

IS THERE A LABOUR SHORTAGE and SHOULD MOTHERS HAVE TO FILL IT?

If there's a labour shortage, don't blame mothers.

In the last year or so we have been bombarded with reports of terrible labour shortages existing and worsening in Canada. Mothers who "quit work" to look after their children are routinely cited as a primary cause of this latest disaster.

WORK IS WORK

First, let us recognize the misogyny (women-hating) of the new, re-tooled patriarchy. The desire to control women and punish those who disobey their self-appointed superiors is clearly very much with us still. This misogyny is most obvious in our elites' continued refusal to acknowledge that the care work of women as mothers IS WORK. Instead they proceed as if this **socially essential work** simply does not exist.

However, "the [British]Office for National Statistics did a valuation of **women's homemaking and care**, and came up with a figure of £929bn, **or 104% of GDP**. (The Guardian, March 7, 2006
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Columnists/Column/0,,1725350,00.html>)

If the mothers who currently do the vast majority of the care work in this nation stopped doing it we would immediately have a disastrous state of emergency. Other workers would have to be immediately called in to do the work or there would very soon be hundreds of thousands of dead and dying children.

TRANSFERRING THE WORK DOES NOT REDUCE THE WORK

Kicking mums out of the work they do and replacing them with daycare staff **does not lower labour shortages**—it merely transfers the work.

CREATING LABOUR SHORTAGE IN FEMALE-DOMINATED FIELDS

Daycares are over 95% female staffed in Canada. Staffing daycares and related bureaucracies takes women from other female-dominated fields. For example, nursing shortages would increase if more women worked in daycare.

CREATING LABOUR SHORTAGES WITH STRUCTURAL INEFFICIENCIES

Daycare has repeatedly been found to increase illnesses as well as aggressive behaviours in children. These effects then require more specialized labour: doctors, pharmacists, therapists, special-education, lower teacher:pupil ratios, police, etc. They also cause more parental time off jobs. These all must count as **costs** which clearly lower **productivity** (measured by "bang for the buck") resulting from inefficient use of existing labour.

Note: The claims that daycare will improve human capital formation and thereby economic competitiveness against China and India are not supported by any evidence. High daycare nations such as France and Sweden are not competitive "high productivity" nations.

WORKER TURNOVER

Staff turn over is very high in daycares. The daycare lobby says that "retention and recruitment"—that is finding and keeping staff—is a chronic problem even with current low usage (less than 10% age 0-12), and even in Quebec where pay is now \$22/hr plus benefits. The fact is that few people want to look after other

people's children 40+ hours a week as a long term career, regardless of pay. Clearly those who have careers lobbying for daycare do not want to do this work either.

Conversely, **turnover among parents is extremely low**. Many—most—people **do** desire to do the vast majority of the care work for their **own** children despite considerable financial losses.

Continuity of care—that is having the same few adults to attach to—is an essential element of children's healthy development. The **costs** to children's development due to the lack of continuity in daycare **must be factored in**.

NO ECONOMY OF SCALE SAVINGS

Getting mothers of dependent children into paid full time jobs—or desperately looking for jobs—and putting the kids in daycare is perhaps imagined to provide “economies of scale”: one adult can look after a bunch of kids so it's more efficient and **productivity** goes up. This is not the case. And even the daycare lobby does not make this argument. The ratio of adult time to children is at least as high in daycare as in parental care when all the very much increased time for administrative, bureaucratic, construction, policy, janitorial, cooking, medical, lobbying, research tasks are included.

HIGH PRODUCTIVITY PARENTAL CARE

Parental care is in fact **far more efficient** because we multi-task (care, administrate, cook, entertain, read, plan, teach, shop, health care, prevention, social work, etc), and use multi-purpose facilities (homes, park, neighbourhood). And this very multi-tasking enhances the child's learning: the typical multi-environment does not need to be “enriched” because it is rich already.

Daycare is inefficient due to excessive **specialization of tasks** and **single purpose facilities**. Also, when children are sick—as daycare children more often are—they are not in the daycare centre anyway. When **holidays** and **weekends** and **nights** are added in, we see that daycare centres are empty or operating at far below capacity most of the time. [Would families benefit more if daycare centres be converted into affordable family housing?]

CURRENT LABOUR SHORTAGES ARE IN MALE DOMINATED FIELDS

Very few women are trained in the fields we hear are experiencing labour shortages: plumbers, electricians, welders, mechanics, construction, roofers, etc. Displaced mums will not fill these shortages.

OTHER SOURCES OF LABOUR

If we need more workers we can look to others who are not actually working. Early retirees, students— an expanding demographic—, pensioners, EI recipients, seasonal workers, and some part-timers are contributing less to the “economy” than they could be.

ACADEMIC ELITISM IS TO BLAME

Academics have sought to increase their share of social status, power and financing. In their hubris they have created the construct of the “Knowledge Based Economy” (KBE). Now no one will fix or clean the toilet. That the KBE is a rather useless construct is shown by the fact that all economies are based on a combination of earth's bounty, culture, knowledge, people, and many different skills.

The blame for labour shortages should go largely to the prejudice against the trades (where the shortages are) in favour of training for the KBE. This prejudice is perpetuated by the university system which competes for the

dollars that comes with student-customers, as well as for status. The more education—that is years in school—you have the more money you will make we are told.

Similarly, the academic elite's prejudice against family care work has undermined the birthrate.

WHY MUMS?

Why are mothers the target of the economists seeking GDP-fodder?

The problem is not so much that mums are not working as that the work we do deprives corporations of profit opportunity. Corporations, unions and government sectors **lose money** when **we** care, cook, clean, teach, cure, discipline, shop, organize, advise, etc. The OECD looks to the “professionalization of services” (*An Integrated Approach to Early Childhood Education and Care: A Preliminary Study* <http://www.childcarecanada.org/pubs/op16/op16.pdf> p6). This means the corporate and union sectors want to expand and profit by **taking over the work of the family sector. Mums are in the way.** That is why mothers are being targeted by the patriarchal economists and their followers.

For example: Breastfeeding prevents corporations from profiting. Sales of formula, bottles, allergy medication and antibiotics are much lower when women breastfeed babies. That is why you will never hear that breastfeeding even exists from economists whose ideology is moulded by the GDP, OECD, IMF, and World Bank.

LOWERING WAGES

The rhetoric of labour shortages is about creating fear: we will need to import lower-paid labour and/or get mums into McJobs or the economy will collapse. This pressure inevitably increases profits by creating acceptance of **lower pay and work conditions.**

WHY A LABOUR SHORTAGE? BIRTHRATES

If there is a labour shortage it is because our 1.48 **birthrate** is below replacement level of 2.1. That's down over 60% from the peak of 3.9 in 1959. What happened? And does this reflect women's reproductive choice? **No.** Women are having fewer children than they want to. This is caused by lack of suitable fathers, broken relationships, delayed child-bearing, etc.

THE SUCKERS' GAME: LOWERING THE BIRTHRATE BY DE-FUNDING THE FAMILY

"It makes parenthood into a kind of suckers' game," says Mr. Longman. "The shrewd and rational thing is not to have children. Let other people have children and then let them pay for your pension and health care and old age." The Ottawa Citizen Ottawa, May 8, 2006. p. A11

A major cause of the lowered birthrate is the policy of **de-funding families with dependent children (FDCs).** The tax system used to **redistribute income** from non-FDCs to FDCs. But over years policy has transferred funds that once went to FDCs to “services”—daycare, academics, research, therapies, social services, school, etc. Gone are:

- Veterans benefits intended to help those FDCs
- “family wage” policies and benefit packages uniquely for FDCs
- universal child allowance for all to age 18
- tax deductions for all dependent children
- tax exemption for children's products
- birth bonuses up to \$8,000 (Quebec)
- welfare eligibility for single parents till youngest was 16 (is now age 3 years in BC, 6 months in Alberta)

LOWERING THE BIRTHRATE BY DIS-HONOURING PARENTS

Political and social recognition for the care work of parents was lost along with the former financial support. Becoming a parent is now neither promoted nor honoured. Other roles now have far more status. **Parents are now politically and socially invisible. What is surprising is that, despite the economic and social costs, most women nevertheless DO bear children.**

People believe that in the past (1930s-70s) parents “did it on their own” without state help. This is not true. Based on this false view of recent history many think “you chose to have kids” so it’s wrong to “pay parents to look after their own kids.” We now revere and publicly fund **non-essential** academics, therapists, and social workers of all kinds from public funds. We don’t consider it a problem to pay social workers to do social work, and we don’t ask professors to fund their chosen activity. The result is that the **socially essential work** of bearing and raising children is done less and less.