

Matrimonial multiplication

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When social conservatives argue legalizing same-sex “marriage” could lead to legalized polygamy, same-sex “marriage” advocates either laugh or sneer. It’s a scare tactic, they say. It’ll never happen.

Last year, however, as Canada legalized same-sex “marriage,” Prime Minister Paul Martin commissioned a \$150,000 study to debunk the polygamy argument. Big mistake: The study confirmed the scare tactic by recommending Canada repeal its anti-polygamy law.

It also suggested a legal challenge to Canada’s anti-polygamy laws would succeed. “Why criminalize behavior?” asked Martha Bailey, one of the study’s three law-professor authors. “We don’t criminalize adultery.”

Confession time: I am one of those who, for years, has argued that legalizing same-sex “marriage” would not open the door for polygamy. The limit for marriages would remain two, I argued. Two doesn’t mean three or four.

Wrong. In these politically correct times, do-gooders expand definitions until words — or institutions — lose all meaning. Marriage can mean what you want it to mean. And if you don’t prosecute all crimes in a category, you can’t prosecute one.

That’s essentially what Ms. Bailey argued.

The study recognized the “strong association between polygamy and gender inequality.” Then the authors apparently decided Canadian law should eliminate any legal unfairness — in inherently unequal marriages.

One Kuwaiti wife can’t move to Canada to live with her husband and another wife. That’s unfair to the wife and unfair to Muslims. The study noted, “The parties most likely to suffer from this rule are the left-behind wives.” To eliminate that inequity, these professors are ready to provide legal cover for all polygamous (and polyandrous) marriages.

“There’s a logical extension to it,” laughed Rob Stutzman, who worked on the Proposition 22 campaign in 2000, a measure that limited marriage in California to a union between a man and a woman. “If you accept the premise that marriage should be whatever relationships people want to enter into,” he said, polygamy is legit.

Brad Luna of the Human Rights Campaign, which supports same-sex “marriage,” finds any linkage to polygamy “offensive.” He warned against reading too much into one Canadian study. In America, he said, “two people is the defining element in our system of government on contractual marriage.”

Democratic San Francisco Assemblyman Mark Leno, who has pushed for same-sex “marriage” in California, noted “a unique nature of a relationship with two. If you go beyond two, you can’t draw a line anywhere else that isn’t arbitrary.”

I agree, but the Canadian study gives me pause. The authors use a very American argument: that adults already are living in de facto polygamous relationships, so why make their arrangements illegal? The answer is that even if authorities cannot and should not jail adults for group cohabitation, the state should not extend legal protections to those unions.

Extending marital protections to same-sex couples bestows equality. Extending protections to unequal unions protects inequality.

The Washington Times interviewed polygamous Mormons who argued they lead happy, harmonious lives. That may be, but the practice is poison for cultures at large. Rich men marry many wives. Poor men do not. Women have few opportunities and limited rights. It can’t be good