

1999

THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM AND WOMEN TODAY

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Recommended Citation

Shlaes, Amity (1999) "THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM AND WOMEN TODAY," *NYLS Journal of Human Rights*: Vol. 16 : Iss. 1 , Article 17.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/journal_of_human_rights/vol16/iss1/17

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SYMPOSIUM 1999
Women, Equity and Federal Tax Policy: Open
Questions

Forum on Women and Social Security:
What Would Equity Look Like?

Panel IV:
The Social Security System and Women Today

Amity Shlaes

MS. SHLAES:^{*} Good afternoon. We are now moving to address what is the timeliest topic of the day. My colleagues in the media have been very busy telling us that now, following the President's trial, we have a very divided and divisive session of Congress to look forward to.¹ However, it seems the one thing both sides of the aisle do agree on is the urgent need to reform the old Social Security arrangement. There is even talk about it happening in this session of Congress which is, indeed, very energetic.

The first step of good reform is to ask what is it, exactly, that we are reforming? While most Americans are aware, at least in some global sense, of the nature of the current Social Security arrangement. They are not all clear on the enormous effects the various obscure benefit formulæ can have and have had on our lives, particularly women's lives. I have thought a lot about this, both this morning and in the past weeks as I watched Congress mull two parallel topics: Income Tax Reform and Social Security Reform. The first thing you have to do is know where you are starting. On that note I can say I am

^{*} Amity Shlaes is the author of *THE GREEDY HAND: HOW TAXES DRIVE AMERICANS CRAZY AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT*. Ms. Shlaes is also on the Editorial Board of the Wall Street Journal where she works on variety of issues involving tax, economy and Social Security.

¹ See David S. Broder & Dan Batz, *A Year of Scandal with No Winners; Public Trust in Institutions has Suffered, but Long Term Damage Remains in Doubt*, WASH. POST, Feb. 11, 1999, at A1.