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Emily Dale Rebuttal to Schlafly

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[This transcript is from a commentary on IWU radio station WESN in response to a Phyllis Schlafly broadcast about the Equal Rights Amendment. It was recorded on a reel-to-reel tape, undated but ca. 1973, and digitized in July 2009. Date is estimate based on ERA coverage in the Argus; no mention in the Argus of this broadcast found at this time. The IWU archives has the Schlafly broadcast on reel-to-reel but it has not been digitized due to uncertainty about intellectual property rights.]

This is Doctor Emily Dale, of the department of anthropology and sociology at Illinois Wesleyan University. Some students who assist in directing our college radio station have asked me to prepare a rebuttal to the tape which has just been played, featuring Phyllis Schlafly. It wasn't easy to make up my mind that I was adequate to the task, accepting the challenge to respond to the very beautiful, brilliant, and very rich Phyllis Schlafly. Probably wouldn't bother equally beautiful, brilliant, and rich spokeswoman for the women's rights movement such as Gloria Steinem, or Germaine Greer. But for a provincial professional, who has difficulty paying her bills, this is a pretty intimidating task.

Most particularly, my role is complicated by the fact that I am not an advocate of women's rights per se, so as much as I am a dedicated spokesperson for human rights. I would like to think that the cause of achieving equal rights for all people has been the prime social motive of my adult life. I think that a great deal of why one is for or against the equal rights amendment has to do with one's life experience. My own has led me from the position, very well explained by Mrs. Schlafly, one to which I probably would've subscribed, while I was still primarily the mother-wife-homemaker, and I have come instead to another perspective.

Mrs. Schlafly does things like running for Congress from Alton, an activity that her husband's financial activity backing underwrites. I support my family. Mrs. Schlafly is the outstanding spokeswoman for conservative politics, having authored a pro-Goldwater book. I'm about as independent and hard-nosed a political evaluator as you can find. And I don't belong in anyone's political pocket. Also, although I understand, and to a certain extent, sympathize with, the radical women's liber, I do not see myself in that corner either. In the first place, I don't hate men. In the second place, I love being a mother, and taking care of my home is fun for me. I wouldn't be anything but a woman if I could. From a biological point of view, females have so many advantages over men that I sometimes think that a lot of the prejudice and discrimination directed against us is grounded in pure, unadulterated jealousy.

But what I hear Schlafly saying is—and I'm pretending to quote from her—paraphrasing from her now—I have it made, because I'm a woman, I can lean on TV dinners, vacuum cleaners, and a multitude of electrical appliances to do my household work. Because I'm a woman, I don't have to go outside of the home to work. Because I'm a woman, I don't have to worry about losing my children, since the courts are stacked in my favor. Because I'm a woman, I don't owe my country any service. I'm exempt, by virtue of the biological fact that I bear the children. And when I get old, because I'm a woman, I should enjoy special privileges from the Social Security administration.

Then, she tidily sweeps all of this special privilege behind the noble façade of preserving the family. So speaketh Schlafly, as I read her. What I have found out, in the process of being a professional breadwinner for my family, is that I had a lot more to gain in terms of self-respect, than I lost in security. As a matter of fact, I found out what most men have to discover: that performing and providing for those who are dependent on you, is a deep source of ego-fulfillment and self-satisfaction. One of the major reasons why I am in favor of the equal rights amendment is that I feel men have paid a terrible price for overprotecting females like Phyllis Schlafly. They have literally paid years of their lives to give women the advantages Schlafly wants to continue to hoard. The life expectancy of a man in this society is about seven years less than it is for women. Interestingly, and I'm sure Schlafly is aware of this with her Phi Beta Kappa key firmly planted on her bosom, this difference is declining as an increasing proportion, now 42 percent of the adult women in this country work, and most of them incidentally are the chief breadwinners in their families.

Whether they are consciously aware of it or not, the women who oppose equal rights are asking the men, on whom they are dependent, to die earlier, so that they, the privileged women, can live to enjoy the material fruits of their husbands' labors. To me, this seems a profoundly selfish, immoral kind of parasitism.

I don't know where Phyllis Schlafly was during World War II, but I was in college. My brothers were in the military service, and I wanted more than anything else to enlist, so that I could help bring my brothers home as soon as possible. Since I was underage, I had to have my parents' consent, and they wouldn't give it. They felt that having two sons in the service was enough. But from where I sat, at the time I would have been vulnerable to some kind of selective service system, had I been a male, I'd have given anything to have been a part of that national defense effort. As it was, I wound up using a poor grade of toilet paper, doing without Hershey bars, and curtailing gas consumption. Hardly noteworthy sacrifices, in comparison with the sacrifices of Ewing DeMange, Don Ward, Reed Yates, or Bruce McClure, to mention four fine young men, about my age, from this area, who died in that war. Maybe Phyllis Schlafly wants somebody else to do her dying for her, but I don't.

As far as the court scene goes, I am fully cognizant of the pro-female bias which prevails. The assumption that the woman should automatically be awarded children in divorce cases, it seems to me, is as outmoded as gaslights. Suppose the woman doesn't give two hoots for the kids, but just wants them to spite her husband. Shouldn't the prime consideration be which parent would do the best job? The courts have leaned on this outmoded line of thinking to escape the heavy responsibility for making a serious effort to establish what is best for the child's welfare. There are too many battered babies in this country to mouth the old cliché about a mother's instinct. Some women want to kill their kids. Some of them want to turn them into overprotected idiots. Some want to keep them around as permanent reminders of their hatred for a now absent husband. Schlafly may want to continue giving women the edge on this crucial consideration, but I don't. I don't believe a mother is automatically a better parent than a father. I feel that the children's

rights should take precedence over those of the biological mother, or father, for that matter.

Part of the confusion, from which the Phyllis Schlafly of this world suffer, is that they don't know very much about their own biogenic systems. They operate on the pre-1960 vintage belief that a man is a man, and a woman is a woman. This is patently false. Since the DNA molecule was unwound, we've known that every individual possesses some sex-linked characteristics of both sexes. Some individuals who look like males may have more female than male traits, and vice versa. The most recent developments in embryology indicate that all human fetuses are originally female. Male characteristics do not begin to appear until after the fifth or sixth week.

What this means is that the basic organizational pattern is given in the female, whereas that of the male has to be acquired. The female anatomy is genetically set, whereas in the male, it is hormonally determined. The weird thing about this is that for all mammals, modern embryology calls for an Adam out of Eve myth, in direct conflict with the religious myths surrounding the reproductive properties of Adam's rib. For those who would like to know more about these most recent findings, I'd like to recommend a book that I read recently, entitled The Nature and Evolution of Female Sexuality, by Dr. M.J. Sherfey. That's spelled S-H-E-R-F-E-Y. The book is copyrighted, 1972 from Random House.

Well, what does all this have to do with the Equal Rights Amendment? It means our own biological makeup contradicts rigid sex segregated roles, rules, and treatment. Fundamentally, we are all, male and female, more like, than unlike one another, and should do all we can to remove the socially and culturally determined walls that separate us from each other. Those walls have led to diminishing female achievement in a world that needs all the high achievers it can produce. A study published in Psychology Today, by Dr. Matina Horner, revealed the extent to which playing a passive, feminine role affects women's performance in academic settings. Caught in a double bond, the intelligent woman, who is aware of her own abilities, wants to achieve, and yet, she is aware of the price she may have to pay if she succeeds too well. She becomes a pariah, denigrated, and put down by her sisters, and avoided like a pestilence by males. Horner found that many bright women are actually motivated to fail, to avoid success, rather than risk unpopularity, or being seen as less than full woman. When placed in competitive situations with their own sex, these women performed very well. But when males were present, these same women deliberately underperformed.

The message is clear. Until women are psychologically free from the fear of being successful, their performance will suffer accordingly, and the psychological freedom for women to develop themselves requires basic changes in sex-role expectations in this country. I believe that the Equal Rights Amendment can lay the groundwork for these changes.

Mrs. Schlafly passes over the overwhelming evidence of gross discrimination against women in the professions in business, with the trite and also patently false comment that

everyone is in favor of equal pay for equal work. If that is so, why do women college graduates earn approximately half the income paid male college graduates? If that is so, why are people in domestic services, the textile industry, and until last May, teaching, excluded from protection under the law? Is it merely a coincidence that most of the people in these fields are women? To paraphrase the famous “Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Clause” line, I’d have to say “No, Phyllis, I’m sorry, you’re mistaken. There are a lot of people who aren’t the slightest bit supportive of equal pay for equal work as a goal.”

And to pretend that any woman can just contact the Equal Opportunity Commission and get free legal aid to gain legal regress is misleading. The Department of Health Education and Welfare has yet to process a single case of discrimination in higher education due to sex. And when I talked to a regional director of AGW this fall about that fact, she said, “My advice is to forget using the federal machinery, and just take cases through the regular courts.” Well, what I’d like to know is who can afford it. The maid, working in a private home, or in a big industry? The underpaid textile employee? That’s like telling a black cotton picker you ought to sue the white plantation owner in Georgia for 200 years’ worth of back pay. It’s an impossible thing.

To conclude my remarks, I want to quote from a book published last year. It was written by a husband and wife team, Betty and Theodore Roszak, and it’s entitled Masculine/Feminine. In the foreword it reads, “He is playing masculine. She is playing feminine. He is playing masculine because she is playing feminine. She is playing feminine because he is playing masculine. He is playing the kind of man that she thinks the kind of woman she is playing ought to admire. She is playing the kind of woman that she thinks the kind of man he is playing ought to desire. If he were not playing masculine, he might well be more feminine than she is, except when she is playing very feminine. If she were not playing feminine, she might well be more masculine than he is, except when he is playing very masculine. So he plays harder, and she plays softer. He wants to make sure that she could never be more masculine than he. She wants to make sure that he could never be more feminine than she. He therefore seeks to destroy the femininity in himself. She therefore seeks to destroy the masculinity in herself. She is supposed to admire him for the masculinity in him that she fears in herself. He is supposed to desire her for the femininity in her that she despises in herself. He desires her for her femininity which is his femininity, but which he can never lay claim to. She admires him for his masculinity which is her masculinity but which she can never lay claim to. Since she may only love her own masculinity in him, she envies him his masculinity. Since he may only love his own femininity in her, he envies her her femininity. The envy poisons their love. He, coveting her unattainable femininity, decides to punish her. She, coveting his unattainable masculinity, decides to punish him. He denigrates her femininity, which he is supposed to desire and which he really envies, and becomes more aggressively masculine. She feigns disgust at his masculinity, which she is supposed to admire and which she really envies, and becomes more fastidiously feminine. He is becoming less and less what he wants to be. She is becoming less and less what she wants to be. But now, he is more manly than ever, and she is more womanly than ever. Her femininity, growing more dependently supine, becomes contemptible. His masculinity, growing

more aggressively domineering, becomes intolerable. At last, she loathes what she has helped his masculinity to become. At last, he loathes what he has helped her femininity to become. So far, it's all been very symmetrical. But we've left one thing out. The world belongs to what his masculinity has become. The reward for what his masculinity has become is power. The reward, for what her femininity has become, is only the security which his power can bestow upon her. If he were to yield to what her femininity has become, he would be yielding to contemptible incompetence. If she were to acquire what his masculinity has become, she would participate in intolerable coerciveness. She is stifling under the triviality of her own femininity. The world is groaning beneath the terrors of his masculinity. He is playing masculine. She is playing feminine. How do we call off the game?" I'm sincerely convinced that one of the ways in which we can begin to call off the game of playing masculine and playing feminine is to pass the Equal Rights Amendment.