

**Institute of Ideas**

in association with **relate**

presents

# PRIVATE LIVES, PUBLIC POLICY

**Marriage, relationships and  
commitment in Singleton Society**

**The London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre,  
356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA  
(Holloway Road tube)**

**Saturday 20 July 2002**

Supported by: **Hodder & Stoughton**



**GENDERQUAKE**  
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At this one day conference, contributors to the **Conversation In Print** title **Maybe I Do**, the **Debating Matters** title **Teenage Sex: What Should Schools Teach Children?** and other leading commentators and social policy experts, discuss:

- the significance of the state of contemporary relationships
- proposals for halting the decline of marriage
- increasing public policy intervention into our private lives

9.30 -10.15am registration

10.15 - 11.15am

## ARE WE LESS COMMITTED?

– the rise of singleton society and cultural cooling

In **Maybe I Do**, **Jennie Bristow**, commissioning editor of *spiked* ([www.spiked-online.com](http://www.spiked-online.com)), argues that: 'The decline in marriage... indicates a broader ambivalence about intimate relationships, contemporary attitudes to long-term commitment, and what we expect from each other and ourselves'.

After a short introductory lecture by **Jennie Bristow**, respondents **Helen Wilkinson** of Genderquake and **Relate's** Chief Executive **Angela Sibson** will assess whether traditional marriage has simply given way to novel forms of partnership, or whether the reluctance to commit indicates a deeper malaise.

Chaired by **Claire Fox**, Director, Institute of Ideas

11.30 - 12.45pm

## THE DECLINE OF MARRIAGE

– what's at stake for whom?

Marriage as an institution has been in decline for decades; even unmarried cohabitation now seems to be on the wane. Should we be concerned? Is 'singleton society' simply a result of greater freedom, the fruit of women's liberation? Are we now free to choose how to conduct our private lives, free from the pressure to conform? Does this freedom come at the price of social fragmentation, individuation and declining social capital? And – what about the children...?

**Barb Jungr**, chansonnier, CDs include 'Every Grain of Sand'

**Mary Kenny**, writer and journalist, author of 'Goodbye to Catholic Ireland'

**Dr Piers Benn**, lecturer in ethics, Imperial College, London

**Penny Mansfield**, Director, One Plus One

Chaired by **Claire Fox**, Director, Institute of Ideas

1.45 - 2pm

## HOW PRIVATE ARE OUR PRIVATE LIVES?

Sociologist **Ellie Lee**, series editor of *Debating Matters*, opens the afternoon debates with a short lecture asking whether private relationships should be the subject of public policy.

2pm - 3.15pm

## THREE IN A BED

– the inexorable rise in third party intervention into our private lives

It seems everyone, from TV life coaches and confessional TV hosts to government agencies such as the Lord Chancellor's department, wants to advise and counsel us on our relationships. But do we really need – or want – so much help? What drives public bodies to delve into our intimate lives? Is relationship advice a help or a hindrance?

**Professor Jane Lewis**, Barnett Professor of Social Policy, University of Oxford

**Dolan Cummings**, Institute of Ideas

**Ed Straw**, co-founder National Family and Parenting Institute, board member, Relate

**Ellie Lee**, lecturer in sociology, University of Southampton

Chaired by **Jan Macvarish**, researcher in contemporary relationships, University of Kent

3.45 - 5pm

## WHAT SHOULD WE TELL THE CHILDREN?

### – teaching sex and relationships

Under New Labour, sex education is a big priority. 'Pro-family' groups contend that young people are not given a clear message about right and wrong. School inspectors OFSTED urge less concentration on sex and more on relationships. Others argue there is still too little sex education. And some worry that all too often sex education stigmatises sex. So what should schools teach children about sex and relationships?

**Peter Tatchell**, human rights activist

**Stuart Waiton**, community worker, director Generation: Youth Issues

**Simon Forrest**, Director, Sex Education Forum

**Terry Marsh**, producer of an award winning BBC sex education video for primary schools

Chaired by **Tiffany Jenkins**, Institute of Ideas

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5 - 5.30

## FINAL REMARKS

**Jan Macvarish**, researcher in contemporary relationships at the University of Kent and **Helen Wilkinson**, author of forthcoming report 'Smart Marriage' (Genderquake), assess the themes of the day.

Chaired by **Tiffany Jenkins**, Institute of Ideas

**Tickets: £20 / £15**

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