

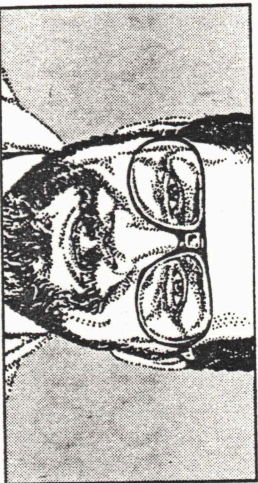
Men demand equal time in quest for understanding

Sixteen years ago, when Warren Farrell started conducting seminars on male-female relationships, his central theme was that men needed to listen harder to what women were saying to them.

Farrell is still holding the seminars, but his theme has flip-flopped. Now he spends most of his time telling women that they need to listen harder to men.

It may sound like heresy, coming from a sensitive guy who has been on Phil Donahue seven times and who served for three years on the New York City board of directors of NOW (the National Organization for Women). But Farrell, 43, feels obligated to fight for the underdog. And these days, he says, men are the new minority, having been badgered into a sense of powerlessness, futility and confusion by unrealistic expectations.

This is his line of reasoning: Men in our society feel that when they make a commitment to a woman they must provide her with the option of being either a career woman or a homemaker. Women, on



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MEN

the other hand, do not feel any obligation to give a man that choice.

Farrell tells participants in his weekend seminars that a single working woman would be overwhelmed with requests from potential husbands if she ran this ad in the personals:

"I am a woman, fairly successful, and I am willing to provide a man with the option of working full time, part time or devoting full time to the family..."

Farrell doesn't deny the reasonableness of expanding a woman's options. But he believes that the only fair way to do that is to expand a man's options too.

"We have to change our thinking on this," he says. "It's absurd. When a man supports a woman we call him a breadwinner. When a woman supports a man we say she's being used."

The implication, of course, is that women's liberation, in its focused insistence that women be given more options, ultimately has been more take than give.

As Farrell sees it, the feminist movement does not offer enough bargaining chips. There is not enough enticement to men to buy into the program. Men are being asked to shoulder more than their share, with little or no obvious pay back.

Perhaps surprisingly, Farrell says he has not been attacked by feminists as a turncoat. "I think they realize that they need to live up to the values that they claim to want, and that's all that I'm really saying," he said in a telephone interview from his home in Leucadia, Calif.,

which is near San Diego.

Farrell, 43, has written a book about his observations, *Why Men Are the Way They Are* (McGraw Hill, \$17.95). He says the book is based on his experiences from conducting seminars in the United States and in countries all over the world, including Yugoslavia, Australia, Mexico and New Zealand.

The seminars sometimes are sponsored by corporations to increase awareness among their employees about male-female relationships. Farrell counts NASA and IBM among his corporate customers. Individuals who are simply curious about the subject also can take the seminar.

Farrell thinks the confusion over male-female relationships could be alleviated if we could see through "the illusion of the last 20 years — that women have changed and men have remained the same."

"What is more accurate is that women's situation has changed, but they have wanted men to maintain the same role — of giving them the option of working or not working."