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Rand Paul Knows Nothing of Milton Friedman's Work *Matthew O'Brien*

# Men Caring for Babies! The Horror! Visions from the Early 20th Century

Many of the things the anti-suffrage movement worried would come to pass if women could vote have, in fact, come to pass.

GARANKE FRANKE-RUTA | AUG 8 2013, 6:08 PM ET

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Riffling through [old suffragette postcards](#) earlier this week, I was struck by the images of men used by opponents of the movement. They showed how the contested social territory of the aughts and teens of the young 20th century remains contested ground even 100 years or more later. Giving women the vote was fraught with social peril, these images suggest, for women's formal emancipation might upend gender relationships so much that it would lead to men also taking on womanly tasks, such as caring for babies or doing the laundry. The horror!

The "Suffragette Madonna" was a popular though gentle image among those who questioned the movement for women's voting rights in America, according to Kenneth Florey, who maintains the [Woman Suffrage Memorabilia](#) site.

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**WRITERS**



One of 12 cards issued by the firm Dunston-Weiler, this 1909 version of the Suffrage Madonna was part of a series that highlighted fears that "somehow giving votes to women would mean that male and female gender roles would be completely overturned," Florey told *The Atlantic*. "If women got the vote, women would be going out in business and men would be forced to take care of the households" -- part of a "general fear working on male insecurity."

"Most of these images are caricatures about how men will be feminized," observed Margaret Finnegan,

author of *Selling Suffrage: Consumer Culture and Votes for Women*.

"A lot of these images played on this tensions that men and women were feeling in the age of the new role," she said.

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Those tensions are more obvious later in the series, in an image of a man washing laundry while caring for a baby and a cat. "I want to vote but my wife won't let me," the tagline reads -- as if power were a total zero-sum game and women voting and working meant men would experience a wholesale role reversal.

"I think what you're seeing again in an image like that is a complete inversion of gender roles," said Finnegan. "It's sort of suggesting that women aren't doing the traditional roles that they should be, that they are being selfish actually...now he can't even do the things he is expected to do because of her selfishness. I read this as him being really emasculated.... Surely if they can vote and they can be active in politics then men are going to be taking care of babies!"

Another image, from Florey's collection of British anti-suffrage materials, shows how exciting a prospect that was to some.



California's Silver Fire

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**GARANACE FRANKE-RUTA** is a senior editor covering national politics at *The Atlantic*. MORE

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**MatterOverMind** • a day ago

Very interesting how time changes and unreasonably fear of "change" persist. I think that one can also see parallel images and messages during the civil rights era about how wrong it was to integrate and grant black people the right to vote. Fast forward to today, and you'll see the same irrational fears by some, about SSM.

It will be interesting to see the reaction of future generations to proclamations by people like Rick Santorum who claimed that SSM will lead to humans marrying animals or their pets. My hunch is that those future generations will be flabbergasted at how many of us in 2013 couldn't quite get it because for them, SSM will be a norm.


24 ^ | 1 ▾ Reply Share ›



**anewleaf** • 21 hours ago

I'm often struck by how dire simple justice seems to people. It just doesn't grip me. Even when they threaten some prime bit of privilege that I have enjoyed, I can still get basic principles of equality and social justice. The histrionics seem like the tantrum of a spoiled child.


13 ^ | ▾ Reply Share ›



**Betty** • 20 hours ago

That top postcard seems to be depicting a woman dressed up as a man with a fake mustache.


^ | ▾ Reply Share ›



**Persia** → Betty • 7 hours ago

I think that's part of the point - men become 'effeminate' if women get power. (Gee, why does that sound familiar?)

3 ^ | ▾ Reply Share ›



**ToddlerThomist** • 17 hours ago

The reality is that women are treated differently by society for exactly the same reason that children and the mentally handicapped are treated differently. It's just easier this way for everyone.

You don't argue with a four-year old about why he shouldn't eat candy for dinner. You don't punch a mentally handicapped guy even if he punches you first. And you don't argue when a woman tells you she's only making 80 cents to your dollar. It's the path of least resistance. You save your energy for more important battles.



**DrNobelDynamite** → ToddlerThomist • 8 hours ago

The women in your life are certainly lucky to have you around, aren't they?

3 ^ | v Reply Share >



**ToddlerThomist** → DrNobelDynamite • 7 hours ago

Indeed, they always say it exactly that way: "I'm sorry honey, I just didn't realize how lucky I am to have you around", then they put the knife down.

1 ^ | v Reply Share >



**DrNobelDynamite** → ToddlerThomist • 7 hours ago

"...then they put the knife down"

Sounds like they make a lot of bad decisions.

^ | v Reply Share >



**ToddlerThomist** → DrNobelDynamite • 7 hours ago

You mean leaving the strip club?

^ | v Reply Share >



**Erik Vanderhoff** → ToddlerThomist • 7 hours ago

OK, now THAT was funny.

^ | v Reply Share >



**Persia** → ToddlerThomist • 7 hours ago

Scott Adams, how did I forget for five seconds what an idiot you are? Oh, that's right, because I don't think about you at all.

^ | v Reply Share >



**ToddlerThomist** → Persia • 7 hours ago

Man... I guess you are the old man in the neighborhood who keeps the balls kids throw at your porch, aren't you? I'm just having fun with the feminists, don't ruin that.

^ | 1 v Reply Share >



**Persia** → ToddlerThomist • 5 hours ago

That's exactly what I am, now get off my lawn!

2 ^ | v Reply Share >



**Erik Vanderhoff** • 8 hours ago

Now get i the kitchen and make me a pie!

::ducks::

^ | v Reply Share >

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