Can't Buy Me Love

"Does Money Buy Happiness?" by Robert E. Lane, in *The Public Interest* (Fall 1993), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Money can't buy happiness, they say, and they're right. Or at least mostly right, says Lane, a Yale University political scientist.

The fact is, surveys conducted during the past two decades show that people in rich countries are happier than those in poor ones. This reverses the findings of earlier polls. It's not so much that money buys happiness, writes Lane, as that it buys "relief from sorrow" by means of better health care, lower infant mortality, and the like. For much the same reason, money can buy a degree of happiness for poor people in affluent countries.

By and large, however, "there is no substantial relation between income and well-being" in most developed countries, Lane writes. What does make people happy? Family comes first, followed in most surveys by friendship and then by satisfying work and leisure. Only middle-class intellectuals, Lane remarks parenthetically, are likely to be surprised by the discovery that work satisfaction is not closely related to income. Why, after all, should we expect the highly paid paper pusher to be happier in his work than the highly skilled wallpaper hanger?

Government, Lane says, can help people in their pursuit of happiness. Since family is the number-one source of well-being for most people and family troubles go hand in hand with poverty, policies that alleviate need would help. And since satisfying work is more essential to well-being than a fatter paycheck, economic policies should be designed to promote full employment rather than bigger incomes.

SOCIETY

Which Way Feminism?

A Survey of Recent Articles

Polls indicate that most American women strongly support the ideal of equality between the sexes, yet do not call themselves feminists. Do these women still just not get it? Or does modern feminism itself need to have its collective consciousness raised? Feminists of various hues have lately been pondering a number of such "state of the movement" questions.

"The widespread belief in equality . . . is a belief in equality up to a point—the point where women are drafted and men change diapers," attorney Wendy Kaminer writes in the *Atlantic Monthly* (Oct. 1993). "After 30 years of the contemporary women's movement, equal-rights feminism is still considered essentially abnormal." To the extent that feminism questions women's traditional familial roles, Kaminer says, it demands "profound individual change"—and naturally runs into resistance.

That much about feminism is quite familiar to veterans of the 1960s and '70s. But for many in the movement, the sort of equal-rights feminism that came to prominence then has become passé. For them, the *difference* between the sexes is fundamental. Central to this kind of feminism, writes Kaminer, "is the belief, articulated by the psychologist Carol Gilligan [author of the influential *In a Different Voice* (1982)], that women share a different voice and different moral sensibilities. . . . In a modern-day version of Victorian True Womanhood, feminists . . . pay tribute to women's superior nurturing and relational skills and their general 'ethic of caring.'" Some "difference" feminists draw reformist conclusions from their beliefs about male-female differences; others push on to radical notions, arguing that "female" ways of doing things such as science, intuitive and antihierarchical, should be

given parity with (if not be allowed to replace) "male" ways.

That there may be basic differences between men and women is not, of course, a recent academic discovery. Nor, as Deborah Tannen, a Georgetown University linguist and author of the bestseller *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (1990), argues in *Utne Reader* (Sept.–Oct. 1993), does difference imply inequality. "Whether or not the genders are the same," she notes, "is irrelevant to whether they should be treated as equals."

Unfortunately, others have not found it so easy to reconcile the two ideas. Feminism "has always been plagued by bitter civil wars over conflicting ideas about sexuality and gender which lead to conflicting visions of law and social policy," Kaminer observes. "If men and women are naturally and consistently different in terms of character, temperament, and moral sensibility, then the law should treat them differently, as it has through most of our history, with labor legislation that protects women, for example, or with laws preferring women in custody disputes: special protection for women, not equal rights, becomes a feminist goal." On the other hand, she says, "if sex is not a reliable predictor of behavior, then justice requires a sex-neutral approach to law."

"Difference feminism" does not sit well with the *Nation*'s (Dec. 28, 1992) Katha Pollitt. "Women embrace Gilligan and Tannen because they offer flattering accounts of traits for which they have historically been castigated," she maintains. "Men like them because, while they urge understanding and respect for 'female' values and behaviors, they also let men off the hook: Men have power, wealth, and control of social resources because women don't really want them." The "pernicious tendencies" of a feminism that accepts sex differences are illustrated, Pollitt says, by the 1985 Sears Roebuck and Company sex discrimination case, "in which Rosalind Rosenberg, a professor of women's history at Barnard College, testified for Sears that female employees held lower-paying salaried jobs while men worked selling big-ticket items on commission because women preferred low-risk, noncompetitive positions that did not interfere with family responsibilities. Sears won its case." Irrelevant, in Pollitt's eyes, evidently, was the possible truth of Rosenberg's testimony.

A form of difference feminism predominates among academic feminists. Karen Lehrman, now literary editor of the *Wilson Quarterly*, toured the world of women's studies in academe last spring, visiting the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Iowa, Smith College, and Dartmouth College. She reports in *Mother Jones* (Sept.–Oct. 1993) that for the most part the professors were serving up an academically thin and heavily politicized gruel. "Most women's studies professors seem to adhere to the following principles in formulating classes: women were and are oppressed; oppression is endemic to our patriarchal social system; men, capitalism, and Western values are responsible for women's problems." That feminism itself, as Lehrman points out, is "a product of Western culture based on moral reasoning and the premise that some things are objectively wrong," is seldom noted. Nor, Lehrman found, is much classroom attention given to women with accomplishments in the public realm; instead, students pore over the writings of women who are cast as victims of the "patriarchy." Instead of elevating women who succeeded by male, capitalist standards to heroic status, some professors said, society needs to value women's distinctive roles and forms of expression.

That focus seems quite correct to Susan Faludi, author of *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (1991). Responding to Lehrman in *Mother Jones* (Nov.–Dec. 1993), Faludi writes: "The capacity to analyze the world in political terms is not a disease; it's a healthy and fundamental prerequisite for moral engagement in the world. . . . Feminism in the academy is about more than women getting the right to absorb the male-defined curriculum; it's about challenging the foundations of that curriculum."

For some feminists, radical change is at the very heart of the feminist movement. "To me," says bell hooks, a professor of women's studies at Oberlin College, in a roundtable discussion on the movement's direction in *Ms.* (Sept.–Oct. 1993), "the essence of feminism is opposition to patriarchy and to sexist oppres-

sion. A lot of women who go for the notion of equal rights cannot go for the notion of opposing patriarchy, because that means a fundamental opposition to the culture as a whole."

Disagreements among feminists remain deep. "Vying for power . . . ," writes Wendy Kaminer, "are poststructural feminists (dominant in academia in recent years), political feminists (office-holders and lobbyists), different-voice feminists, separatist feminists (a small minority), pacifist feminists, lesbian feminists, careerist feminists, liberal feminists (who tend also to be political feminists), anti-porn feminists, ecofeminists, and womanists." Not to mention New Age feminists and goddess worshipers.

That the feminist movement has not achieved the ideal of equality is no surprise to Kaminer. "We haven't even defined it," she notes. "Nearly 30 years after the onset of the modern feminist movement, we still have no consensus on what nature dictates to men and women and demands of law."

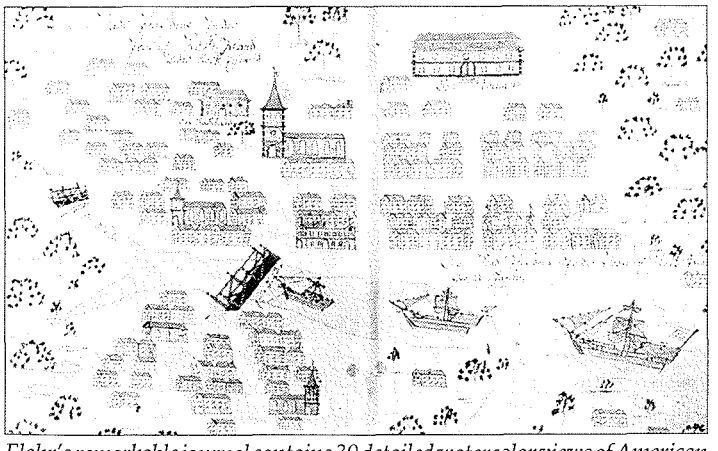
Colonial America: A View from Below

"A German Soldier in America, 1780–1783: The Journal of Georg Daniel Flohr" by Robert A. Selig, in *The William and Mary Quarterly* (July 1993), Box 8781, Williamsburg, Va. 23187–8781.

Many visiting foreigners recorded their impressions of 18th-century America, but few, if any, had quite the qualifications of Georg Daniel Flohr. "Relatively unburdened by book learning or preconceived ideas, he had fewer prejudices" than many well-born observers of American life, writes Selig, a visiting professor at Hope College, in Holland, Michigan.

Born in 1756 in southwestern Germany, the son of a butcher and small farmer, Flohr volunteered when he was nearly 20 for the Regiment Royal-Deux-Ponts, which the duke of Pfalz-Zweibrücken leased to the French crown. The regiment was part of the French force that King Louis XVI sent to America to aid the revolutionary cause. Unlike some of his fellow soldiers, Flohr went "joyfully" to the New World, arriving in Newport, Rhode Island, in July 1780 and serving until the Battle of Yorktown (1781) ended the war.

Like other visitors of higher birth, Flohr was impressed by the religious tolerance, prosperity, and egalitarian outlook that he found in America. The people, he wrote, "talk to everyone, whether he be rich or poor." While some of his officers complained of the "coldness" of the Rhode Island colonists, Flohr said that he "got along very well with them." The soldiers encamped in Newport all tried to learn some English, mainly to be able to converse with the "beautiful American maidens" who lived nearby. The freedom the girls enjoyed surprised him. "Once they are 16 years old, their father and mother must not forbid them anything anymore . . . and if they have a lover he can freely go with them."



Flohr's remarkable journal contains 30 detailed watercolor views of American and Caribbean towns, including this one of Providence, Rhode Island.

But the slavery that Flohr found in New England and the South shocked him. On wealthy plantations in the North, the slaves "are bought and sold . . .