

Family Policies in Post-Communist Nations: Reply

January 27, 2011

Letter from: Betty Reid Mandell

In response to Saxonberg:

THERE IS SUCH WIDESPREAD IGNORANCE about communism and socialism that I think it is important to call those countries Stalinist rather than Communist or state socialist.

Thank you for calling attention to my error about Sweden in the article on caregiving. You are right that most Swedish fathers use some of their allotted family leave. I would have been more accurate if I had said, "Relatively few Swedish fathers use *all* of their allotted family leave." I took my information from a 2008 Swedish article entitled, "Swedish dads steer clear of maternity leave." [1] That article said, "Fathers take on average only 20 percent of the 16 months of paid parental leave offered in Sweden to either mums or dads, according to *Statistics Sweden*. . . . In most cases it is mothers who invoke their legal right and stay home with the kids."

A 2010 *New York Times* article [2] said, "Eight in 10 fathers now take a third of the total 13 months of leave—and 9 percent of fathers take 40 percent of the total or more— up from 4 percent a decade ago." The article said, "Swedish mothers still take more time off with children—almost four times as much."

Sweden is in the vanguard of countries that allot some family leave time for fathers, but even that vanguard has a long way to go before it reaches full equality.

Regarding my statement that I don't fully trust *any* journal that doesn't publish letters to the editor, you say that I must not trust any academic journals. You are not aware of any academic journals that publish letters to the editor. I stick by my statement that I don't fully trust *any* journal that doesn't publish letters to the editor. Academics like to hear the sound of their own voices, and are just as happy if they don't face dissent. *New Politics* welcomes dissent, and encourages articles that present differing opinions on the same topic.

Notes

1. See here.
2. Katrin Gennhold, "In Sweden, men can have it all," *New York Times*, June 9, 2010.