 575-576
 - Hansard: House of Lords, 13 October 1998, col 905
 - See *Fairness at Work*, Cm 3968, DTI, 1998, page 33
 - Para 3.14-3.16
 - Para 2.8
 - Para 3.19
 - The Times* 24 January 1997
 - Para 3.19
 - Para 3.1
 - Heading on page 25
 - ³⁸Murray C *Underclass: The Crisis Deepens*, IEA, 1994, page 33 1994, page 33



Going through the motions: In the last session of Parliament.

An early day motion, or EDM, is the term used to describe a motion put down by an MP that will never be debated. The tabling of an EDM is a Parliamentary device to draw attention to an issue, and to elicit support for it by inviting other MPs to add their signatures to the motion.

Transsexuality

An EDM in support of a man who had a sex change, married illegally, then adopted a child was just one of the motions (EDM 1664) standing in the name of Lynne Jones, Labour MP for Birmingham Selly Oak. “Portrayal of Hayley in Coronation Street” (EDM 1655) and “Social justice for gay men and lesbians” (EDM 243) are the titles of two more. The second congratulated “the scriptwriters, actors and producers of Coronation Street for their sensitive and realistic portrayal of Hayley, a transsexual woman”. It noted the “surprising, but satisfying, lack of media hysteria about the Hayley character” and hoped that “the Government will soon see fit to guarantee transsexual people full civil rights, including the right to correct birth certificates and enter into marriage...” (The Granada TV soap recently included an emotive scene where “Hayley” and her boyfriend indicated their frustration at UK laws which do not allow transsexuals to marry.)

Lynne Jones’ EDM 243 called on the Government to order a “wide-ranging review of the law as it affects gay men and lesbians”. In particular it called for changes to the age of consent, immigration rights, employment policy in the armed forces, pension rights and the law banning promotion of homosexuality in schools. Pushing for recognition of homosexual couples, the EDM concluded with an assertion that “a family is any unit of adults and children whose aim is to provide a loving, stable and nurturing environment for the positive development of the individuals which comprise it.”

Euthanasia and Abortion

On the pro-life front, Marion Roe (Conservative, Broxbourne) received the support of 70 other MPs for her motion (EDM 315) which welcomed a decision of the Supreme Court of the United States rejecting ‘physician assisted suicide’. The motion also noted the “‘overwhelming’ rejection of euthanasia by representatives at the British Medical Association’s annual conference” and called on the Government “to continue with the policy of its predecessor in opposing the efforts of the vociferous few who wish to legalise euthanasia either directly or through legally binding advance directives, living wills.”

Pushing in the opposite direction at the other end of life, Teresa Gorman headed the list of names attached to EDM 83 entitled, “A woman’s right to choose”. Deploring an attempt before the courts in Scotland by a husband to stop his wife aborting their child, the named MPs called for reaffirmation of “the legal position which allows for termination in well defined circumstances”. Other names include Joe Ashton, Barbara Follett, Ken Livingstone, and Ann Cryer.

Sexual Offences

57 MPs signed up to a motion by Evan Harris, (Lib Dem, Oxford West and Abingdon) in support of seven men who were convicted of sexual offences after filming themselves engaging in a homosexual orgy (EDM 717). The oldest participant was 55, the youngest 17. The EDM cited the Government’s decision not to contest a case in the European Court of Human Rights over the unequal age of consent and it’s intention to allow a free vote on reducing the age of consent. It then called on the police and the Crown Prosecution Service to suspend prosecutions of age of consent offences.

After the House of Lords overturned the Commons amendment to lower the age of consent, 110 MPs signed EDM 1612 reaffirming their support for an age of consent at 16 and calling on the Government “to introduce a Government Bill starting in [the House of Commons] as early as possible in the next session of Parliament.”

Section 28

Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act prohibits the promotion of homosexuality in schools and bans local authority expenditure promoting homosexual ‘families’. The table below lists, by party allegiance, the 79 MPs who signed up to EDM 1621 calling for the repeal of Section 28 to “allow schools and local authorities to provide comprehensive information on sexuality”:

<u>Labour Party</u>			<u>Liberal Democrats</u>
Austin/John	Etherington/Bill	Pike/Peter L	Baker/Norman
Barnes/Harry	Fitzsimons/Lorna	Plaskitt/James	Brand/Peter
Benn/Tony	Fyfe/Maria	Pound/Stephen	George/Andrew
Best/Harold	Gardiner/Barry	Rapson/Syd	Gorrie/Donald
Borrow/David	Gerrard/Neil	Reed/Andrew	Hancock/Mike
Brinton/Helen	Gibson/Ian	Ross/Ernie	Harris/Evan
Canavan/Dennis	Griffiths/Jane	Sawford/Phil	Harvey/Nick
Caplin/Ivor	Gunnell/John	Sedgemore/Brian	Jones/Nigel
Chaytor/David	Hope/Phil	Simpson/Alan	Jones/Lembit
Chisholm/Malcolm	Hopkins/Kelvin	Skinner/Dennis	Opik/Lembit
Clarke/Tony	Jones/Lynne	Smith/Jacqui	Stunell/Andrew
Cohen/Harry	King/Oona	Stringer/Graham	Taylor/Matthew
Coleman/Iain	Kumar/Ashok	Todd/Mark	Tonge/Jenny
Cooper/Yvette	Lepper/David	Turner/Desmond	Tyler/Paul
Cox/Tom	Levitt/Tom	Twigg/Stephen	Wallace/James
Cryer/Ann	Livingstone/Ken	Vis/Rudi	<u>Plaid Cymru</u>
Davey/Valerie	Mahon/Alice	Wise/Audrey	Dafis/Cynog
Dawson/Hilton	Mallaber/Judy	Wood/Mike	
Dean/Janet	Marsden/Gordon	Woolas/Phil	
Dismore/Andrew	McAllion/John		
Drown/Julia	McDonnell/John		
Eagle/Maria	Organ/Diana		
	Pickthall/Colin		

Lords block “Gay sex at sixteen” Voters back move by Peers

Simon Calvert reports on this summer’s Parliamentary defeat for homosexual activists

One of the biggest political stories of the summer was, without doubt, the homosexual age of consent. The prospect of legalising “gay sex at sixteen” filled the papers and sharply divided the nation: MPs and homosexual activists on one side; the House of Lords and the vast bulk of the population on the other.

Back in May of this year, a new heroine had emerged from the Labour backbenches to carry the torch for homosexual rights. Ann Keen, MP for Brentford & Isleworth, announced that she would move amendments to alter sex crime laws to reduce the homosexual age of consent¹.

The Crime and Disorder Bill provided the vehicle for her amendments. It was lodged with parliamentary officials on Thursday 11th June, the last possible day before the debate set for 22nd June². The amendments changed the wording of existing laws in order to allow buggery and gross indecency to take place with males over sixteen instead of males over eighteen.

■ The Commons debate

Stonewall, a homosexual activist group, claimed that the majority of the population were behind reducing the age to sixteen³.



The polls contradicted this claim, showing a majority firmly against it. In July 1997 an NOP poll found that 72% were opposed to lowering the age of consent.⁴

Yet, despite the views of the electorate, on 22nd June, MPs voted by 336 to 129 in favour of Ann Keen’s amendments⁵. The amendments concerned changes to sex

crimes law, yet there was little discussion of sex crimes. Instead, MPs used Shakespeare⁶, Stephen Sondheim lyrics⁷, emotive stories⁸ and the language of human rights⁹ to fill up the three hours before the vote.

Although it was a free vote, Alun Michael, then a senior Home Office Minister, put his name to one of the amendments, giving Labour MPs a clear signal of official Government support¹⁰. An excerpt was also read from Tony Blair’s strong speech in favour of sixteen made in 1994¹¹. [See inset page 13]. Tories and Lib Dems knew that their own party leaders had also endorsed sixteen¹².

The only dangerous moment for homosexual activists came when Joe Ashton stood up to move his amendment. The Labour MP for Bassetlaw was concerned about the increasing problem of adults in positions of authority who have sexual relationships with young people in their care, thereby abusing the trust placed in them. Mr Ashton referred¹³ to the 1997 Utting report which noted cases of child abuse where the perpetrators were “frequently in a position of particular responsibility, authority and trust.”¹⁴

Facts about the Commons’ vote:

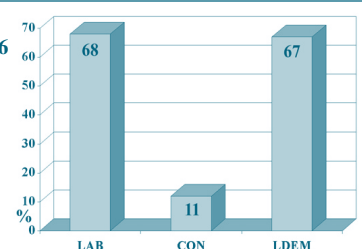
All MPs:

51% of all MPs voted for 16
20% of all MPs voted against 16
29% of all MPs abstained or were absent

Parties:

68% of all Labour MPs voted for 16
11% of all Conservative MPs voted for 16
67% of all Liberal Democrat MPs voted for 16

% MPs voting for 16



AGAINST REDUCING AGE OF CONSENT

Con	Lab	LDEM	Other	TOTAL
109	14	3	3	129

Tellers: Edward Leigh (Con) and Dr. Julian Lewis (Con)

FOR REDUCING AGE OF CONSENT

Con	Lab	LDEM	Other	TOTAL
18	283	31	4	336

Tellers: Neil Gerrard (Lab) and Eleanor Laing (Con)

Mr Ashton proposed to outlaw any sexual contact between an adult and a person between sixteen and eighteen where the adult is in a position of trust over that person. This would apply equally to heterosexual or homosexual acts.

There was a surprising amount of sympathy for this proposal from some of those who were in favour of reducing the age of consent as well as from those against. When the vote was called, Joe Ashton lost by only 40 votes¹⁵, a defeat he attributed to the Government encouraging Labour MPs to vote against him¹⁶.

Homosexual activists were jubilant with the results of both votes. MPs had voted almost three to one in favour of sixteen and no qualifying amendment had succeeded. With this milestone passed, everything else on their agenda seemed theirs for the taking. However, analysis of the Commons vote shows that only half of all MPs voted for sixteen. Just 129 had voted against but there were a considerable number of absences and abstentions: 192 MPs had failed to vote.

■ The Lords' Response

In the weeks running up to the Commons vote one Peeress had repeatedly been asked for her view on the matter. Baroness Young, former leader of the House of Lords and Minister of State at the Foreign Office, stated that she was unequivocally against reducing the age of consent. Lady Young has a formidable reputation in the House of Lords. In May she had brought about an embarrassing Lords defeat for the Government over its refusal to acknowl-

edge the concerns of religious bodies about the Human Rights Bill. In 1996 under the Tory Government she had shown her willingness to stick to principle over divorce law reform, fighting against no-fault divorce. To the dismay of homosexual campaigners she began to emerge as a champion of those who opposed what the Commons had done.

Shortly after the Commons vote Lady Young wrote to her fellow Peers asking for their support as she formally launched her campaign to keep the age of consent at eighteen¹⁷. She argued that the House of Lords, a 'revising chamber', should fulfil its constitutional duty to ask the Commons to 'think again' if it believes it has acted unwisely.

She argued that the House of Lords, a 'revising chamber', should fulfil its constitutional duty to ask the Commons to 'think again'...

She pointed to the opinion polls as evidence that gay sex at sixteen was deeply unpopular. She said that it was not morally equivalent to heterosexual intercourse, with considerably increased medical risks, and that homosexuality is something which sets people apart from the rest of society. Young men, she said, should at least be encouraged to wait till an age when they are more mature and able to weigh up all

these factors before commencing homosexual activity. She also argued that keeping the age at eighteen protected young boys from exploitation. Citing the scenarios referred to by Joe Ashton in the Commons, she argued that sixteen and seventeen year old boys away from home in the care of adults were particularly vulnerable.

There were also constitutional and procedural arguments: the 'gay rights' amendment had been tacked onto the end of the Government's flagship Crime and Disorder Bill, a Bill which originally had no reference to homosexuality. There had been only one debate in Parliament, and a very short one at that. The matter was not in the Bill when it first passed through the House of Lords a few months earlier but had been slotted in at the latest possible moment, minimising opportunity for public and parliamentary debate. Neither had there been a Committee Stage to consider in detail the full import of the move. In short, there had been no proper scrutiny for a change which had enormous social implications.

The Christian Institute worked closely with Lady Young during this time and it quickly became apparent from the volume of mail, faxes and phone calls she was receiving that she had tapped into a huge vein of popular unease about homosexual activism in general and about the threat to young people in particular. Some of these letters included painful stories of homosexual abuse and the desperation of parents whose sons had been lost to a life in the "gay scene".

Facts about the Lords' vote:

Life Peers: If only Life Peers had been allowed to vote, Lady Young would have won by 128 to 93.

Bishops: 26 Church of England Bishops are entitled to sit and vote in the Lords. 9 of them voted on the age of consent. 6 voted with Lady Young, 3 voted against.

The Parties:

44% of all Labour Peers voted for 16

1% of all Conservative Peers voted for 16

44% of all Liberal Democrat Peers voted for 16

3% of all Cross Bench (non-party) Peers voted for 16

	AGAINST REDUCING AGE OF CONSENT						FOR REDUCING AGE OF CONSENT					
	Con	Lab	LDem	XB	Other	TOTAL	Con	Lab	LDem	XB	Other	TOTAL
Life Peers	85	20	3	18	2	128	5	67	19	2	0	93
Hereditary Peers	104	4	3	38	3	152	1	6	11	7	0	25
Law Lords				3		3				1		1
Bishops					6	6					3	3
TOTAL	189	24	6	59	11	289	6	73	30	10	3	122

Within the House of Lords there was huge support for Lady Young. More and more Peers began to speak out and the Press picked up that a major clash was in the offing.

■ Lady Young's Amendment

By the time the day of the vote came on 22 July the media coverage was wall-to-wall, with the front pages of all the major national dailies given over to predictions of a government defeat and a major constitutional showdown between the Lords and the Commons. Hour by hour the TV news showed anxious homosexual activists berating Peers for threatening their success. The Archbishop of Canterbury made a statement which gave encouragement to Peers, including his own Bishops, to vote down the Commons amendment¹⁸. On the day of the vote homosexual rights activists held a demonstration outside the House of Lords, giving rise to fears that Peers might be attacked on their way in. Extra police protection was laid on¹⁹.

The Chamber of the House of Lords was packed when Lady Young rose to her feet at 6.45pm to move her amendment "that the Lords do disagree with the Commons" over homosexual sex for sixteen year old boys.

The debate was more intelligent than the debate in the Commons. Many Peers expressed concerns about young boys

being exploited and coerced by older homosexual men. Baroness Mallalieu responded by arguing that the age should be reduced to encourage young people to be open about their homosexual feelings. She also asserted that age of consent laws make no difference to what people choose to do in private, and argued that sex laws in general do little to protect young people from sexual exploitation²⁰.

Lord Longford spoke with compassion towards homosexuals and came down firmly against reducing the age²¹. Former Archbishop of York, Lord Habgood²² and the Bishop of Winchester²³ both warned against officially approving of homosexual behaviour. Lord Mishcon rose to his feet



Archbishop Coggan evades 'Gay rights' demonstrators

and the silence was tangible as he told of his involvement in the 1956 Wolfenden report which paved the way for the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967. His opinion would carry great weight

with more liberal-minded Peers. After an extremely finely balanced speech, he came down in support of Lady Young²⁴.

As time went on more and more of the speeches flowed in the same direction: against reducing the age of consent and in favour of protecting young people from the moral and physical dangers of homosexual activity.

When the vote came, their Lordships voted overwhelmingly in support of Lady Young: 289 to 122²⁵. Her supporters included former Prime Ministers Lord Callaghan and Baroness Thatcher. Opponents included Baroness Jay, Lord Puttnam and Lord Steel. Less than half of all Labour

Peers voted for sixteen (73 out of 161). It was notable, given the debate about the role of Hereditary Peers, that Lady Young would still have won by 128 votes to 93 if Life Peers alone had been voting.

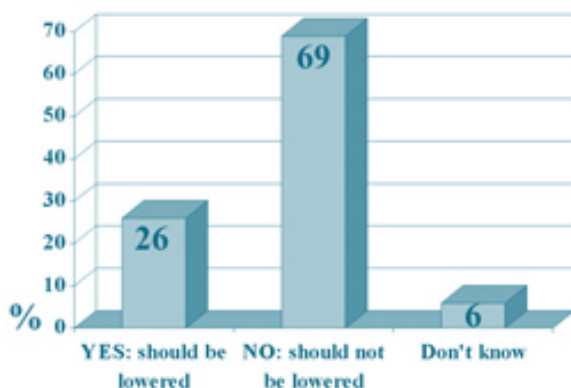
■ Angry Scenes

At the announcement of the result, some of the 70 or so campaigners²⁶ outside attempted to storm into the House of Lords²⁷. Outside the chamber to the House of Lords itself, Lady Young was met by angry homo-

sexual activists. The 72 year-old Peeress had to be whisked away by security staff who feared for her safety²⁸. Colin Hart, *The Christian Institute* Director, was with Lady Young at the time: "Things got

"Should the age of homosexual consent be lowered to 16?"

Source: ICM Public Opinion Poll³³



Tony Blair on the homosexual age of consent:

"...the real objection is not reason but prejudice... In the end, all the concern, however ostensibly objective - let us assume that some of it is genuinely motivated - is traceable to that very subjective prejudice. Let us be clear that people are entitled to think that homosexuality is wrong, but they are not entitled to use the criminal law to force that view upon others. That is where the real practitioners of political correctness lie - not in those who merely seek equality of treatment but in those who insist that the law must discriminate in favour of their view of the conduct of others. That is why, also, the so-called compromise of 18 is misguided. What is the rationale behind maintaining the stigma but at a different age? It is an issue not of age but of equality."

House of Commons Hansard, 21 February 1994, Columns 99-100

pretty tense. I was worried Lady Young was going to get hurt. I was very glad when the security staff escorted us away. Later, Lady Young needed to get to a television studio and the police sent five Constables to accompany her to the taxi.”

Lord Coggan, former Archbishop of Canterbury, found himself surrounded by demonstrators as he tried to walk from the House²⁹. Lord Beloff, (85) was harassed as he attempted to make his way through the crowd³⁰. Many Peers had to run the gauntlet of furious protesters yelling “fascist scum”, “parasites” and “your days are numbered”³¹.

But it all made no difference. The Lords had voted out the reduction of the age of consent. The gay rights bandwagon had hit a pot-hole and its future direction suddenly looked uncertain.

How would campaigners respond? How would MPs and the Government respond?

The public responded with relief and delight, judging by the newspapers and the letters of congratulations to the Baroness herself. Many who felt isolated by political and media support for ‘gay rights’, felt that the vote gave them permission to say publicly that they too disagreed with homosexual activists. New opinion polls confirmed the popularity of the Lords’ action.

Polls taken after the vote showed between 65%³² and 69%³³ opposed lowering the age of consent, figures comparable to the July 1997 figure of 72%³⁴. Only 26% believed it should be sixteen³⁵.

■ Government Climbdown

There had been signs before the vote that the Government might be paving the way for a climbdown over the age of consent. After the vote, the newspapers went into a frenzy, predicting an embarrassing climbdown and Straw facing the protests of pro-homosexual MPs³⁶. The Crime and Disorder Bill had to go back to the Commons where, unless the Home Secretary could stop them, MPs could again insert the amendment and send the Bill back up to the Lords.

But the popularity of the Lords was high after throwing out the reform, and there was a Lords’ majority of 168 to overturn. Mr Straw was faced with losing his flagship law and order Bill if the Lords disagreed once more, since there would not be time for the Bill to go back again to the Commons before the summer holidays.

Ann Keen and Stonewall held summit meetings with Straw and it took several days for a decision to emerge. Straw persuaded Keen not to push her amendment again, in return for which a separate Government Bill would be brought forward

in the new session, dealing with the issue on it’s own³⁷. This Bill would start in the Commons and would allow the Government to invoke the Parliament Act if the Lords again disagreed. The Parliament Act is a rarely used device by which the Commons can force its will on the Lords. Its use marks a constitutional clash of titanic proportions. Along with these promises, Straw made it clear that he was reluctant to accept the Lords’ vote and reiterated his personal support for lowering the age to sixteen³⁸.

The Queen’s Speech on 24th November referred to the new Bill, the Age of Consent and Abuse of Trust Bill, which includes measures in response to concerns that some adults in positions of responsibility and trust in schools and children’s homes can take sexual advantage of the young people in their care. Homosexual activists are unhappy about child protection measures being attached to their ‘equality’ bill³⁹ but the fairly minimal measures are designed to placate Peers and to ease the passage of the Bill. Whether they will be enough to persuade the Lords to accept ‘gay sex at sixteen’ remains to be seen. The new Bill is expected to be introduced in the Commons in January 1999 and should be considered by the House of Lords in the Spring.

■ References

¹ *Gay Times*, May 1998

² See *Notices of Amendments to the Crime and Disorder Bill (Lords) given on Thursday 11th June 1998*, amendment NC1. The amendments would not have come to the attention of MPs until Monday 15th, only one week before the debate. (See speech by Joe Ashton, Hansard: House of Commons, 28 July 1998, col 191)

³ *Daily Telegraph*, 28 July 1998

⁴ NOP “*Young People*”, 18-20 July 1997

⁵ Hansard: House of Commons, 22 June 1998, cols 805-808

⁶ *Ibid.*, col 802

⁷ *Ibid.*, col 775

⁸ *Ibid.*, col 801

⁹ *Ibid.*, col 760

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, col 785

¹¹ *Ibid.*, cols 778-779

¹² *Ibid.*, col 785

¹³ *Ibid.*, col 764

¹⁴ *People Like Us*, the Report of the Review of the Safeguards for Children Living Away From Home, Utting, Sir William et al, The Stationery Office, 1997, para.9.4

¹⁵ Hansard, *Op. Cit.*, cols 808-811. The vote was 234 to 194

¹⁶ Hansard: House of Commons, 28 July 1998, col 192 - 193

¹⁷ *The Times*, 10 July 1998

¹⁸ *Daily Mail*, 22 July 1998

¹⁹ *The Times*, 22 July 1998

²⁰ BBC News web-site, <http://news.bbc.co.uk> 22 July 1998, 22.47

²¹ Hansard: House of Lords, 22 July 1998, cols 940 - 941

²² *Op. cit.*, col 954 - 955

²³ *Ibid.*, col 955 -957

²⁴ *Ibid.*, cols 942 - 944

²⁵ *Ibid.*, cols 947 - 948

²⁶ *Ibid.*, cols 973 - 976

²⁷ *The Independent*, 23 July 1998. *The Guardian*, 23 July 1998

²⁸ *The Times*, 23 July 1998. *The Guardian*, 23 July 1998

²⁹ *The Independent*, 23 July 1998.

BBC news website, 22 July 1998

³⁰ *The Independent*, 23 July 1998

³¹ *Daily Mail*, 23 July 1998

³² *Daily Mail*, 23 July 1998. *The Times*, 23 July 1998

³³ *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 July 1998.

Poll of 733 adults conducted by Gallup 24 - 26 July 1998

³⁴ *The Guardian*, 10 November 1998.

Poll of 1,222 adults conducted by ICM 6 - 7 November 1998. (An NOP survey, entitled “*Young People*”, conducted 24 - 26 July 1998 found 68% opposed to reducing the age of consent.)

³⁵ NOP “*Young People*” survey, 18 - 20 July 1997

³⁶ Gallup survey - *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 July 1998. ICM survey - *The Guardian*, 10 November 1998. [The NOP “*Young People*” survey July 1998 (which did not allow “don’t know” answers) found 32% in favour of 16.]

³⁷ *Evening Standard*, 23 July 1998.

Daily Mail, 23 July 1998. *The Times*, 23 July 1998. *Daily Mail*, 27 July 1998. *The Times*, 27 July 1998

³⁸ *The Pink Paper*, 31 July 1998. BBC News Website, 26 July 1998

(http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk_politics/newsid_139000/139622.stm). *Daily Mail*, 27 July and 28 July 1998. *Daily Telegraph*, 27 July and 29 July 1998. *The Times*, 27 July 1998. *The Guardian*, 28 July 1998. *The Independent*, 28 July 1998. See also letter from Jack Straw to Ann Keen, received on 27 July 1998.

³⁹ See letter from Jack Straw to Ann Keen, received 27 July 1998

See letter from Angela Mason to Stonewall supporters, 28 July 1998

Lambeth backs Biblical teaching on homosexuality

Within days of the House of Lords rejecting an attempt to lower the homosexual age of consent to 16, the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Communion passed a resolution which strongly affirmed Biblical teaching on marriage and homosexuality.

The motion asserted that:

- Homosexual practice is incompatible with the Bible;
- Christians can experience same-sex attraction and that the Church should seek sensitively to minister to such people;
- For those not called to marriage sexual abstinence is the right course;
- Same-sex unions are to be rejected;
- The significance of the Kuala Lumpur statement is noted (this statement deplored the “setting aside of Biblical teaching” especially in regard to homosexual behaviour which it described as “totally unacceptable”).

Bishops voted to support the motion with 526 for, 70 against and 45 abstaining.

The vote showed up the huge chasm of belief between liberal Bishops in the UK and USA and orthodox Bishops throughout the rest of the Anglican Communion. Unlike in the West, the Church in the ‘two thirds’ world has not departed from the Bible on basic morality.

Leading liberal, Bishop Richard Holloway, was “gutted... and depressed” after the vote and called Dr Carey’s speech “pathetic”, a comment for which he later apologised. The Bishop has now shelved his plans for a new career as a Labour politician in the Scottish Parliament. He has pledged to remain as Bishop of Edinburgh and to fight for gay rights in the Church.



The BBC and the liberal British press were incredulous that Bishops could ever believe that homosexuality was wrong. The main story on the Lambeth conference posted on the BBC’s internet site by Alex Kirby, the religious affairs editor, only quotes Bishops who back gay rights. Bishops Spong and Holloway condemn Lambeth’s “fundamentalist” view of the Bible. Kirby comments “*You do not have to agree with their views on sexual morality, though, to realise that they may have a point in what they say about their opponents’ use of the Bible.*”

■ Pro-gay Bishops and the LGCM

After the vote the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM) hit back by circulating a “Pastoral Letter” signed by 182 pro-gay Bishops apologising to homosexuals for “the sense of rejection that has occurred” following Lambeth. Many of these Bishops were not senior enough to attend Lambeth. Many are Suffragans who do not supervise a diocese.

However, thirteen English Diocesan Bishops have signed: Bath & Wells, Birmingham, Bristol, Derby, Exeter, Guildford, Hereford, Manchester, St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, Salisbury, Sheffield, Truro, and Worcester.

Twenty nine English Suffragan and Area Bishops have signed: Aston, Brixworth, Whitby, Bolton, Wolverhampton, Dorking, Swindon, Huntingdon, Penrith, Plymouth, Bradwell, Stafford, Colchester, Dudley, Sherborne, Bedford, Repton, Barking, Ludlow, Hulme, Hertford, Jarrow, Dunwich, Selby, Warrington, Reading, Lancaster, Grimsby and Knaresborough.

In the Church of Ireland Archbishop Eames and the Bishops of Meath & Kildare, Limerick & Killaloe and Cashel & Ossory have signed.

In the Church of Wales, all Bishops have signed except the Bishop of Llandaff.

In the Scottish Episcopal Church, all have signed except the Bishop of Glasgow & Galloway.

Liberalism is strongly represented at “official” level in the Church of England, but it has much less support amongst ordinary church-goers. In the UK, through organisations such as REFORM, and in the US, Anglicans are networking outside the official structures to combat liberalism and give support to those who hold to Biblical teaching on homosexuality. It is clear that the battle within the Church of England and the wider Anglican Communion is set to rumble on.

Sources: *The Times*, 6 August 1998; *Church Times*, 7 August 1998; *The Times*, 7 August 1998; *The Times*, 19 August 1998; BBC News website: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/uk/newsid_147000/1476778.stm; *Bishops Signing Pastoral Statement to Lesbian and Gay Anglicans of August 5, 1998 from Lambeth Conference* (as at October 30 1998).

REFORM can be contacted through Jonathan Lockwood on 0114-230-9256 or via their Web site on: <http://www.reform.org.uk>

Summary

■ Supporting families - the Green Paper

Common sense and research evidence support the Government's claim that marriage is the surest and most reliable framework for raising children.

If the Government believes this then, for the sake of children's best interests, it must uphold the institution of marriage across a whole range of policy areas including education, divorce law and the tax/benefits system.

Key facts

- The family is still overwhelmingly based on marriage.
- 70% of children are still brought up in a married family. Only 7% of children live with cohabiting parents. Most lone parenthood is created by divorce or separation from a spouse.
- Over the past 30 years divorce, cohabitation and births outside of marriage have increased rapidly. Marriage was previously the stabilising factor and no new alternative has been created.
- Around half of all mothers with pre-school children do not work. Stay-at-home-mums make up a third of mothers with children aged 5 - 9, and a quarter of mothers with children aged 10 or more.
- Of those mothers who do have a paid job, most only work part time.

Details of how to obtain the Government's Green Paper on the family and how to take part in the consultation can be found on page 9.

Research by *British Social Attitudes* has found

- Women stay at home because of what they believe about their role in the family.
- Even amongst those mothers who do work there is great resistance to using commercial childcare.
- Women overwhelmingly prefer their children to be looked after by themselves, their husbands or a close relative.

■ Age of Consent

Key facts

- 70% of the public oppose any reduction in the age of homosexual consent.
- Nearly 30% of MPs abstained or were absent from the Commons vote.
- Only 44% of all Labour and Liberal Democrat Peers voted for 16.

■ Other items

- The Queen's Speech announced legislation to introduce the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) and a Government Bill to lower the age of homosexual consent.
- The Government is to consult on parents' right to discipline their children. Legal changes are proposed following a European Court of Human Rights ruling.
- Some 22 states in the USA have started considering legislation to re-introduce fault-based divorce.

Faith *in the* Family

The married family is the future. It is *the* most stable relationship in which to raise children. It follows that, for the sake of our Nation's children, public policy must uphold marriage - *the voluntary union for life of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.*

Faith in the Family is a new project of *The Christian Institute* which seeks to promote marriage and family values in public

policy. *The Advocate* is a bi-monthly publication of news and comment on the major issues facing the family today.

The Christian Institute is a policy research organisation which seeks to uphold historic, Biblical, Christian truth. Since being established as a charity in 1990 *The Institute* has specialised in marriage & the family, religious liberties, education, the case against drugs legalisation, and the constitution.



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