

April 26, 1998

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G- WJ

Dear Brian:

It is almost impossible that I would want to criticize something you had done, but I feel I must give you a little added input to your journalists' segment with Christopher Buckley and Eric Alter this past week.

Granted, the woman who called regarding Eric's new daughter, should have phrased her comments a little differently, or else written them, rather than sent them out over the air. Of *course*, it is not the little baby's fault that her parents have chosen to have her "out of wedlock" as the saying goes. But, the term the woman used is the correct, long-held meaning of the word -- not the meaning most often attributed to it today, where it describes a perfectly despicable adult! The parents deliberately chose to remain unmarried; they are responsible for any reflection on their child. Legitimacy is not quite the same as acknowledged paternity, which requires attention to financial support and possible inheritance rights.

However, where I feel that you could have handled things differently, was not to have given *prominence* to the pictures of Alter and his new daughter which then led to discussion of the fact that the parents deliberately chose not to marry, even though they were expecting a child. Tactfully avoiding the whole scenario would have been much better, don't you think?

What is wrong with this is that approval of celebrities living together, and continuing to live together without marriage after the child is born, gives a false endorsement of the practice to society as a whole. How they choose to live their lives is their own business. However, then when the living arrangements and the non-married parenting of children becomes an acceptable practice for celebrities who may or may not later go their separate ways, that idea carries over into all of society, with disastrous and expensive consequences most often the result.

"Living together because we object to heavy taxes placed on married couples," has trickled down to one-night stands, shacking up, and the single mother who "isn't sure who the father is" because "we had a fight and I kicked him out and then I met this other guy..." The acceptability has hit the lower-income, lesser-educated and high school dropout level of impressionable society.

This flouting of conventional customs of "legitimizing" a child causes much of the "high taxes" that this particular couple feels are too high to pay for "a piece of paper," be it a marriage license or a birth certificate.

While Alter and his unmarried wife obviously have combined incomes which should suffice for any married couple, those who adopted the same choices in the lower-income, less-educated, less-responsible segments of society display other, even less admirable anti-social customs: domestic violence, child abuse, abandonment of responsibility for support, a succession of live-in "partners," and worse.

Society pays in the long run for the smart-aleck, deliberate avoidance of marriage by the financially secure "celebrities" who want congratulations and admiration for producing children. Society pays, by the massive social costs in picking up the tab for the financially insecure and less stable individuals who see marriage as no big deal. The lower end of the "shacking up" group necessitates many, many police and emergency squad responses to domestic violence; clogs legal systems with processing of orders of protection that are becoming so prevalent as to be almost unenforceable; for supplemental food and medical help for children whose parents not only can't afford to feed them, but aren't interested in being a family in the first place. The latter group is


responsible for the unimpeded growth of government social service providers which are becoming the backbone of "employment" in small towns all across the country. The latter group has been the excuse for the gigantic and costly tracking and processing of ALL support payments -- the responsible divorced fathers as well as the so-called deadbeat dads. The latter group is responsible for the plight of unmarried welfare mothers who can't make in on their own, and the children who live with those unmarried and abandoned women.

Worst of all, the well-known, well-paid, and/or well-connected "professionals" and "celebrities" who have opted to live together, have children out-of-wedlock, and brag about it, have all-but-enshrined the practice of having illegitimate children. That is what their children will grow up to perpetuate, as well as all the children brought up in far-less comfortable, far-less caring households. They later live what they learn from the examples they grew up with.

THAT is why the unwise and unconventional personal lifestyle choices of celebrities should not be publicly accepted, let alone paraded on camera and in print-- even though it is their right to make those choices. For every child who is loved and cared-for in a long-term (permanent?) out-of-wedlock "family," there are hundreds more who suffer long-term emotional and often physical effects and who cost the public enormous amounts of money.

The children aren't to blame. The adults are -- those who put them in that situation, and those who openly approve of it, or who don't want the parents criticized for what they have done. Alter's daughter shouldn't be hurt by her biological parents' actions. Unfortunately, they don't consider how many other children they are encouraging to be hurt in the process. Today's headlines carry clues for everyone -- most of all for those who are supposedly trained in journalistic ability to report on cause, effect and results.

Sincerely,


Apalachin, NY 13732

