



Should the state help conserve the family?

This was the question up for debate on March 8, 2013, at the Manning Networking Conference in Ottawa. Andrea Mrozek, newly minted Executive Director of the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, took on the side saying that yes, the state should help conserve the family, but perhaps not in the way one might expect. Her remarks are re-printed below.

ANDREA MROZEK

Executive Director, Institute of Marriage and Family Canada



I guess it was about eight years ago, I was still working at the *Western Standard* and we were working late. Suddenly, we heard a car accident on the street below. Looking out the windows, you could see lights flashing and people running around. It was mayhem.

Someone said, "Wow, it's total anarchy out there!"

To this my colleague, ever the libertarian, replied: "You say that like it's a bad thing!"

It was the very same colleague, however, who wrote me a kind note when I left the magazine to work at the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada.

He told me that without strong families, we cannot have a small government.

So the question is how do we get these strong families?

The question before us today is whether the state should help conserve the family? I'll say yes.

But one of the key manners in which it should do so is by "recogniz[ing] that certain culturally central institutions are outside the state's jurisdiction," to paraphrase the authors of the book *Indivisible: Restoring Faith, Family and Freedom Before it's Too Late*.

The state is not now, and has not been for at least four decades, a neutral player, let alone a positive influence, on the family scene.

Today in Canada the state is helping to destroy the family.

Marriage and family are the strongest institutions we have and they *precede* the state. The intact family is the strongest bulwark against big government that we have.

You'll note internationally and historically statist regimes tend to mess with the family, pitting children against parents and replacing siblings with the notion of "comrades." They do this because where family is strong, statist regimes tend not to thrive.

Family is weak in Canada today.

We're in demographic free fall. With a fertility rate well short of replacement we will, in a few short years, have more seniors over 65 than kids under 16.

Through the introduction of no-fault divorce, the state weakened the lifelong nature of marriage.

In some jurisdictions, it is easier to divorce than it is to get out of a business contract.

Marriage is now one of the few contracts in which a wife or husband can leave the other high and dry for no reason at all and the law will explicitly protect the defaulting party.

Subsequently, in every province but Quebec, Canada made living common-law an equivalent to marriage. Research shows that it is not.

The end result of family breakdown, facilitated by the state in concert with all of us, is poverty. When families fail, the state steps in to "help" at a cost of roughly 7 billion dollars annually. That's the price of the Vancouver Olympics, each and every year.

So-cons are interested in long term poverty reduction without state intervention. This is what strong marriages are.

Decreasing poverty increases freedom.

Canadian economist Doug Allen poses this question: "Why in the history of mankind, has every *successful society voluntarily* formed the family institution?" (It's because "it mitigates transaction costs, or put differently, bad behaviour.")

After all, he asks, "How do you get two, greedy, selfish people to cooperate over the life cycle of procreation and raise socially productive children without killing each other?"

The answer?

Marriage.

So there you have it, people. So-cons are pro-life in more ways than just one.

We need the family to be strong if we want the state to be weak. We need to stop the state from messing with family, so that family can start to do the job it does so well once again.

Thank you.



Permission is granted to reprint or broadcast this information with appropriate attribution to the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada