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Fair is Fair? Where the Logic of Civil Unions or Same-Sex Marriage Must Lead

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Carol Sarler wants to enter into a civil union with her adult daughter. Nothing incestuous or lesbian, mind you. She just wants the tax savings and other benefits that come with the civil unions. Writing in today's edition of *The Times* [London], Sarler argues:

If I were gay, I could pop into a lesbian dive, pick up a cute little chickie, install her in my home and then, giddy with optimism and desire, trot her off to the register office a month later and make her my civil partner. Romance aside, by doing so I would be protecting the person I love most from the potential for financial disarray that, quite sensibly, is a frequently given reason for wanting to do it at all.

We would enjoy the mutual pension rights and the tax breaks of a married couple, including the chance to use each others' capital gains tax allowances. Were I to be run over by a bus, if we lived in a council flat the lucky girl would be allowed, as are wives, to stay in it. If we lived in my privately owned home, she'd also be sitting pretty: totally freed from inheritance tax, she could own every brick of my estate.

As it happens, I do live with a cute little chickie and have done for 32 years. She is the person I love most, there is no possibility of that ever changing, yet I cannot protect her at all. Come the killer bus, the rise in house values means that there is no way that she could possibly afford to pay the taxes on my estate; she would be flung out of the only home she has ever known, paying the price for being not my squeeze but my daughter.

More: A commitment to a civil partnership is a commitment to a person. The "sickness and in health" of conventional marriage is not so much a sexual as a moral tie; where there is a chosen one above all others, a mutually caring unit is established and stability is promoted above caprice. Loneliness is held at bay, isolation is thwarted and devotion is rewarded, some sad day, by the simple security of a roof over a deserving head, be it gay, straight or otherwise.

Like it or not, this is where the logic of civil partnerships and same-sex marriage inevitably leads. If marriage rights are divorced from heterosexuality and procreation, a refusal to accept virtually any formalized relationship amounts to just another form of discrimination.

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