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Tuesday, May 15, 2007

Is paternity leave as important as maternity leave?

Posted at: 00:05

Fathers will [soon be allowed a half share of their partner's year-long maternity leave](#).

In a bid to boost the role of dads, the Government has announced that a male partner will be entitled to take up to six months paid leave after the birth of his child, if his partner goes back to work.

The move has already come in for criticism from businesses, who fear that it will difficult to administer, and parenting groups, who say that the pay rate of just £112.75 a week, is not enough to persuade many fathers to take time off.

Do you think paternity leave is as important as maternity leave? Would you or your partner consider taking it, or do you share concerns that taking up to six months off would be 'career death'?

The Government hopes that the change will encourage fathers to play a greater part in family life. Do you think it will work, or are more drastic moves necessary? Should men forget about changing nappies and focus instead on their traditional role as the breadwinner?

What about those employees who choose not to have children? Are they increasingly being forced to pick up the workload of those who choose to start a family?

To send a letter to the editor of The Daily Telegraph, email dtletters@telegraph.co.uk

Comments (134)

Keep this up and whores will be able claim child support from their client/s. Although the DNA testing may be more than a little time consuming.
Posted by Andrew Milner on May 20, 2007 4:57 PM
[Report this comment](#)

Yes, Aileen (who posted on 17th May), that's exactly the point of my post!! EXACTLY!!

I am not sure I understand the indignation. It seems to me that if a new father wants paternity leave, now he will be allowed to have it. He and his wife will now be allowed to divvy up parental leave time as they see fit instead of having the government set the parameters. If new dads don't want paternity leave, they don't have to take it. Seems to me that the government is giving people MORE choice, not less.

If a man decides that he does not want to take advantage of paternity leave because of his career or simply because he can't be bothered with the drudgery of life with a newborn, then he mustn't be too surprised when the courts decide that he gets to see his kids only every other weekend once he is divorced. You are free to make

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whatever choice you want, but you will have to live with the consequences of that choice.

There is absolutely NOTHING in ANY of these posts that suggest to me that this society values fatherhood outside of a man's financial contribution. This pervasive attitude is merely reflected in family courts all over the country.

Posted by Michelle on May 20, 2007 1:17 AM
[Report this comment](#)

In response to Simon, May 15th. I didn't mean to imply that I think all women earn less than men. As someone who earns more than her partner I'm quite aware that women can and do earn more in some cases. I was merely recognising the fact that the majority of women still earn on average a quarter of a man's wage.

Posted by Emma on May 18, 2007 2:03 PM
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Eventually fathership 'delivers' best !!
Posted by AdVader on May 18, 2007 11:45 AM
[Report this comment](#)

Don't be surprised when this and all the other stupid legislation already imposed, results in higher unemployment and less and less job creation. Much just wants more and more and.....
Posted by Gerry on May 18, 2007 7:57 AM
[Report this comment](#)

Duncan, you are so right. My "disgusting attitude" is shared by millions, including family courts. My husband has four kids by his previous wife, and I can assure you that those people see him as nothing more than an ATM machine. Save yourself time and money and let other people repopulate the earth! If a man's role in the family (besides the financial role) was so important, we wouldn't be having this discussion.

Chaz, I have no idea why child support payments are so high. I suspect they are punitive. My husband has kids by his first wife; he never gets to see them, but boy, does he pay for them!!! And of course, they all expect him to pay for their university educations...
Posted by Michelle on May 17, 2007 4:58 PM
[Report this comment](#)

Men's contribution to the family is really nothing more than a few moments of pleasure 9 months before birth and then years of making the money it takes to finance the resulting kids. Men should keep to their traditional role, which is to be the family's ATM machine, nothing more. Men have their careers, their work. Women have their kids. And this is why men don't have many rights when it comes to divorce and subsequent custody/visitation arrangements. They just are not needed when it comes to taking care of children, right?

Posted by Michelle on May 15, 2007 11:02 PM

Oh, you silly people!
The point this post is making is that if men want to be treated as more than walking ATM's, they have to act like it and involve themselves in the family. Taking advantage of paternity leave would be a start.
Posted by Aileen on May 17, 2007 1:37 PM
[Report this comment](#)

The world is going rapidly mad. What will come next? Conception leave?
Posted by Morris Hickey of Chigwell, Essex on May 17, 2007 9:25 AM
[Report this comment](#)

To be short, civilized advanced European countries have had it for decades without any inconvenience.
Posted by Rui Mota on May 17, 2007 4:26 AM
[Report this comment](#)

"Men's contribution to the family is really nothing more than a few moments of pleasure 9 months before birth and then years of making the money it takes to finance the resulting kids. Men should keep to their traditional role, which is to be the family's ATM machine, nothing more. Men have their careers, their work. Women have their kids. And this is why men don't have many rights when it comes to

divorce and subsequent custody/visitation arrangements. They just are not needed when it comes to taking care of children, right?

In saying that, though, I do think the whole "You are getting something that I don't get" argument from those who remain childless is evidence of what is wrong with our society. To whine because you think that someone else is getting a benefit that you don't get reflects a selfish attitude. If you feel so aggrieved, go home and be thankful that your life isn't tainted by having to take care of a bunch of sick kids or some such thing."

Posted by Jarvis on May 17, 2007 12:03 AM

[Report this comment](#)

It is only a sensible and non-discriminatory move. This will reduce any discrimination against child-bearing women as their partners are as likely to take parental leave. Furthermore, children need both their fathers and mothers - fathers are not just ATM machines as one reader suggest. It is dated to think otherwise and the legal system needs to bring itself to the modern world.

Posted by Tohk on May 16, 2007 9:12 PM

[Report this comment](#)

'Yummy Working Mummy.'

Like many others, I have to contend with people who think that they have some Divine Right to leave work before me in order to collect their kids from school. Strange, I remember getting home without assistance from my parents.

As for your child contributing to MY pension and NHS treatments when I am in dotage, I have already paid for that privilege MYSELF.

Please don't expect sympathy for being a higher rate taxpayer, because that status only comes with a fat salary.

Oh, and you really needed SIX months off as your 'reward' for having a child?

Given your extreme views, how condescending of you to actually work with people who do not have children. I am sure that they are ever so grateful to have someone like you in their midst.

As for the cigarette, coffee and hangover excuses, you'd never guess from listening to you that unmarried and childless people have to cope with these examples as well.

It might interest you to know that I have enormous experience of colleagues who "swan off to look after their children" and never make up the lost time. However, according to your way of thinking that is being naive and assuming that parents have an easy ride.

No wonder this country has a third-rate economy with your attitude.

Posted by Tim on May 16, 2007 4:41 PM

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Michelle, your disgusting attitude - that we men are just ATM machines for greedy women and "their" children - is why so many of us refuse to marry and have children these days.

Posted by Duncan on May 16, 2007 2:07 PM

[Report this comment](#)

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Posted by Michelle on May 15, 2007 11:02 PM

If this is the case, why should/do women get huge pay-offs in divorce settlements and ridiculous sums for child allowance?

Posted by Chaz on May 16, 2007 2:04 PM

[Report this comment](#)

Michelle (on May 15, 2007 11:02 PM) is largely right in her assertions. Personally, I feel there is something strange about

having young children around me, and I would positively hate to rear them myself. I was glad to get out of the way of it all when my children were small. I refused to eat with them after a while and had a table set in another room, in fact. And all that endless running up and down the corridors!

I felt nothing but a sense of fear and foreboding if left alone with them.

I once found the eldest boy sucking on the electric kettle attachment whilst it was live—I'd sat him on the work surface in the kitchen whilst preparing lunch. On another occasion the youngest child drank bleach and had to be rushed to hospital, and if that wasn't bad enough some weeks later the eldest boy again nearly drowned in one of the buckets of water I always leave around the house for the dogs. I had to haul him out by the ankles and shake him vigorously. It was a terrible time. I was glad when they finally went away to school.

Posted by Space Station 1 on May 16, 2007 1:41 PM

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I think this is going a bit too far! Whatever people say in these politically correct times, the mother is usually the primary caretaker of a child in its first year of life. After all, fathers cannot breast feed!

However, having said that, I do think that fathers should be allowed between between two and four weeks off after the birth of a baby. In the first month after having a baby, most mothers really need that extra support with recovering from the birth and the disturbed nights. Having somebody else to help with the baby and take over some of the cooking and housework is essential at this time. And he will start to get to know his child. It should be expected that fathers take the first two weeks (no sneaky working from home allowed!) after birth on full pay and have the option of another two weeks on perhaps slightly reduced pay.

Because mothers tend to be the primary caretakers in a child's early life, fathers need to fulfil their provider/protector/supporter role during this important stage of family life (yes, even in these 'enlightened' times!). Whatever people say to the contrary, career breaks, for whatever reason, do damage careers. And there is nothing worse for a mother with young children than having a partner/husband with a dodgy career at this time!

Posted by Alicia Fox on May 16, 2007 11:34 AM

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If your employer can manage without you for six months they can manage without you forever! A person who has a good input to their work cannot be replaced by a temporary stand-in. Unless of course you are an employee of the state, eg. work for the NHS or the dept of employment, etc.

My father worked his socks off just keeping up with the cost of his three children but work he did, sometimes seven days a week and mostly twelve hours a day! His only days off he had was his ten days Statutory annual leave from his job, on those days he gave his family a treat and spent time with them and for me those are the memories I have of him and loved him for it. I am proud to have known how my father stinted himself to afford me a good education and set me up for life. However this unstinting way off life is generally not prevalent in this day and age. The nanny state is the unfortunate outcome!

Posted by J Banyo on May 16, 2007 6:02 AM

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Whether paternity or maternity leave is more important avoids the real issue.

The destruction of 'the family wage' as a concept means that neither spouse can feel at peace or afford time off from work [for whatever reason].

The Conservative Party of the 1980s is partly responsible for this state of affairs but it is a trend sharply accelerated in the Blair years.

The continual financial pressures and strains that result from two income families being the only viable option contrasts sharply with the once common format where such pressures were infrequent and arguably life was happier as a result.

Posted by Robert Whiston on May 16, 2007 3:21 AM

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YummyWorkingMummy and Workaholic:

I'm sorry but you are being disingenuous. I have already paid for my

future pension and my old age requirements. I shouldn't need to pay again for your children to provide for me in the future.

Posted by Lickyalips on May 16, 2007 1:32 AM

[Report this comment](#)

No. It's one more move in the anti-capitalist, transnational UN-esque agenda.

Men are not nurturers. They are hunters and protectors. They bring home the booty. "Baby, baby bunting, Daddy's gone a-hunting; he gone to catch a rabbit skin to wrap his baby bunting in."

This move is all part of the one-worlder, anti-capitalist Stalinesque agenda of levelling out the world: Weaken the workforce.

It's abnormal. That's why the socialists love it.

Posted by Verity on May 16, 2007 12:31 AM

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Men's contribution to the family is really nothing more than a few moments of pleasure 9 months before birth and then years of making the money it takes to finance the resulting kids. Men should keep to their traditional role, which is to be the family's ATM machine, nothing more. Men have their careers, their work. Women have their kids. And this is why men don't have many rights when it comes to divorce and subsequent custody/visitation arrangements. They just are not needed when it comes to taking care of children, right?

In saying that, though, I do think the whole "You are getting something that I don't get" argument from those who remain childless is evidence of what is wrong with our society. To whine because you think that someone else is getting a benefit that you don't get reflects a selfish attitude. If you feel so aggrieved, go home and be thankful that your life isn't tainted by having to take care of a bunch of sick kids or some such thing.

Posted by Michelle on May 15, 2007 11:02 PM

[Report this comment](#)

After reading so many comments from the "anti-children brigade" on this page - about how we parents are sucking the life out of the economy with our benefits (what a laugh!!!, the bad effect we have on businesses and to top it all the comment about "the Asians" who are much harder working and will take our jobs(I couldn't believe someone actually wrote that BTW). I thought for a moment that I had landed on a Daily Mail page.

Why don't you moaning minnies get a life and realise that there are countless numbers of parents like us who are contributing HUGE amounts to the economy and not taking ANYTHING out of it. We're not all on benefits you know and one day, OUR children will be financially supporting YOU in your old age. You'll do well to remember that!

Posted by the workaholics on May 15, 2007 10:49 PM

[Report this comment](#)

Workers receive a minimum of 4 weeks holiday a year. There is no justification for Paternity leave or maternity leave. Men can if necessary use part of their annual holiday entitlement and women on becoming mothers should give up paid employment for at least 5 years and preferably a lot longer. Children would then receive the parental supervision that is necessary to avoid many social and indeed economic problems.

Posted by Denis Stacey on May 15, 2007 9:17 PM

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Tim & Martin - your comments are laughable. Who covers for you when you're on holiday or when you're sick? And my child will be contributing to YOUR pension and NHS treatments when you are in your dotage. As a higher rate taxpayer (no handouts or tax relief for us!), I work harder and more focused now than I have EVER worked. Yes I took 6 months off (most of it unpaid - living on OUR savings) and yes I work with people who do not have children, but I cover for them when they go off (during working hours) for a cigarette or a coffee(around a couple of times an hour) or cover for them when they have hangovers and come into work when they should have taken leave. In fact I have taken less sick leave in 7 years than any single member of my team has taken in the last 12 months. And by the way parents don't "swan off to look after my children" - it's

called "using up your holiday entitlement". When I - and no doubt many working parents - are not as you call it "swanning off" we're creating employment and contributing to the economy by paying extremely high nursery or nanny fees out our NET income. So stop being naive and assuming that parents have an easy ride. Get your facts right before you spout off this sort of rubbish.

Posted by Yummy Working Mummy on May 15, 2007 8:44 PM
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Richard Tobin on May 15, 2007 12:26 PM
said... Some rant about men competing...

I say this Richard, the day women provide sex to average looking men who are financial losers, then all men will stop work, and stop trying to support them.

Posted by Charles on May 15, 2007 8:35 PM
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Paternity leave is a thing generated by the feminists in government to try to persuade employers that women aren't as uncompetitive as employers think they are.

It's completely pointless otherwise.

If the government actually thought fathers were worth anything, they'd fund nannies so fathers could throw violent mothers out.

Posted by Charles on May 15, 2007 8:28 PM
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Man ,whyever not ?

Posted by Swilly Tisher , Loch Maree on May 15, 2007 8:09 PM
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I note that the Telegraph elected to gather and only report comment from a busines representation organisation with regard to the maternity/paternity leave proposals. No surprise there then - Tory right-wing money-grubbing as per usual.

As commented elsewhere here, maternity and /or paternity leave arrangements in the rest of "industrialised" Europe (Germany, France, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, etc. etc. etc.) are generally far better in provison than our own, and businesses there don't seem to suffer, in fact they seem to prosper and get better work efficiency from their employees.

But never mind, we have for decades endured abysmal employment conditions (in particualr note Glauca's dismal misogynist comment re:businesses electing not to employ women of child-bearing age), and that situation doesn't look set to improve any time soon.

Posted by JosephWhite on May 15, 2007 6:58 PM
[Report this comment](#)

I am an American mother of three. To answer your question, no, paternity leave is not as important as maternity leave simply for the fact that the father is not the one recuperating from childbirth, nor is he the one nursing a newborn. However, paternity leave is important. It gives the father a chance to tend to his wife and newborn, or to the other children in the family, following delivery. I don't know any fathers who have been able to take off for more than a few weeks, though it would be nice for families to have that choice.

Posted by Mary Baugher on May 15, 2007 6:49 PM
[Report this comment](#)

Choice may be a good thing, but I can envisage situations where mothers who would prefer to stay with their baby are persuaded to go back to work so the father can take some leave. I agree that a father's input is of far more benefit when the child is older, and surely we should be encouraging mothers to breast feed. By the way, has AngelaM researched the subject of giving birth in the fields of Africa? I believe the death rate for mothers and babies is pretty high. Even the practice here in the UK of sending mothers home soon after birth can cause problems unless she has plenty of help. Pregnancy and childbirth isn't always easy.

Posted by Mary Jackson on May 15, 2007 6:05 PM
[Report this comment](#)

What fun reading these mails, as an ex-pat living in Sweden I can only laugh at you lot. There is no damage to the economy, no

damage to efficiency in the office or any other workplace. The country is full of willing workers or unemployed, students waiting to fill the places of those on leave. Here in Sweden, a civilised country where I can take 6 months paternity leave on 70% of my salary paid by the welfare state, and I did last summer ! Stop sacrificing yourselves on the corporate altar, you`ll never get promoted anyway! No Swedish company has had negative effects ever in the last 20 years from this. Wake up to modern living, men of Britain do your duty and look after your kids & stop being lazy ! Women should not have to choose between career & a family. We are all born of woman, right ?

Posted by John Clachan on May 15, 2007 5:40 PM

[Report this comment](#)

What about the people who have to cover for others taking maternity/paternity leave? Where is the recompense for them when someone swans off to take care of a child?

This is nothing less than legalised discrimination against single and/or childless workers.

Posted by Tim on May 15, 2007 5:22 PM

[Report this comment](#)

The question being asked is "is paternity leave as important as maternity leave?", not "should we have this kind of leave at all?"

Given the latter question I fall firmly into the pay-for-your-own-damn-kids camp.

However given that p/maternity leave exists, I see no reason why the quota can't be divided as the parents see fit. After all the high-earner may well be the mother, so if dad takes time off it's got to be better all round.

Posted by martin on May 15, 2007 5:20 PM

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I think that is a good idea , and I would like my country take paternity leave , but only one month.

Posted by loreto on May 15, 2007 5:12 PM

[Report this comment](#)

Women bear children because they are best at rearing very young children. The time the father should take off is immediatly after the birth to assist the new mother to adapt to looking after the new child, and then he should return to work leaving the mother to do what only she can do.

Posted by Ian K Pestell on May 15, 2007 5:01 PM

[Report this comment](#)

Never mind the usual Labour social engineering and interventionist nonsense, the real problem is that so many have borne children that they had no intention of providing for in the first place.

You can see these people every week at the post office and local housing associations trousering taxpayer's money.

Frankly no government would dare withdraw such subsidies and this is what happens when you encourage people to become financially and now morally dependent upon the state (i.e other taxpayer's money).

As for 'paternity' leave I do not understand why the rest of us should have to take up the slack because Dave or whoever has just become a father.

Frankly this is going to get worse and worse is it not, whilst others, notably the Asians who are far more hard working and realistic, will take our companies and our jobs whilst we dance to the siren voices of welfare state imposed socialist bureaucracy.

Posted by Paul on May 15, 2007 5:01 PM

[Report this comment](#)

Re Glauca 2.43pm

Glauca, it doesn't matter how much you have saved up for your old age, you will still need other peoples children to look after you.

Posted by Michael on May 15, 2007 4:54 PM

I think the government should be encouraging marriage and not get tied up on maternity/paternity leave. I have a good job and career but would much rather be at home with my child. Unfortunately due to the high rate of taxes my husband has to pay this is out of the question. So instead of increasing maternity/paternity leave I think the government should do more to support the marital unit - bring back married persons tax relief. This might encourage more people to work at staying together and making a commitment to family life which has to be in the best interests of the child(ren).

Posted by josie on May 15, 2007 4:51 PM

[Report this comment](#)

I don't normally comment against some posters but the comment by L E has to be addressed.

The bit about immigration merely demonstrates how many have meekly accepted the drivel about immigration being "necessary" in this country and no doubt other Western nations.

The populations of this and other countries varies and has varied for centuries. One reason has been wars and starvation but the main reason was the Black Death and other plagues which wiped out half the populations.

It is just the flow of people happening naturally and the last thing we need here some more nonsense about needing people to come here.

What we should be doing is allowing for this in the way we all live and work thus everyone gets a go at a variety of work placements during their lives.

If the women in this country produced 2.4 children the population would remain roughly static. Because it drops to 1.9 is not a cause for panic buying from around the World rather the opposite.

One of the reasons for the high inflation here as measured by the tripling of house prices is the influx of migrants who have exceeded the numbers that could be accepted which in any event should never exceed collectively 1% of the population. Thus having 300,000 Russians in London causes problems which spin off into this area. Mothers would not have to worry about taking years off to rear children were it not for the false reasons put out for manipulating the population.

Posted by David Albion on May 15, 2007 4:29 PM

[Report this comment](#)

As a mother of 2, I say not necessary. After my first, my husband took the 4 days he was entitled to when we came home from hospital, just to ensure we were all ok. After the 2 he took the time when the baby was born, so he could look after the 1st. No more was necessary, a newborn is not that interesting, sleeps alot and that is about it. What are these people going to do with themselves, who is going to pay for it, and who is going to stand in for the absentee staff. Daft idea if you ask me. If mothers can't cope on their own, maybe they should think again about parenthood.

Posted by Dee on May 15, 2007 4:29 PM

[Report this comment](#)

Yes, Peter Hindley on May 15, 2007 3:17 PM, but won't those children be chipping in, by paying taxes, to pay for the services that will be needed to look after you in your dotage? And the current suggestion about global warming seems to be that at least half is caused by deforestation - nothing to do with this discussion.

Posted by Cirep G Nol on May 15, 2007 4:18 PM

[Report this comment](#)

Steve Buttery - well said! Read his comments, they make sense. When my daughter was born, I had to give up my job to look after my little one as there was no paternity leave available then and 'er indoors was very ill and couldn't do the caring bit. I spent the first six months of my daughter's life looking after and I loved every minute of it!

Paternity leave - yes please and mum can get back to work!!

Posted by Paul Williams on May 15, 2007 4:17 PM

[Report this comment](#)

The only answer is, give up work, become a benefit claimant, then you get increases of around £40 for each extra child. Maternity leave will no be needed then.

Just makes you wonder how we did it years ago, oh sorry we did without the latest gismos and gadgets, and were full time parents. No expensive holidays, maybe a few odd days out, or a week in a

draughty caravan or tent, did our children suffer, of course not. Yes I can already hear the replies, times have changed, I accept that, but children are born to be part of families, money doesn't make them any happier. Observe kids playing with boxes and paper and pencils, they get just as much fun, because you as a parent are there with them.

I have also been an employer, and can remember dreading any member of staff saying they were pregnant, mainly because, I had to cover that gap as well as run my business.

Large companies can absorb maternity leave, but when you have 8 members of staff it gets very hard.

Posted by [bertha](#) on May 15, 2007 4:01 PM

[Report this comment](#)

If I understand correctly, the suggestion is that either the mother or father take the leave, not both at the same time. Maybe 12 months total leave is too long, but that isn't the question here. What difference does it make to employers or to the taxpayer which parent is off work? So, what is all the fuss about?

If the mother earns more than the father, why shouldn't he stay at home with the baby and she go back to work?

Posted by [Charlie](#) on May 15, 2007 3:49 PM

[Report this comment](#)

My wife and I emigrated to Canada from the UK a few years back. We had our first child in December.

Canadian law allows 12 months of parental leave, with approximately 9 months which can be split between the parents of the child (again though the "wage" the govt pays is a pittance). I took 5 weeks off after the birth of my baby. All I can say is it was an absolute godsend. My wife ended up having a 3 day labour and an emergency C-section. She could not pick the baby up for the first week as she was not allowed to lift him due to the possibility of bursting stitches, so without me being home there would have been no-one to change diapers, console the crying baby etc.

Ignoring the OBVIOUS (despite what some people seem to think) psychological benefits of bonding with your newborn baby, if nothing else sharing the burden of things like sleepless nights over the first few weeks until routine is established allows for a smoother transition into parenthood and results in a healthier relationship for the parents too.

It's also really fascinating to see your child develop!!!

Posted by [TheBoyZogo](#) on May 15, 2007 3:40 PM

[Report this comment](#)

They should completely stop paternity leave and above all child benefit. If couples want children let them finance them themselves and not expect everyone else to chip in.

The world should be encouraging less children not more - it's not greenhouse gases that is the problem for the earth's future - it's the global population, it's too big.

Posted by [Peter Hindley](#) on May 15, 2007 3:17 PM

[Report this comment](#)

Each time one of my four children were born I made sure I had stockpiled sufficient annual leave and time off to stay at home with my wife for the first three weeks following her return from hospital. Likewise she gave up her career to be at home with our children, and did not resume it until they were in their final years of school education.

Yes it was financially hard at times, and before someone says things were cheaper then, the answer is no they were not. Mortgage and inflation rates were sky high in comparison to now.

The question can we afford children has always applied and the answer has always been the same. Yes if you are prepared to make sacrifices.

I suppose the thing that is relevant now is that most couples have to work in order bring home in total what was once considered to be married man's salary.

Paid protracted maternity leave for what is essentially a lifestyle choice is a burden both on employers and your own work colleagues.

Posted by [D Haslam](#) on May 15, 2007 2:50 PM

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2 weeks....6 months.....one year - all irrelevant! How does £112.75 a week pay the mortgage in Greater London?
Posted by Hawkeye on May 15, 2007 2:46 PM
[Report this comment](#)

This law is a form of enslavement.

Why does the government presume to dictate the arrangements between private individuals and private businesses?

The government's moral duty is to uphold contracts between consenting adults. Anything more than this is a gross infringement on our freedom.

Posted by Tim S on May 15, 2007 2:45 PM
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As a small single female childless business owner, having known for some time that this moronic legislaion was coming I have stopped employing people of child bearing age.

Through my taxes I already have to pay for people to reproduce themselves (child benefit, education, "new deal" etc.) so why should I also, through my business, have to subsidise the choices of those who choose to bear children?

I don't need their children to pay for my old age as I have made provision for it through my hard work.

Like Mark Cooper rightly say: this country will become so uncompetitive (it already has) that we will have mass unemployment.
What then?

Posted by Glauca on May 15, 2007 2:43 PM
[Report this comment](#)

Yes, if men grow breasts("should men grow breasts"? next HYS question!)

No they should not, let mummy,not nanny state, know best!

Posted by Annie Burns on May 15, 2007 2:37 PM
[Report this comment](#)

Maternity leave: subject to the striking of a sensible balance to protect employers' interests, a common sense concept founded upon the physical burden and shock of latter stage pregnancy and childbirth, combined with the immediate biological dependency of newborn upon mother.

Paternity leave: a modern day invention of political correctness, perhaps founded upon illogical fears of sex discrimination from the half of the population who through no fault of their own (with all due respect to Stan/Loretta from Monty Python's Life of Brian) cannot reproduce.

On distant shores, the Chinese and Indians rub their hands in glee as yet another nail is driven into the coffin of common sense.

Posted by David on May 15, 2007 2:35 PM
[Report this comment](#)

"if you are asked to do double your work load you should negotiate your pay for that period of time."

Ha, ha, ha Rosalind, nice one. You are joking, aren't you?

Posted by Hamish on May 15, 2007 2:16 PM
[Report this comment](#)

I fail to understand why a large number of the people commenting here seem to believe that allowing parents greater flexibility about who stays at home is interfering with family life. The changes do not mean that men HAVE to take paternity leave. Instead, the changes result in an easing of restrictions on family life.

Posted by Sarah Lambert on May 15, 2007 2:08 PM
[Report this comment](#)

All I can say is that those people who are against maternity/paternity leave had better not be the same people who complain about the amount of immigrants coming to Britain.

Admittedly, in this era, having more than two children on this

crowded little island would be selfish. But it's a simple fact that if this population doesn't reproduce itself, it will decline. A lack of sufficient labour will mean increased immigration or slower growth. China is so successful because of its billion plus population. Yet another example of their "productivity". It's a lesson they have long since mastered.

I am glad to hear that there are sensible employers out there that value dedicated working parents.

Those self-satisfied people that presume that a woman's place is in the home ought to return to the time when marriage was purely a relationship of financial dependency and when women were bought and sold as wives like legitimised prostitutes.

I'll stick to this century, thanks.

Posted by L E on May 15, 2007 2:07 PM

[Report this comment](#)

The child has no special need for a constant presense of the father within the first year or two. Normal holiday should be sufficient.

Small companies and self-employed can't afford also having fathers away for a longer time.

Posted by jorgen on May 15, 2007 2:06 PM

[Report this comment](#)

In some circumstances being able to share this paternity leave would be an ideal solution to when a mother has to return to work, especially in situations where the financial losses of her having the full 12 months she's entitled to are far greater than if her husband was able to take some of the leave!

There are situations where the 2 weeks already available to men is all that can be taken, or sometimes even those 2 weeks aren't possible!

As long as the additional time is an option then it should be there, however I don't think it should become something that is expected!

Posted by Heather on May 15, 2007 1:59 PM

[Report this comment](#)

I think this is a good idea. At the moment I am pregnant and I earn more than my husband. If I could go back to work earlier and if he could take paternity leave it would make a lot of difference to us and give us more choices. It would also help to solve the problems of child bearing age women getting discriminated against when applying for jobs. Nobody is saying men must take this new paternity leave, so I don't know why other posters are getting so worked up. It just allows flexibility.

Posted by Virginia Smith on May 15, 2007 1:52 PM

[Report this comment](#)

Absolutely not!

The major problem with the youth of today has arisen from the blurring of the roles of Mum and Dad often to the extent that only one parent is involved with the child. Any (and all) child (children) need a Mum who feeds, washes and generally cares for him/her and a Dad who supports Mum in those activities. As the child grows older the role of Dad increases as he gives more to the family from his knowledge of life from Dad's viewpoint.

Both Mum and Dad need to instil discipline in the child by taking a common approach to right and wrong; they never should disagree over the corrective action taken in front of the child and, at all times, must be firm with the child. If such a regime is followed the child eventually will become a fine, balanced adult of whom the family will be proud.

Dad's role in all this is to ensure that there is sufficient money coming in to the family to provide food and clothes for all. Mum's role is to cook and wash and generally run the household for the benefit of all the family.

At no time is it appropriate for Dad to take leave just because he has become a Dad.

John Candler

Posted by John Candler on May 15, 2007 1:42 PM

[Report this comment](#)

In the meantime, the colleagues of the new parents have to take up the slack at the workplace for no extra pay.

Posted by Lickyalips on May 15, 2007 1:33 PM

[Report this comment](#)

It is a pity that humans do not reproduce like Penguins. Can you imagine men having to cart a large egg about on a trolley, whilst incubating it after the female partner had laid it? I suppose that way the female partner would be able to return to work until hatching time, and the male could still work normally providing the boss supplied all fathers to be with a heated egg rack in the rest room.

Posted by S Shack on May 15, 2007 1:26 PM

[Report this comment](#)

Who will pay for all this?

When we had our children years ago I had to work harder to help keep the new member of our family not have a couple of weeks leave at the expense of the taxpayer. No wonder this country is gradually declining into a third world power.

Posted by Michael on May 15, 2007 1:26 PM

[Report this comment](#)

£112/week? That's £5500 a year. How many men can afford to forego their normal salary to take advantage of this??? The whole thing is a farce which will cost more to administer than it will pay out as usual. As a father of four, I and my wife, yes shock horror we're married, worked out the financial position before we had children and never claimed maternity leave either. No one made you have children. Start taking some responsibility for your own decisions. As usual this will be used primarily by the public sector and those of us who actually generate the money to pay for it will get nothing back again.

Posted by Richard Morgan on May 15, 2007 1:21 PM

[Report this comment](#)

To what problem is this a solution? Who is demanding 6 months paternity leave? What are fathers supposed to do during that time when they have decorated the nursery and built the rocking horse? Of course paternity leave is as important but in moderation - 6 months is daft. Why is the government promoting this when it is otherwise so eager to remove fathers from families? When the scheme has run a while and take-up is poor, will they then turn round and say that they knew all along fathers didn't really care anyway?

Posted by Nick Langford on May 15, 2007 1:06 PM

[Report this comment](#)

surely shared 'aternity' leave can help some employers.. mum does 3 months then returns to work meaning that she's been off a shorter time than usual, ok, dad's employers have to cover him for 3 months, but in companys such as the one I work for, where there is a lot of fertile woman, less time spend on maternity leave would help the rest of us out a lot! Saving costs of temps and/or overtime.

Posted by helen on May 15, 2007 12:54 PM

[Report this comment](#)

What's everyone so worked up about? What's the difference between a woman taking her 12 months' ordinary + additional maternity leave, and splitting it 50-50 with her husband? Hardly any difference to the taxpayer. Just common sense, surely.

Posted by Jane Benteley on May 15, 2007 12:52 PM

[Report this comment](#)

No, certainly not.

Posted by TESS NASH on May 15, 2007 12:46 PM

[Report this comment](#)

With regard to the comment made by Emma, do you really think that it is "not likely" that the mother will earn more than the father? I can tell you that my wife, as a doctor, earns more than twice my salary as a mere PhD-qualified research scientist. From a purely financial point of view, it would therefore make more sense for me to take paternity leave. If only I had the breasts....

Posted by Simon on May 15, 2007 12:39 PM

[Report this comment](#)

It would probably be a good thing if there were equality between the sexes so that one or other parent could take six months leave, but not both.

Besides, as a father of two little bundles of joy, there is no way that I would want to give up my cushy office job for six months to look after the kids day in and day out. I know when I'm onto a good thing.

Posted by Matt on May 15, 2007 12:33 PM
[Report this comment](#)

Maternity or Paternity leave unfortunately does cause conflict in the workplace, leaving those without children the added increase in work load. It doesn't stop there. When "the New Parents" do eventually return back to work, it is often assumed that it is their right during working hours, to take time off for Doctors Appointments, school appointments etc.

Posted by Liz (Germany) on May 15, 2007 12:33 PM
[Report this comment](#)

Does this mean if Gordon Brown were have another child while he is Prime Minister, he will take six months off and give us all a rest.

Posted by J Lamont on May 15, 2007 12:26 PM
[Report this comment](#)

If men invested more time caring for infants and helping to bring-up youngsters, just maybe they would be less inclined to so busy themselves in developing the tools of war and engage others in war whilst overdeveloping and consuming the finite resources of our world. All in a mad and greedy rush for a selfish and mindless want of status, authority, material possession and unnecessary wealth. Moving away from a society dominated by such male lead social instincts is a move towards a betterment of our civilisation.

Posted by Richard Tobin on May 15, 2007 12:26 PM
[Report this comment](#)

I'm a big fan of paternity leave - in moderation. Dads have a very positive role to play when a child is born. That said, 6 months is absurd and why should it be for half the maternity leave entitlement? Surely it should be the same - or am I being sexist? Then again, no-one says that you have to take it all.

I think 2 weeks paid (or part paid) leave is fine for most people. I used my 2 weeks paid leave to plan and build my vegetable garden with child #1, while the women cooed over our new-born. It was much better than with #1 when my previous employer gave no leave. I was forced to use a week's holiday, but wifey didn't come home until mid-week. It was a complete waste of a wonderful opportunity.

Posted by Jon on May 15, 2007 12:22 PM
[Report this comment](#)

It makes no sense that only women are allowed to take parental leave. All the proposals do is give families a choice of how to divide their 12 months, no one is forced to take time off work. Choice is the free market way.

At present there is no choice for women who are the only ones allowed to take parental leave, even if economically makes sense for the husband to be home and the wife to work. What I would like to see is that the govt take responsibility for paying and administering parental leave, and spreading the financial burden for looking after happy well adjusted children across society and not just on the employers.

I know the proposals sound scary, in the UK we are so sure that there must be a main breadwinner and a child rearer. Since I moved to Sweden though I now have:
a family to whom I contribute more than just money and weekends,
a happy wife with a real career,
my own career.

And guess what Sweden also have economic growth and soaring house prices. Try it, it doesn't cost anything and it just gives families a bit of flexibility in arranging their lives.

Richard
Posted by [Richard Calvert-Smith](#) on May 15, 2007 12:10 PM
[Report this comment](#)

Ok, so a couple has a baby. If the mother earns a better wage than

the father (although I admit not likely even in this day and age) and has better job prospects, then it would make more sense for the father to take the time off, no?

Posted by Emma on May 15, 2007 10:25 AM

This is precisely why each case should be looked at and examined individually. Everyone has different circumstances/needs.

But I also agree that if you can't afford to have kids, don't have them.

Posted by Chaz on May 15, 2007 11:58 AM

[Report this comment](#)

There is no question that the employment prospects of women of child-bearing age are being adversely affected by oppressive feminist maternity legislation. For a long time many businesses have avoided taking them on where at all possible.

All we have here is a classic example of leftie bureaucratic reaction to a non-success - more of the same, but bigger. The idea is to drag male employment prospects down to the same level as fertile women, to even up the employment playing field between the sexes.

Remember, this is driven by rich and /or childless feminist fanatics, who by definition, therefore, have a blind spot about child rearing. In common with all fanatics, they don't care about the harm they are doing - in this case to Britain, businesses, families, and children.

Still, every silver lining has a cloud - I suppose it would favour The (non ageist stereotyped) experienced grandparents' employment prospects over the youngsters. Bring it on!

Posted by Scott, East Anglia on May 15, 2007 11:51 AM

[Report this comment](#)

If I've understood correctly, the aim is to allow either Mum OR Dad (but not both) the opportunity to take leave to look after a new-born child. If that's the case then fair enough. Dad can often care for a child just as well as Mum, and the burden on employers will be no different, since there will still be the same number of people in the workforce taking parental leave at any one time.

I feel qualified to pontificate on this subject as I am the owner of a small business employing 10 people (one of whom is currently on maternity leave) AND I'm a bloke AND for the past four years I have been the parent-with-care of my young daughter. (So there !)

Posted by Steve Buttery on May 15, 2007 11:43 AM

[Report this comment](#)

When will NuLab realise they were elected to GOVERN, not interfere about with family arrangements. If half of what the people interviewed on last night's Ch4 programme are right about Brown, then there is no way he should be allowed anywhere near No 10. Has anyone any idea at all what we should do to him? Legally of course!

Posted by Mike Smith on May 15, 2007 11:42 AM

[Report this comment](#)

If my husband had been offered paternity leave he would have run a mile! Our 4 children are now all in their 20's, and don't seem to have suffered any ill effects from not having a father who was 'paternally' (eternally?) on leave. I haven't suffered either. Looks like things were a bit different back then!

Posted by Gina on May 15, 2007 11:29 AM

[Report this comment](#)

In response to Leo

I am actually one of the "Have less children" brigade as stated in my contribution. Also, if you are asked to do double your work load you should negotiate your pay for that period of time. You said yourself that in your job you are that specialised that you cannot be replaced - so I guess your job security is not the issue here. Choosing a profession is no different from choosing to have a child - weigh up the consequences beforehand and choose a job where the unpalatable realities you complain about do not affect you. If you are so brilliant and hard working then choosing an employer who can manage the maternity/paternity leave times should be a doddle. And

no, I do not want to rely on my children to look after me, hence my requirement to work and have them. But who do you suggest will "keep the economy afloat" and provide the goods & services that you want to buy in 20/30 years time, when you retire on your mega pension? Is it going to be the kids of the people who live on benefits today or the kids of the people who set a good work life balance example?

Posted by Rosalind on May 15, 2007 11:27 AM
[Report this comment](#)

Emma 10:25

No.
Posted by Hamish on May 15, 2007 11:10 AM
[Report this comment](#)

The amount of SMP is so tiny that the issue is of no real significance. If however SMP became an extension of normal income at the usual rate, this might become rather important. Maybe the govt is setting the rules before increasing the entitlements later. We in the UK are presently miserly with all kinds of benefits except tax credits. Watch this space, GB has arrived!

Posted by colin on May 15, 2007 11:08 AM
[Report this comment](#)

Just one more example of life when our rulers are from another planet.

Posted by jerym eedy on May 15, 2007 10:53 AM
[Report this comment](#)

No wonder that China is poised to overtake the West and become the world's economic superpower, when such measures as paternity leave are foisted on companies trying to do business here.

I would like to say to all the obviously young women posting here who are for these measures that this country will become so uncompetitive that we will have mass unemployment and then the children will suffer far more than missing out on daddy in the first few weeks after birth.

All of this trendy thinking which discounts any need to protect Britain's economic place in the world is indicative of a generation who have grown up not knowing economic privation and who don't realise that we have been living on credit for many years now. Credit is borrowing tomorrow's growth to use today, which inevitably means that when tomorrow comes one has to do without.

Posted by mark cooper on May 15, 2007 10:47 AM
[Report this comment](#)

Yet another example of the fascist nanny state. So, both parents on leave to look after baby, whose at work earning the wherewithall to feed said baby? no-one, they've been seduced by our liberal, socialist, nannyng government to become scroungers and freeloaders, expecting their employers to pick up the bill.

If you want to start a family, you cannot expect some-one else to finance that aspect of your life. If you cannot afford kids then don't have them, equally the government should not be giving handouts in the form of child benefit's to families, it just encourages dependency.

Paternity or Maternity leave, it makes no difference, some-one else is expected to pay for the pleasure of sex and procreation and parenthood, which is wrong.

Posted by George Hinton on May 15, 2007 10:36 AM
[Report this comment](#)

In response to Denise Murphy, often the drive for children comes from the mother more than the father. I had one child willingly and then was forced to have more by being told that if I didn't I would be divorced and prevented from seeing my first child. Never mind realising that women are equal, in the case of family law they are most certainly superior in being able to get away with this emotional and financial rape. I am all for equality of the sexes, perhaps the equality not to have to pay maintenance to women who act in this appalling way or lie about their contraception.

Posted by nick on May 15, 2007 10:32 AM
[Report this comment](#)

Rosalind writes:

"No it's not the single, childless people who pick up the work load. A well managed employer will use the 6 months (from notification) before the maternity/paternity leave starts, to plan and organise work loads and staff - that can include temps and secondments."

That is possible in some occupations and workplaces, but less so in others. For jobs which are either low-skilled or have a high workforce (e.g. doctors and teachers), temporary cover can be provided; albeit at a significant cost. For the more specialised jobs this is often impossible. In my last job I had to organise maternity cover for a qualified archive conservator with several years' experience of handling very specific types of artefact. It proved impossible: there were too few of them about and none were willing to relocate for a temporary contract. As a single, childless person I then ended up doing her job as well as mine while she was away. I had no choice - it was either that or miss performance targets which would have jeopardised the funding of the organisation I worked for, and therefore my own job security. Therefore, employees with specialist qualifications who are not easily replaceable on a temporary basis should be exempt from some parental leave rights, IMHO. I'm sick and tired of other people selfishly deciding that they're going to have it all at my expense, and sod the consequences.

"And lets not forget, someone will have to work & pay taxes when the baby boomers of the 80s want to retire."

This is the classic fallacy put forward by the 'have more kids' brigade. If you don't live beyond your means and save responsibly, you will have no need to rely on your children for support in old age. And personally I can't think of anything more selfish than to have children specifically in order to evade the responsibility of providing for your own care in old age.

Posted by Leo Enticknap on May 15, 2007 10:29 AM

[Report this comment](#)

Ok, so a couple has a baby. If the mother earns a better wage than the father (although I admit not likely even in this day and age) and has better job prospects, then it would make more sense for the father to take the time off, no?

Posted by Emma on May 15, 2007 10:25 AM

[Report this comment](#)

If fathers cannot organise their lives to give enough priority and time to their children (and their marriage) when the children are born then they wont when the children are older. Paternity leave is another example of muddled lefty 'this sounds a good vote winner' thinking. The answer is better support for MARRIAGE.

Posted by Peter Rutter on May 15, 2007 10:13 AM

[Report this comment](#)

As an employer I prefer a parent to a single childless employee every time. I get a committed employee who will work hard and efficiently during their normal office hours because they have a mortgage & a family to support and want to see them once in a while. They also have an interest in my business staying afloat and mothers are particularly good at multitasking and thinking practically. I have seen plenty of single career focused hot shots who leave their job for better prospects at short notice - leaving me in a mess. They slack during the day and hang on for overtime to be seen to be keen, they come in with hangovers or with their minds on the next adventure holiday they are going on and are just selfish & narrowminded and their judgement in business is often poor because of that. Give me a parent or a parent to be any time, the 6 months off are a worthwhile investment to me.

Posted by Dave Scott on May 15, 2007 10:11 AM

[Report this comment](#)

More rubbish intended to pander to groups of people who will no doubt say Labour is wonderful and I must vote for them. Gordon Bruin took his leave so we never ever saw him at work whilst the leave was available. Shame he never became a stay at home father!

Posted by David Albion on May 15, 2007 10:05 AM

[Report this comment](#)

I envisage a situation where several young men will be enjoying paternity leave because the feckless woman is unsure of the identity of the father.

Seriously, surely only one parent is required to be home with offspring; my husband and I worked out which of us could earn more to support the family and the other stayed home, the situation is liable to change and of course when the children are in secondary education, then both parents might be able to take paid

employment.

I feel sorry for small businesses where salaries for two people have to be found, yet only one person is in work.

Posted by Sue on May 15, 2007 9:55 AM

[Report this comment](#)

When I hear these ludicrous proposals I wonder how the government thinks that a small, or even not so small, business can survive the loss of the productivity of a member of staff for so long, and be able to afford their wages in their absence. As we have to compete on the world stage, where costs are a fraction of the UK's, our government seems hell bent on ruining what industry we have left.

Posted by Dudley Holley on May 15, 2007 9:48 AM

[Report this comment](#)

We have 4 boys, (all grown), one of whom is a Downs' syndrome person. My wife followed me round the world for 18 years. A role reversal was forced on us, so I took over Kinder und Küche, while "her indoors" became "her outdoors". The youngest was 4 years old. As a result of this experience, I believe that male children need their mother, or a female substitute, until the 4th year. After that Dad can take on the nurturing process, in fact becoming the 24/7 role model for his sons. I don't know about daughters, but would hypothesise that quality time with Mum would be sufficient to ensure her development as a woman, albeit one who liked sport. Why not allow paternity leave for men within 5 years of the child's birth, provided the child is born within a legal union? I don't believe that paternity leave should be granted in all pregnancies - some men would never have to work!

Posted by Kevin Lohse, Hythe on May 15, 2007 9:45 AM

[Report this comment](#)

Soon this country will be unable to function with the way we are going. Children are born to those that want them (presumably), and it is up to them to cope without any aid from the state. This is where we have gone badly wrong over the years. Some people see children as an extra means of income from the State. Most men would be useless anyway at home with their wives for six months. It is a shame as a nation that people can no longer face their own responsibilities. If you can't afford children, don't spend time with them and can't plan your life around them, then don't have them. I am amazed that any small business can function at all with the amount of maternity leave (which should be reduced) and the introduction of paternity leave. People want it all these days and should not rely on the Government. I suspect that those women who want a 'career' are merely working for 'the second car' and the 'second holiday'. Time in our 'green' period for women to start staying at home more. Those who lived through the War must think today's people are soft, and unable to cope.

Posted by Sylvia Evans on May 15, 2007 9:25 AM

[Report this comment](#)

How on earth is the father supposed to breast feed during his time off?

Posted by Marianne on May 15, 2007 9:20 AM

[Report this comment](#)

What a load of "Poppy cock". How have we forgotten that the primal bond is between child and mother. The fathers role is to provide, support and protect.

We must understand the importance of the mothers role in developing a stable family which allows the man to fulfil his end of the bargain.

Why are women who raise families looked down on by the state and rewarded with such derisory pensions.

We need to get back in touch with our roots.

Posted by Mike Campbell on May 15, 2007 9:19 AM

[Report this comment](#)

Does nobody read the facts? Mums have to go back to work in order for the dads to get time off. Noone is screwing the taxpayers. If my wife earned more than me, I'd think it sensible to have her go back to work and I would stay home without question. This law merely makes it possible for men to have the same right to take leave at the birth of a child, for economical reasons. So, actually, this will probably increase Britain's competitiveness in the market, with the higher-earning partner returning to work to keep the economy afloat. Use your head, and stop being so ignorant.

Posted by Mark Calleja on May 15, 2007 9:16 AM

[Report this comment](#)

I agree , paternity leave for men is just another example of PC madness. Most fathers are happy to take of a couple of days at the time of birth, then let the new mother and normally her mother establish a comfortable day time pattern. Father then normally takes over for a while when he returns home. Problem solved.
Posted by Stephen, Bristol on May 15, 2007 8:59 AM
[Report this comment](#)

More destructive political correctness. I'm surprised the "Equality" industry hasn't been on this soft target long ago.

Why shouldn't siblings have 12 months out of school? To "bond" with the baby. And the aunts and uncles, grandparents and the rest all have "kinship leave"? In fact, why bother working at all until the menopause? On the other hand, by then you'll be a grandparent and one or other of the family is bound to be pregnant most of the time so you'll need leave then. Let's just give leave to everybody all of the time. In fact, let's abolish work and all scrounge on the employer. Oops, but there won't be any employers. All right, let's scrounge on the State. Oops again. There won't be anybody to pay taxes.
Oh, dear! Didn't think of that.

Then let's all work. That's a far better idea.
Posted by David Roberts on May 15, 2007 8:52 AM
[Report this comment](#)

Another stupid piece of ideology being acted out by nu-lab. I bet its only implemented and used to its full extent by Government Departments and Local Authorities. Something else for the tax payer in private industry to subsidise.
Posted by John Thomson on May 15, 2007 8:51 AM
[Report this comment](#)

Fathers will have the "right" to take this time - it's not compulsory. No it's not the single, childless people who pick up the work load. A well managed employer will use the 6 months (from notification) before the maternity/paternity leave starts, to plan and organise work loads and staff - that can include temps and secondments. Happy people make better employees, take less time off sick etc. Breastfed and cared for babies get less sick (less employee absense, less NHS bills). And lets not forget, someone will have to work & pay taxes when the baby boomers of the 80s want to retire. Your attitude to what matters in life changes when you become a parent. I am glad that we live in a country where you can have it both - career and parenthood but I do agree, limiting the number of children one has is the responsible thing to do.
Posted by Rosalind on May 15, 2007 8:49 AM
[Report this comment](#)

So, yet more patronising nanny knows best guff is being foisted upon us. Doubtless the genesis of these measures have been forged in the intellectual crucible of the students union, and honed in that hot bed of common sense, the public sector. Golly gosh, I just do not know how our families could ever prosper without their munificence and wisdom.

The governments desire to impose these measures is breathtaking in its audacity, and hypocrisy. After all they are apologists for, and have presided over the expansion of the welfare state. This has proven to be, in its present unreformed state, to be singularly responsible for the destruction of the family in large swathes of our society.

The government may be striving to seek the namby pamby feminisation of men, but that is not the way of the world, nor should it be. Next the government will be advocating compulsory paternity leave, with health visitors arriving at home with clip boards and lists of do's and don'ts along government proscribed lines. Oh yes and doubtless we will all have to have a nice cup of tea and talk about our feelings. How nice. Woe betide any failure to conform.

In an ideal world it would be pleasant to spend more time with a new born. But that is not an indulgence that the beleaguered tax payer or business should be forced to enable. If men want to spend more time with their children they should pay for it themselves or save their annual leave, heavens above, the arrival of a child is hardly unforeseen.

Those who choose not to have children have every right to believe that they are being discriminated against. After all, why should they

have to subsidise the lifestyle choices and decisions of those who choose to bear children?

Yet another example of the governments insane efforts to nationalise and undermine the family.

Posted by Alta Blue on May 15, 2007 8:46 AM

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Thorsten Krings, if it's so vital to bond etc, then resign and let someone who is willing to concentrate on their job do so. If you're such a complete person, you'll be able to pick up another job somewhere else and your employer won't be disadvantaged by yet another long-term absentee.

I'm all in favour of a work/life balance, though much depends on what your work is, but realism is more important than all this bonding nonsense. My father worked longer hours when I, my brother and sister were very young, spending most of Saturday at the golf club. When we were older and we could do things together, he was there. My family is quite balanced and healthy, thank you.

As an HR manager, you should be only too aware of the detriment to productivity of a fertile office. It is demoralising for staff who don't have families and HR should be more aware of the strain it places upon them and the higher productivity required during their colleagues' absence. The work still has to be done by someone and an absent father can't contribute much, can he?

Posted by Hamish on May 15, 2007 8:44 AM

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I think men need to realise that women are equal to men and that they should share responsibility of the development of their child.

More importantly, I am shocked by the obviously male comments posted here that they do not even have an interest in bringing up their child in the first place!

About time I say, men should be able to have the time off. Believe it or not there are men out there that want to spend time with their children and this is every opportunity to build a relationship with them. In addition gives support to the mother so that she can go back to work. People can have a career and be a parent at the same time.

I can appreciate that for small businesses this can be a problem, but it is no different to the maternity leave entitlements a woman has had for a number of years already.

In addition, just like a woman, the 6 months is not set in stone and a man may choose to come back before that time.

Posted by Denise Murphy on May 15, 2007 8:39 AM

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Well, this is the limit!

Everyone knows that a MOTHER is the important element in a new baby's life, especially when breast feeding. The father should continue to provide for the new member of the family and not expect his employer to do so.

I would however, agree to paternity leave in the case of death of the mother, or severe illness after birth. Then it would be necessary for the child or children to have a family member at hand, even if this person takes an unpaid leave of absence after the first two or three months. But, six months to a year? Paid are they?

What employer can handle this? And, what happens to the replacement? Does he or she get the boot?

As another comment says "Arrant nonsense!"

Posted by C,A,Apicella on May 15, 2007 8:37 AM

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Definitely not - if couples are stupid enough to have children, then they should accept and plan for the loss and hardship that it creates, and not expect the rest of us and employers to foot their bill. Take responsibility for your actions.

Posted by Relieved to be childless on May 15, 2007 8:34 AM

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No - just another trendy left wing fad of political correctness. It is also biased against men without children, why not just increase all

holiday leave for everyone, and then those with children can spend their time doing that bit, while the rest of us can enjoy ourselves.
Posted by A very happy expat on May 15, 2007 8:24 AM
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What a load of rubbish. There is zero need for men to take time off. The UK is losing its competitiveness and this nonsense enhances that. Men are not women. The bonds with children are different. Get working boys, and pay for your offspring's education and hopefully we can overturn the mess the Labour Party has created in modern England-including this trash.
Posted by Philip T on May 15, 2007 8:18 AM
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Stark raving bonkers. Mums do the family raising - dads do the hunting, killing and farming and dragging home the dead brontasaurus to slice up. This namby pamby government thinking will be the death of us.
Posted by Peter Hack on May 15, 2007 8:17 AM
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i think it is very important in the type of society that we now live in. If parents already have other children then it is not unreasonable to allow the father time off to look after them when a new baby arrives.
Contrary to AngelaM's comments, we may be mollycoddled but this isn't Africa where life is struggling to get into the slow lane, mnever mind the fast lane. And besides, why should only the mother be entitled to spend all that time alone with the newborn? fathers have to have time to "bond" and enjoy their new infant as well
Posted by Pigeon on May 15, 2007 8:15 AM
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I think it is utter nonsense! Not only paternity leave, but also maternity leave. If a woman becomes pregnant, she should not be working out of the home, not should she until her children are grown up. Bringing up children must be the most important job there is, and the Mother is the best one to do it (there are exceptions, of course!).

I also go along with Mid J. 5:49 AM - who rightly wonders why the employer is obliged to contribute to the birth of an employee's child.

Posted by Martin on May 15, 2007 8:08 AM
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Absolutely stupid idea.--Mothers will still be taking care of the children and fathers or boyfriends will be screwing the taxpayer.How can a self employed man or an employer do without a key employee or any employee for 6 months and welcome him back. Oh yes just fire the replacement. With the tremendous problems needing legislation in Britain why do so many such schemes take up the time of the government?e.g. the NHS or the prisons could use that and many other social schemes giveaway money. If the money must be thrown at such schemes use it to lay off half the MPs for 6 months .They would be missed less by the economy!
Posted by John Peden on May 15, 2007 8:06 AM
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It is far more important for the state and the father's employer to recognise the wife's contribution to the husbands career by ensuring that when the wife becomes 60 she gets the same amount of pension from both the state and the husbands employer. This 6 months paternity leave is completely unnecessary and is one of the reasons why the German unemployment levels as in other EU countries is on the increase. Enforcing employers especially small companies to hold back the mother's and father's jobs for 12/6 months spells the death of most small companies and make large companies unprofitable.
Posted by Ted Wolfenden on May 15, 2007 8:04 AM
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Of course both parents should be free to take as much time off work as they wish, as should anyone else. It should, however, be entirely at their own expense and not paid for by either their employer or the tax payer.
Posted by Kulu on May 15, 2007 8:04 AM
[Report this comment](#)

This really is arrant nonsense. It is a matter of choice whether to have children and both parents don't require leave to do it.

Maternity leave is a facet of women working extensively in Britain thanks to two world wars after which they never really retired back to the home - it would be far better if families had adequate single incomes to fund their lifestyles so that we could have a lot more full-time Mums.

As for Dads needing time off, there is wisdom in an element of flexibility but full formal leave akin to maternity leave is nonsense.

There may have been a tiny minority - including those where the man is to be the carer for the child long term for whom this has its uses - but for the majority this is a sledge-hammer to crack a nut.

This has heinous effects on small employers. Is the background to this a Euro-Diktat or is it some piece of pure socialist doctrine from the present government which hates small business?

Posted by simon coulter on May 15, 2007 8:00 AM

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I think six months' paternity leave is just silly.

As a mother, I was pregnant for nine months, gave birth and breastfed. I adore my daughter, but the process was physically arduous. I received wonderful material support from my mother during that time, but my partner was barely needed during my daughter's first year. That's biological reality, and legislation ought to support real human needs, not some gruesome brave new world dreamt up by the social engineers that have the temerity to call themselves our leaders.

Posted by Anna on May 15, 2007 8:00 AM

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What ever NEXT!!!!

Posted by Bernard Parke on May 15, 2007 7:56 AM

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"Hilarious to read about single people feeling aggrieved when someone takes maternity leave. What, "you chose to have a kid now sod off"?"

No: 'You chose to have a kid, and therefore you should have made financial and logistical plans for doing so without making unreasonable demands of your employer and colleagues.'

"Oh, okay then. Enjoy the skills shortage."

OK then - enjoy the overpopulation crisis. Suggested reading: [link](#) .

As for the paternity leave proposal, it looks to me like Labour are waking up to the fact that their enhanced maternity provisions have seriously damaged the employment prospects of 18-45 year old women in the private sector, and so their solution is to place (heterosexual) men under the same handicap.

Rebecca Mileman writes:

"Surely it is particularly important for those in positions of authority to take paternity leave, so that their employees feel comfortable and permitted to take it when they need to too."

No. It's important for those in positions of responsibility (I don't like the word 'authority' in this context - it implies the beloved Labour principle of power without accountability) to send the message that someone has to do the work to pay the taxes to support those who make the career decision to devote time and energy to reproducing themselves rather than their professional lives. That's why such workers in positions of responsibility tend to be paid more, and quite rightly so.

Posted by Leo Enticknap on May 15, 2007 7:44 AM

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I think parternity leave is absolutely vital. I discount the economic argument as that applies to maternity leave as well. So either you allow leave or you don't, anything else would be discrimination. Essentially men have allowed themselves for too long to be sidelined in families. It is important for us men and for our children that we can bond with them to the same extent as mothers. It really bothers

me that even today and reduced to being the breadwinner. I am a senior HR manager in one of the world's leading retailing company. I have seen a shift in the work life balance over the past five years or so. You'd be surprised at what's really possible.

Posted by Thorsten Krings on May 15, 2007 7:39 AM

[Report this comment](#)

How on earth did we women manage years ago? OK, take a few days, lads, but there is no need to take months off when all a baby does for the first few is eat and sleep. New mothers do need support, but not to the extent that they seem to believe necessary these days. Go and live in Africa, give birth in the field and then get up and start working again! We are too mollycoddled in this country.

Posted by AngelaM on May 15, 2007 7:28 AM

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It is precisely this kind of nanny state clap trap that decided me to become an ex pat and come to live and work in Thailand where if you don't work, you don't get paid. Simple.

The Western world could learn a lot from the 3rd world!

I would hate to be an employer in the U.K and have to plan my business around a couple's desire to have children.

When my 2 children were born I had 1 day off when my wife came home from hospital and was thankful for it!

To take 6 months leave is authorised skiving in my opinion.

Posted by M Shrosbree on May 15, 2007 7:24 AM

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Yes and no. It's every bit as much an inconvenience for colleagues and employers, albeit for a shorter period, but it's not medically necessary for the father to recover in the same way. If a father needs time off, are holiday entitlements not already sufficient?

Posted by Hamish on May 15, 2007 7:04 AM

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We own a small company of 8 people, 4 of which are sales staff. 2 of our key male employees were fathers within a few months of each other. If they both took 6 months of we would be seriously struggling. They took off, with full pay, two weeks paternity leave and we allow them some time out when needed, they feel this is sufficient. It should be up to the employers to decide what to allow for paternity leave and not the nanny state. We already have enough government interference without now having to face financial difficulties caused by 6 months paternity leave. Did I also mention that we have an employee off with maternity leave?

Posted by Janet Gunning on May 15, 2007 7:02 AM

[Report this comment](#)

Hilarious to read about single people feeling aggrieved when someone takes maternity leave. What, "you chose to have a kid now sod off"?

Oh, okay then. Enjoy the skills shortage.

Posted by James from Oz on May 15, 2007 6:50 AM

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Here in Germany this has been reality for years. Since my husband and I earn about the same it was possible for us to share parental leave, and so we did. He did the second half, obviously, because men do not breast-feed. It was just 6 months then, and he enjoyed every minute (so did I). He was the first in his company, but since then it has become more common. Equal rights means equal responsibilities and I think men should have the right to watch their babies learn to walk - but only if they want to.

Posted by Athene on May 15, 2007 6:49 AM

[Report this comment](#)

The question is whether paternity is as important as maternity leave and the fundamental answer has to be no. Perhaps paternity leave is important to provide support to the mother but surely it all depends on the overall circumstances? It is important to look at the situation logically. If you take a long, cold hard look at it dispassionately, and from an operational and financial perspective, companies and organizations do not employ people to produce children nor do companies or organizations have a responsibility to provide mothers and fathers with time off to take care of their off-

spring, even though legislation has indicated that this is indeed the case. And, individual circumstances should and must be taken into consideration so that the loss of essential or even vital staff at a particularly busy time does not impinge on the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization. I am sure that junior employees would feel even more aggrieved if the absence of senior managers at a particularly crucial time led to the company losing orders or contracts that eventually led to the loss of jobs within the organization. It is important to be able to negotiate, between company and employee, the optimum time that paternity leave can be taken to avoid possible knock-on effects. Besides, when people are away on maternity and paternity leave it is the single people and those without children who have to 'take up the slack'.

Posted by Kenneth Armitage on May 15, 2007 6:20 AM

[Report this comment](#)

TWO WEEKS IS ENOUGH LEAVE FOR THE FATHER .IF THESE DAYS WE KNOW WHO HE IS. ITS LATER THE INFLUENCE OF A FATHER IS NEEDED TO BE FELT BY A GROWING CHILD AND YOUTH. I HAD TWO DAYS OFF WORK FIFTY-FIVE YEARS AGO AND MY SON TURNED OUT A VERY FINE MAN AND GRAND-FATHER

Posted by max bernstein on May 15, 2007 6:12 AM

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I often wonder why the employer is obliged to contribute, sort out or be inconvenienced by the private desires and actions of couples ... and in almost all cases only one of the couple works for that employer.

Holiday, sick leave, perhaps medical cover etc are given...but why should those who choose to have a baby receive extra benefits? That effectively discriminates against those who don't...and certainly costs and is a drain on the company...and often, on other employees who still need to get the work done.

Posted by Mid J. on May 15, 2007 5:49 AM

[Report this comment](#)

Having children is (or darn well ought to be) a personal decision made by two people. Whatever arrangements they may wish to make for looking after their child should be a part of that decision. What is totally wrong is to expect somebody else to fund the costs of them taking leave. In other words – it's nothing whatever to do with Nanny State! Keep your nose out nanny!

Posted by Ex pat Ron in NZ on May 15, 2007 5:37 AM

[Report this comment](#)

The sheer audacity of this failed nanny state is breathtaking. For thousands of years families have managed to conduct their affairs without NuLab and with relative success. NuLab have presided over the breakdown of the traditional successful family with awesome efficiency, with the resultant increases in ill-discipline and crime - and now they're trying to tell us that they know best how families should function. Does their arrogance know no bounds?

This is also another interference in the efficient running of business, which again they know precious little, all for the sake, one presumes, in order to buy a few votes from the idiot classes.

Posted by Theo on May 15, 2007 5:18 AM

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paternity leave is essential to the parents , as it gives the Mother a break immediately after giving birth. It is even more valuable to parents who already have children.

Th pittance offered , in my experience is overlooked and paid days off are given in a mutual agreement between a decent employer and the father.

Posted by chris wills on May 15, 2007 4:12 AM

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Apparently thoroughly modern people jointly participating in the birth of babies now... it's the "we" who have a baby. I have fallen badly behind on biology if this is true and feel cramped in my capacity to comment on matters of paternity leave. Will the men be given one of those large donuts to sit on? Will they receive hormone recovery therapy? Will the NHS help soothe the stretchmarks? These are the issues that men must look into.... it does not appear worth the pay at the proposed rate.

Posted by Henry Cave Devine on May 15, 2007 3:12 AM

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I think paternity leave is important and fathers should be encouraged to take it.

I remember lots of mutterings at my workplace when a senior manager, who was entitled to take the two weeks, chose not to take it because we were busy.

Surely it is particularly important for those in positions of authority to take paternity leave, so that their employees feel comfortable and permitted to take it when they need to too.

Posted by Rebecca Mileman on May 15, 2007 2:04 AM
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