

equity

eq·ui·ty \ 'ek-wət-ē\ n [ME *equite*, fr. MF *equité*, fr. L *aequitas*, fr. *aequus* equal, fair] 1. a : justice according to natural law or right; *specif* : IMPARTIALITY b : something that is equitable

What Is the Purpose of the Law — In This Case, ERA?

The law is any rule or principle expected to be observed. It is as vague as the inherent tendency or instinctive "law of self-preservation;" as useful as the "law of grammar;" or as lethal as laws that have capital punishment as their consequences. The law is the consequences of the observation that there are sequences of events in nature or in human activity that occur (or ought to occur) with unvarying uniformity under the same conditions. These observations are first spoken then put into writing. The writings are used as guidelines or rules which eventually become systematized or codified. Thus, "the law" is born.

The law has three overlapping areas of interest: *common* law, *written* (codified) common law and *statutory* law. The written law is a uniquely *homo sapiens* form of communication. Other animals have codes of unspoken "common law" just as *homo sapiens* does, but only *homo sapiens* has written and statutory law.

Common law is unwritten law based on custom and usage. Codified common law is custom and usage written down. The decisions of the law courts are the most available source of codified law. Statutory law is that law written by legislators or administrators from either an assumed or delegated position of authority; or statutory law may be voted into being by the people.

The law is as specific or as general to the human condition as one wishes. Most of the time, people are concerned with the law in

terms of *written* law which changes their perceptions or their ideas of who they are in relation to others and to their environment. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) will be a law which will facilitate all people's learning about and practicing equity between men and women in the world of work. The ERA simply states that the rights of people will not be abridged because of sex.

There is a body of common law, common usage and custom, which places women in relation to men in two roles only: the social role of "wife" and the biological-social role of "mother."

The role of "mother" is rarely considered to be an abstraction. "Mother" refers to the specific biological and parenting functions of child-bearing and child-rearing. The roles of women who are no longer active in child bearing/rearing functions are not well defined. There are no "retired mothers." There have been no choices for women (as a group) to overtly and publicly choose any condition other than wife/mother. To do so results in ostracism, rejection and ridicule.

The evidence is the fact that the English language has no honored name(s) for adult women or senior adult women who are not wives or mothers. The English language has "old maids," "single ladies," "maiden ladies," and "spinsters." Even the recently acceptable term "career woman" is greater enhanced by the addition of "and wife and mother."

Women's relation to men, children and work has changed rapidly in the past three decades. In 1920, 20 per cent of the work force were women and both men and women's life expectations were near 50 years. Today women are 43 per cent of the work force, but women live to an average of 74 years — about eight years longer (on the average) than men. With decreasing numbers of childbirths and female deaths at childbirth, the percent of women in the workforce and their average longevity will continue to rise.

ERA is simply another expression from a number of men and women who feel that since medical science has reduced the need for women to be production-line child bearers, that women now need and want the opportunities and responsibilities of full participation in the work of the world.

ERA is an attempt to create work and environmental conditions for men so their average life spans can equal those of women. With so many men dying within 2-10 years after retirement, there are men and women who think that the men's work environment can be modified so the consequences for men can be a long, full, healthy, active retirement similar to women's retirement years.

Here again, we need new words for a new phenomenon. What can we call men and women who are no longer working 40 hours a week, but who are self-sufficient, active, productive citizens? "Senior Citizens" is the closest term so far for persons over 60. ERA wants more

male senior citizens available to share the leisure and work of the senior years!

ERA will help keep the trained and experienced population available. Who, for instance, wants the wisdom of our nation to be concentrated in the hands of old maids, retired clerks and house-widows? ERA would help guarantee that equity between the sexes would last through the senior years because men would be available equally with women (they would live longer) and women would have had work/education experiences equal to men. Thus "old maids" and "house widows" would become "retired technicians, supervisors, professionals or managers" (who happen to be women).

ERA is an attempt to raise the Gross National Product by 15 per cent. Some economists say that an increased GNP is needed to reach economic stability. Full utilization of women's skills and their willingness and availability to work is that extra edge the U.S. needs to achieve economic stability.

The laws of nature are being modified by the choices of the scientists. Men's work environment needs improving so they can live, on the average, as long as women. The Equal Rights Amendment will help achieve equity between men and women at work and it will help change the working environment of men.

Managers need to gather data about the long-range consequences of the work environment they provide their people. (When people retire from their companies, do they die earlier or later? Do retirees require excessive tax-based support with minimum contribution while they are alive; or, are they the community leaders?) It is the responsibility of the information specialists and training officers to provide data to management about the long-term consequences of their choices under the common law (customary usage)

which make work inequitable versus choices to provide humanitarian and equitable work environments.

The Equal Rights Amendment will be a statutory law which will allow the citizens of this country to focus on the (equitable) responsibilities of each individual in terms of a life span which covers three or four separate occupations during

their adult years. For women, only one-half of one occupational choice (on the average) will be the child bearing/rearing occupation. All people must help provide women other roles, equal to those of men, especially for women who are not occupied with children.

ERA is one means to a more beautiful ending together! — Mary M. Fuller

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