

Susan Bentley

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April 12, 2005

Chairman, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services.

Dear Sir or Madam:

I recently forwarded a submission into your inquiry but wish to add to my previous submission. After reading many of the other submissions put forward I found that there were not a great many solutions and a great number of problems facing women with children participating in the workforce. I would like to offer the following: The main and constant point people make is the lack of affordable, good quality childcare, many or most parents actually would prefer to stay home and care for their own children, and the fact that most people consider this the woman's problem. Children have both, a mother and a father, why are men's roles so blatantly ignored, and men excluded from the solution to this problem. The job of providing suitable and affordable childcare would be insurmountable, if not impossible. I know of a couple who both worked a 36 hour week, but did it in 3 days. The father worked Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday; the mother worked Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Whilst one was in paid employment the other was taking care of the children's and household needs. They never had to worry about childcare, financial contributions and home duties were shared, the children always had access to one parent, they had a full day as a family together and the father had the privilege and luxury of getting to know his children and contribute to their welfare and development. I thought this was a real solution to a real problem.

I believe there is a lot of merit in the 3 day working week, even if it were to increase the length of the working day. Men and women could participate equally in both employment and, the responsibilities of childrearing. It would decrease the demands on childcare centers and eliminate the dilemma of what to do when a child is ill, parents would be free to participate in the school community, single parents would have better access to jobs, only having to find childcare for 3 days per week, families would have at least 1 day of the family unit being together for a full day, and much pressure would be eliminated at home and in the workplace.

In addition I believe incomes should be split for taxation purposes. I have always believed the system of penalizing parents for living together to be most unfair; ie; if only one parent manages to find employment the income should be split between the two parents, and taxed at that rate.

I do hope you find these suggestions helpful

Sincerely,
Susan Bentley