

New family law is 'con job' on women

By MAGGIE HANNAH
Herald staff writer

"Bill 59 is the greatest con job ever played on women," says the vice-president of the Oakville Single Fathers Society.

"While they have been talking all about the benefits women will receive under the new legislation they have failed to say where they will not benefit," says Gord Rogers, a father of two.

"Women now have the same problems every man has had all along," he points out. "Their responsibilities have increased dramatically now that they have equality."

"They can be expected to support their husbands, can have their wages garnished for support of their husbands and children can even be cited for contempt of court and sent to jail if they do not make support payments as the court awards them," he says. "Welfare can even come to a woman and claim every penny they spend on her husband if he winds up on their rolls after a separation."

Mr. Rogers, replying to a special feature on family law published in The Herald, says

he and his group have been put down as being sexist and anti-women because they opposed some parts of the legislation.

Their opposition is not based on a belief that women can't handle the changes, he says. What has really disturbed him is the way women have been kept in the dark as to what these changes would mean for them.

Women can cope with their new responsibilities, he feels, once they realize what they are, but it was totally wrong of the government to mislead them into thinking that the changes would make life easier and more secure for them in case of separation or divorce.

Mr. Rogers compared the new Family Law Reform Act to legislation passed in West Germany last year which was designed to end the practise of assigning guilt in a divorce action. He feels that Ontario's new legislation will quite possibly be viewed much as the German changes have been.

A New York Times article on the German legislation termed it "so complicated, so convoluted, so forbidding" to residents that "in the six months

after it took effect in July, the number of divorces compared with the same period in 1976 fell to 5,000 from 50,000."

Mr. Rogers is a firm believer in communication between spouses when it comes to working out separation agreements. The less that can be left for a lawyer to handle the better, in his view, since he can quote too many horror stories of people in, or known to, his organization who now have huge legal bills as a result of handing all their problems over to a lawyer.

Leaving it up to a judge to decide whether a marriage contract or separation agreement is equitable to both parties is also something he views with suspicion. Who can tell whether what separating partners feel is equitable to a judge, he argues.

He notes that lawyers are already advising men facing separation hearings to get themselves fired from their jobs so that their wives will be the ones with the larger salaries and therefore the ones who end up having to make support payments.

The other two bills which

came into effect March 31 are just as flawed as the Family Law Reform Act and the Succession Law Reform Act.

The Children's Law Reform Act, formerly Bill 61, was passed in November and deals with changes in laws to remove any distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children.

Part 2, section 4, of the Act allows any person with an interest in a child to apply to a court for recognition as the child's legal parent.

While this might be suitable enough in some cases Mr. Rogers is not happy with the possibilities this opens for one parent to lose his or her rights to children without any recourse.

While parents may separate and decide to live with other partners that doesn't mean they automatically want to lose all their rights to their children. Many times the separated parents aren't even happy with the fact that the other partner has been given custody of their children and they certainly don't know the new partner the separated spouse has chosen, he says.

"The government has given

the right to any kind of jerk to get control of my kids and I haven't even a way to fight him," he says.

Mr. Rogers also finds the length of time allowed in law between the termination of a marriage and the birth of a child for which a man is still

deemed responsible as another strange matter.

The law says a child born 300 days or less after the end of a marriage by death or divorce is the legal child of that marriage. What really disturbs Mr. Rogers is that fact that the average gestation period is

only 280 days. That leaves wives 20 days leeway during which they may become pregnant and their former husbands will still be legally responsible for the child.

This, of course, is mild compared to the loophole which really incenses Mr. Rogers.

When a couple separate, it usually takes three years before they can apply for a divorce. Then it takes another 12 to 18 months before the case comes before a judge and a further 90 days before an absolute decree takes effect. A man could be considered legally responsible for a child his wife bears at any time up to five years after they separate, he says.

The Marriage Act, 1977, formerly referred to as Bill 62, also leaves Mr. Rogers wondering as to whether homosexual couples may now marry legally because there is no male or female reference in the Act.



NORVAL UCW BAKE SALE

Betty Hagen, left, purchases a pie from Anne Wilson at the bake sale table held by the Norval UCW at Zeller's Saturday morning.

The bake sale was just one of several similar activities taking place throughout Halton Hills at the weekend.

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Travel

San Juan city of contrasts

SYNDICATED TRAVEL NEWS - The capital city of Puerto Rico, San Juan, is a city of contrasts. It is also the oldest city under the American flag; a place of gleaming luxury hotels and ancient forts; a city true to its Latin heritage, where English is spoken throughout.

The most marked contrast is to be seen in Old San Juan, a seven-block area with narrow streets, colorful gardens, and filigree balconies. It's a spot of the 16th century tucked away on a point jutting into the sea.

Surrounding this throwback to the 16th century is the new San Juan with its giant modern hotels, superb sports facilities, nightclubs and casinos, top rate entertainment, balmy weather, and stretches of tranquil beaches.

You might wonder just how such a paradox came into being. The island was once part of the Spanish Empire, colonized after Columbus made his second voyage to the New World. Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States under the Treaty of Paris which ended the Spanish-American War.

The island, the fourth largest in the Caribbean, thus began its new life under American influence. Through the years, both



Spaniards and Americans have been attracted to the island, not only by its beauty, but also by its climate for Puerto Rico has an almost perpetual summer.

Bear in mind that if you plan to visit Puerto Rico that San Juan is not the whole country than Winnipeg is all of Canada. To fully appreciate the island's natural beauties and to learn something of its people, their culture and life-styles, you must be adventurous.

One particular natural wonder in Puerto Rico is a phenomenon known as a "phosphorescent bay". In the waters of several of the island's bays, there are luminescent dinoflagellates, a tiny form of marine life that produces sparks of chemical light when disturbed.

The best known phosphorescent bay is near Parguera, a fishing village on the southwest coast of the island, and there is also another active bay on the nearby out island of Vieques.

For the best effect, you should see these phosphorescent bays on a moonless night, when a boat's wake creates silver ripples and leaping fish drip sprays of light.

While Puerto Rico has always had much of the

St. Kitts - undiscovered paradise

SYNDICATED TRAVEL NEWS - Cool trade winds whispering through the sugar cane . . . children laughing . . . donkeys braying . . . and cloud capped mountains dreaming in the brilliant sunshine. All this and more is there to greet you when you arrive in St. Kitts in the eastern Caribbean.

St. Kitts is actually part of a three-island state, the full and correct name of which is St. Christopher, Nevis and Anguilla. They now form an associated state with Britain, and St. Kitts and Nevis were once England's richest colonies in the West Indies.

The people on St. Kitts make you feel welcome from the moment you arrive, and upon departure you get the impression they are sincere when they express sorrow at your leaving.

The islands offer almost anything you would desire - quiet restful holidays, sports facilities, entertainment, and beaches. The beaches are of two types - one is basically black volcanic sand, and the other is the white and light brown

variety. No matter what type of sand you pick, the water of the eastern Caribbean is always delightful.

When awaking in the morning, instead of hearing the traditional rooster crowing, your first waking moments are more often than not greeted by the braying of donkeys. If not prepared for this you may be startled; but the donkeys are used on farms and for transportation, and their braying confirms that you are in a different environment.

The islands have different styles of hotels - from small intimate houses to new hotels directly overlooking the sea.

If it's the smaller accommodation facility that appeals to you then the Fairview Inn and the Ocean Terrace Inn on St. Kitts would fit the bill. Larger hotels there include the Fort Thomas and the Royal St. Kitts.

The Royal St. Kitts, located on a Crown Corporation development called Fregate Bay gives you a chance to pay for your golf course, and just a short walk from beaches on the Atlantic and the Caribbean.

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Portugal still a bargain paradise

IF YOUR DESIRE IS FOR DELUXE but your budget says standard, take heart for there still is a country in Europe where a regular vacation can be had on a moderate budget. Portugal remains one of Europe's best vacation values. Although inflation is rearing its ugly head throughout the world, the dollar continues to go farther in Portugal than just about anywhere else.

IRONICALLY, IT TOOK A REVOLUTION to make Portugal one of the best bets for the tourist. Several years ago, the country went through some turbulence which was mostly noise but little violence. Many tourists who were in the country during the height of the political activity reported that they were unaware of any revolution except for what they read in papers or heard over the radio. The only real sign of turmoil was the graffiti left upon the walls which, for the most part has since been removed.

Unfortunately for the country, it received a lot of bad press which discouraged a great many people who ordinarily would have chosen Portugal as their vacation destination. Fortunately for the smart travel shopper, the Portuguese are doing everything in their power to encourage the return of tourism to their country.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT and the service is excellent. For instance, a night's accommodation at either the Ritz or the Sheraton in Lisbon, both deluxe hotels, is about \$30 per couple. When you consider that just a single room in many of our larger cities can cost nearly twice that, you can appreciate the value of staying at the best.

While you might feel that a hotel is a hotel, a night or even a week at the Ritz is a real pleasure in itself. The average bedroom unit covers over 500 square feet and includes a large terrace. While the bedroom is tastefully decorated, the bathroom is undeniably lavish. Marble throughout, the tub is separate from the marble shower stall and gigantic towels are hung over hot water pipes so that the hotel patron will not shiver as he dries off. That is class.

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