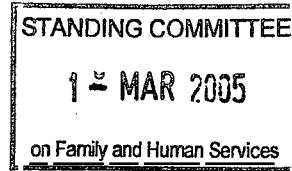


AUTHORISED: 9/3/05 

From: Karen Davies [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 28 February 2005 3:36 PM
To: Committee, FHS (REPS)



Subject: balance work/family

i think the enquiry should include focus on how to make achieving the balance between work and family more managable, particularly for women.

part time and flexible work hours seem more the norm these days for many women, but we are now more accessible in a communications sense, and more required to multi-task than ever before.

it seems that mothers who take the decision to work, even part time, generally continue to hold primary responsibility for household and family duties, in addition to their professional duties.

i count amongst my friends many women with senior roles who choose to work less than five days a week, but that doesn't necessarily add up to less than 40 - or 50 - or 60 - hours a week. it means no lunch breaks, no time for tea breaks and (often positive teambuilding) chat, just meetings and desktime, work work work. it means meetings on "non-work" days, begging childcare for those adhoc occasions. it means always being "in debt" to a variety of people. it means last minute panics when children need to stay home ill. it means constant long term trade offs within the family with annual leave for school holiday care, business travel needs and so on. it means catching up with emails after the kids have gone to bed. it means possibly sacrificing promotional opportunities.

the real cost of working includes childcare (which should at the least be tax deductible), clothing, perhaps an additional car, certainly some sort of transport or commute cost, time, stress, nutrition, possibly domestic help. even our personal affairs are much more convoluted than ever they used to be - the weekly or monthly trip to the local shopping strip branch of the bank has become several hours a week of internet transfers between various accounts, managing shares and investment accounts, mortgages and more.

and women who choose to leave the workforce altogether, even to care for their children during those few, short pre-school years, face imposing barriers to workforce re-entry. today's employment market evolves far more quickly than it did in the days of our parents - five year old skills are terrifyingly dated. young entrants to the workforce are delivered to their employers at a more trained, more skilled, and in

many areas far more motivated and focused condition than in previous times. perhaps re-skilling (refreshing) support is required.

the number of cottage industries which have emerged in recent years, begun by women, are a testimony to the fact that the current system does not work. who would run around like a maniac, possibly turning their entire family into maniacs, for a few dollars a week? not worth it, and not what we want for our children anyway.

our support networks are often thinner than they used to be. we don't tend to live as near family as we used. grandparents may be busy doing their own things, possibly still working themselves, to take grandchildren for extended periods. we don't know our neighbours like we used to, particularly if we are still working as we'll never see them.

if we want to get women back into the workforce, we need to support the entire community. men need to understand how to contribute better. our children will need careful handling to avoid becoming a latchkey generation. the community network, which used to centre around neighbours and family but is now so eroded, needs to be recreated. schools need to be more flexible. government needs to provide greater financial incentive via the taxation system for women/families/employers, together with other qualitative measures (retraining, attitudinal development?).

i look forward to reading about the sweeping changes that will result from this enquiry.

thank you for your time.

k davies

wa