ForeWord Reviews

WOMEN'S STUDIES

The New Feminist Agenda: Defining the Next Revolution for Women, Work, and Family
Madeleine M. Kunin
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As the first female governor of Vermont, and a lifelong feminist, Madeleine M. Kunin brings a wealth of knowledge and authority to her latest book, *The New Feminist Agenda*. Convinced that feminism has not lived up to its potential, Kunin seeks to infuse the movement with new vigor by redirecting its focus. And so she asks: “Can we mobilize under the banner of Feminists for Families?”

And by “we,” she pretty much means everyone. “We need a revolution,” writes Kunin. “But women cannot lead it alone. We have to broaden the feminist conversation to include men, unions, the elderly, the disabled, religious groups, and the unaffiliated.” What she suggests is that feminists broaden their ranks so that they may “snatch back the words ‘family values’ and redefine them as the work/family policies necessary to sustain strong families.” In particular, Kunin calls for the institution of work flexibility across the board, for all men and women, wealthy and poor.

Kunin looks to other countries for case studies where the institution of maternal/paternal leave and work flexibility has been successful. She investigates the more radical policies of the Nordic and European countries, as well as the policies of countries similar to the United States, including the United Kingdom and Canada. Her line of inquiry not only details the policies of these other countries but also asks, “Would this work in the US?”

In studying the states that have successfully passed family leave policies (California, Washington, and New Jersey), Kunin details the lessons learned from those situations so that similar laws might be implemented elsewhere. The conclusions might seem simplistic or obvious—for example, “form a broad coalition,” “frame the question,” “do not accept the inevitable”—and yet, the work Kunin is doing here is important. She’s not only framing the conversation but also bringing a new generation of feminists into a discussion in which they may have never before played a part.

Though at its heart this is a feminist manifesto, it’s not a polemic. Rather, *The New Feminist Agenda* reads like a practical guide, loaded with case studies and examples, all of

which invite even the casual reader to consider that the “next revolution” may be not only definable but also attainable. ?

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