

Republican Perspective

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by John Littig

The Man-Tax

Alex O'Brien has opened a vegan restaurant named Handsome Her in Melbourne, Australia. Here are "House Rules" she has posted: *Rule #1: Women have priority seating. Rule #2: Men will be charged an 18% premium to reflect the gender pay gap....which is donated to a women's service. Rule #3: Respect goes both ways.*

O'Brien's "man-tax" has caused a media kerfuffle in Australia and in Old Blighty. A headline on the website thesun.co.uk explained her intent: "Feminist vegan hopes the move will provoke people into discussing unfair treatment of women."

Of course the man-tax is not really a tax, because it isn't levied by any government. It's really just a surcharge she applies to those of the male persuasion in order to make her point. "I do want people to think about it, because we've had this (pay discrepancy) for decades and decades and we're bringing it to the forefront of people's minds. I like that it is making men stop and question their privilege a little bit."

O'Brien says the man-tax is only applied for one week per month, and it is unclear whether she will enforce it if someone objects. There are other unanswered questions. What if a man and woman come in together? Does the man-tax apply only to what he orders? What if the woman is picking up the check? Is the man-tax waived? What if the man is paying the entire check? How much of it is subject to the man-tax? As you can see, the complications rival the Internal Revenue Code. O'Brien will need a tax advisor!

A sign posted in Handsome Her advises that the man-tax O'Brien collects is donated to Elizabeth Morgan House---a charity which supports Aboriginal women and children. If Australian law provides for a tax deduction for charitable donations it would seem that the customers paying the man-tax should be entitled to take that deduction, since O'Brien is functioning as a conduit rather than as a philanthropist.

O'Brien did indeed provoke people, but not into "discussing unfair treatment of women." She says that customer response is all favorable. "There has been nothing but positivity from everyone, males and females." But the comments appended to the article on thesun.co.uk show just the opposite. They are overwhelmingly negative

toward O'Brien and her man-tax, and many predict Handsome Her's early demise--- more on that in a moment.

Perhaps there's a way of evading the man-tax. It's likely that a metrosexual chap sporting a man bun might be viewed as sufficiently sympathetic to feminism or even sufficiently gender-ambiguous that O'Brien might forgive the man-tax.

Which of course brings us to the gender dysphoric customer. Assuming a male customer who claims to be transitioning to female, how will O'Brien rule on that one? Will she celebrate her new sister and forgive the man-tax? Or will she suspect a likely ruse? Dangerous ground there.

Handsome Her will not fail---at least not because of the man-tax. O'Brien is catering (forgive the pun) to a feminista clientele, and they are likely to be delighted with her politics and become loyal customers. The publicity she has gained from her goofy man-tax will spur her business.

The vegan café would not have attracted many male customers anyway. But if she were serving up real food like cheese steak sandwiches, T-bone steaks, and Tooheys beer, her man-tax would have killed her business.