



Photo by Geoff Putnam

Motherless Mandate

The pressure is on the U.S. Senate to ratify a radical U.N. treaty.

Analysis by Janice Shaw Crouse, Ph.D., and Wendy Wright

All of a sudden there is a movement afoot to ratify the United Nations treaty titled the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, known more commonly as “CEDAW” (pronounced see-daw). Congressional hearings to promote its ratification took place on June 13, a political maneuver with political timing. Senate Democrats apparently believe there are advantages to bringing “women’s issues” to the fore prior to the important congressional elections this fall.

Former president Jimmy Carter signed CEDAW in 1980, but the U.S. Senate has never ratified it—for

legitimate reasons. On April 12, 2000, Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-California) introduced a “sense of the Senate” to hold hearings and act on CEDAW. One month later, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina) introduced a “sense of the Senate” to reject CEDAW because it “demeans motherhood and undermines the traditional family.” Recently, the State Department classified the treaty as a “Category 3” (acceptable, ready for ratification, but a low priority).

On the surface, what is not to like about a treaty that would supposedly “end all forms of discrimination against women”? No one wants women to be

treated as second-class, without equal justice or rights. If this were what CEDAW was about, there would be no dissent; we'd all be its cheerleaders.

Faulty Reasons

In asking people to tell the Senate to ratify the treaty, fans of CEDAW claim:

★ *“This treaty is not so much for American women—it won’t change much for women here, they claim—but the United States ought to get behind policies that would empower women around the world.”* What they don’t recognize, however, is that countries that are the worst abusers of women are also anti-American. The United States signing a treaty will not persuade them to change their ways.

★ *“Legally, CEDAW can’t be enforced; therefore, it is not a threat to U.S. policies.”* While the U.N. currently does not have a police force or court system, very soon the International Criminal Court will be operational. This U.N. body is set up essentially to have jurisdiction over every country, regardless of whether each nation has signed on to it. Also, some argue that the provisions in CEDAW could be considered “international common law” and may have to be recognized by the legislatures and courts of every country.

★ *“We can take care of any problems with the treaty by posting official ‘reservations’ (amendments to define controversial language).”* Some legal experts dispute that “reservations” can release a country from CEDAW’s mandates. In fact, the treaty itself states that reservations “incompatible with the object and purpose of the present Convention shall not be permitted.”

★ *“The United States would be in a stronger position to affect the debate about women if we participated in negotiations about the content and enforcement of CEDAW.”* Ratifying CEDAW would allow the United States to have one member on the committee that oversees its enforcement. That would be one person out of 23.

Social Engineering

CEDAW defines “discrimination” as “any distinction . . . on the basis of sex.” It requires governments to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women “with a view to achieving the elimination of . . . all . . . practices that are based on . . . stereotyped roles for men and women.” Professor Richard Wilkins, an expert on how U.N. documents affect the family, notes, “CEDAW requires the government to intrude in all areas, no matter how private, consensual, or even sacred, if there is any distinction made on the basis of sex—or if any culture perpetuates ‘stereotypes.’” CEDAW thus requires the exertion of government power against religion and even thought.”

As with all important documents, it is necessary to understand how it would be enforced. The CEDAW committee, which oversees the treaty’s implementation in signatory countries, has used broad interpretations to lament the celebration of Mother’s Day in Belarus, to advocate the legalization of prostitution, and to recommend that labor and civil laws extend to prostitutes.

Perhaps more problematic is the vague phrase “based on sex,” which opens the door to the homosexual agenda. Indeed, the Central Asian

country of Kyrgyzstan received an order to “re-conceptualize” lesbianism so that it would be a “sexual orientation” rather than a sexual offense in that country’s penal code.

Equally troubling is the redefinition of the family. CEDAW is upfront about seeking to “change the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family.” Nations have received complaints from the CEDAW committee about their “stereotypical” portrayals of men as heads of households and women as mothers and homemakers. Experts on the committee have “expressed concern that women’s motherhood role was taking precedence over their professional and individual development.”

Government Parents

The CEDAW committee views government as better than parents, by promoting federally funded day care in order to socialize children. It believes governments should facilitate “women’s re-entry into the labor market.” It commits governments to “the elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all

levels and in all forms of education ... by the revision of textbooks and school programs and the adaptation of teaching methods.”

CEDAW mandates sex education in schools, demands quotas and insists upon “comparable worth”—sex-based wage and salary price-fixing. Like similar international treaties, CEDAW is used to support universal abortion-on-demand.

The new push to get CEDAW ratified in the United States appears to be sheer opportunism by the political left. American women do not need the treaty because it would do nothing to enhance the rights and privileges that they already enjoy. Instead, the treaty is a way to force acceptance of highly

controversial and harmful issues like abortion, decreased parental rights, sexual promiscuity and redefinition of the family. Sadly, privileged women are shamelessly using the legitimate needs of women around the world to push a frivolous and morally corrupt agenda.

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free, online commentaries at
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How would you feel if a committee of "experts," some from totalitarian countries, decided to undercut your parental role? Visit <http://cwfa.org/cedaw> to read CWA's paper on the dangers of CEDAW ratification. Or use the form on page 38 to request your free copy.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- PRAY** that the Senate will reject this treaty.
- PRAISE** for citizens who stay alert and contact their representatives.
- ACT** Ask your senators to reject CEDAW. Capitol switchboard: 202-224-3121

What's Wrong With CEDAW

The CEDAW document established a committee to ensure that signatory nations become more "woman-friendly." However, Sen. Jesse Helms shows the treaty is more concerned with "denigrating motherhood," and he gave fellow senators examples of how the committee pushes "an anti-family agenda" in the way it handles the following topics:

★ **Abortion**—"This committee has instructed Ireland, a country that restricts abortion, to 'facilitate a national dialogue on [its] restrictive abortion laws' and has declared that 'it is discriminatory for a [government] to refuse to legally provide for the performance of certain reproductive health services for women'—that is to say, abortion."

★ **Redefinition of the Family**—"The committee solemnly declared to Belarus its 'concern [over] the continuing prevalence of such [stereotypical] symbols as a Mother's Day' and lectured Armenia on the need to 'combat the traditional stereotype of women in the noble role of mother.'"

★ **Decreased Parental Rights**—"The committee informed Slovenia that too many Slovenian mothers were staying home to raise their children."

★ **Day Care**—"This committee warned

that because only 30 percent of children were in day-care centers, the other 70 percent were in danger of ... 'miss[ing] out on educational and social opportunities' offered in formal day-care institutions."

★ **Prostitution**—"The committee recommends the decriminalization of prostitution."

★ **Women in Combat**—"The CEDAW committee mandated that all countries adopting the treaty must ensure the 'full participation' of women in the military, meaning that nations would be required to send women into combat even if the military chiefs decided that it was not in the national security interest of, for example, the United States of America."

—*Excerpts from statement by Sen. Jesse Helms, Congressional Record: March 8, 2000 (Senate), S1276-S1277.*