

Newman Weekly

By Dr. Muriel Newman
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The New Zealand Centre for Political Debate

The fatherless generation

This week concerns over youth gangs and violence have hit the headlines. It is a problem that can be found to a greater or lesser degree in many towns and cities throughout the country.

The debate over what can be done has ranged widely from more council amenities for young people, making education more relevant and improving after-school activities, to more proactive truancy monitoring, more effective parenting, greater coordination between social agencies, and better policing.

While suggestions on what should be done to improve the situation have been free flowing, little has been said about the underlying causes of the problem. The reason is that it is no longer considered to be politically correct to discuss issues relating to personal responsibility, the home and the family. Yet the reality is that these are at the heart of the problem: children raised in stable, loving families, are more likely to join sports teams, rather than gangs.

Any discussion with police or those who work with troubled youth will quickly identify that the largest proportion of them come from homes where their biological father is absent: children raised in families without a father, where there is inadequate supervision and a lack of socialisation, are far more likely to become involved in anti-social behaviour and crime, than those raised with a dad.

Chief Youth Court Judge, Andrew Beecroft, in a speech at Parliament a few years ago identified six characteristics of serious youth offenders: "85 percent are male, the majority have

no contact with their father, 80 percent do not go to school and have chronic drug or alcohol addictions, most have psychological or psychiatric issues, and 50 percent up to 90 percent in some courts are Maori".

He explained that many of these boys have no adult male role model: "14, 15, and 16 year-old boys seek out role models like 'heat seeking missiles'. It's either the leader of the Mongrel Mob or it's a sports coach or it's Dad. But an overwhelming majority of boys who I see in the Youth Court have lost contact with their father. ... What I'm saying is that I'm dealing in the Youth Court with boys for whom their Dad is simply not there, never has been, gone, vanished and disappeared".

Judge Beecroft went on to say: "...every single young boy that we have dealt with has been abused as a child".

This is why I am so passionately opposed to public policy and practice that encourages family breakdown and excludes biological fathers. A biological father is a child's traditional protector. Removing him from the lives of his children leaves them extremely vulnerable to abuse, neglect and failure.

That is not to say that every child being raised without a dad that ends up in trouble, or for that matter that every child raised in a loving two parent household by their biological parents, turn out to be little angels. But, on the balance of probability, children raised without their natural father, will face greater difficulties in life, than children brought up with their dad to love, guide

and protect them.

In 1990, Dr Daniel Amneus, Professor of English at California State University, in his book The Garbage Generation put it this way: "Most criminals come from female-headed families. Most gang members come from female-headed families. Most addicts come from female-headed families. Most rapists come from female-headed families. Most educational failures come from female-headed families. Most illegitimate births occur to females who themselves grew up in female-headed families".

He then went on to say: "If we are to deal meaningfully with crime, what we must do is reduce the number of female-headed families; what we must do is prevent the divorce courts from expelling half of society's fathers from their homes; what we must do is terminate a welfare system which displaces millions of men from the principal male role, that of family-provider. What we must do is make the father the head of the family".

Here in New Zealand over the years, our policy makers have steadfastly ignored that wisdom. Instead, driven by a feminist agenda, which seeks to create equality for women by undermining men, society has now reached a sorry state: taxpayers are funding a hundred thousand women and girls to struggle to raise

their children on their own, there is an epidemic of tens of thousands of abused children, and there is now an escalation in youth gangs and violence.

Boys are falling further and further behind at school now that we have taken away an external examination system that encouraged them to strive and excel. Men are finding themselves excluded from more and more of the professions like teaching that used to largely be their domain. Increasing numbers of fathers are being alienated from their children by our female-biased family court. Dads and grandfathers up and down the country are now afraid to hug and kiss their children in public.

It has all gone too far, and the sooner we return to some balance and common sense, the better.

To turn the situation around, we need to realise that New Zealand society is stronger when men and women both play an equal role, and that it is not in anyone's interest to marginalise either. Further, we should be encouraging and supporting strong and committed families by removing the incentives in the welfare system and in family law that have lead to the massive undermining of the family.

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