

Point of View

To Be Equal

DAY CARE NEEDS UNMET

By John E. Jacob

One of the big issues neither presidential candidate is talking about is the unmet need for expanded day care services.

Editorial

Have you ever wondered why politicians always wait until just before an election to make themselves visible among their constituents? Where are most of them during the years between elections? Are they so busy that it is virtually impossible to make an appointment with them to talk over problems of citizens? We do not think so. We think that most of our elected officials lapse into a position of lethargy and couldn't care less about their constituents until it is time to court them for votes again.

The negligence of some of our politicians to communicate regularly with their constituents during off-years seems appalling. This refers to both White and Black politicians alike. Still the voters will return many of the politicians to their posts year after year without having had a chance to interact with them until just before the next election.

We are aware that politicians are human beings, and should and must spend some time with their families, and in many cases, such as with legislators, must go back to their places of employment to make a living. However, before running for an elective office one should inform his/her family that, as an elected official, he/she will have an obligation to his/her constituents. Without an understanding family, the politician's life can be one of utter misery.

We hope that our Black elected officials will take note and not forget the people who put them into office.

Much more respect and appreciation can be gained by our elected officials if they would remain as visible during the off-election years as they usually are during the election years.

We, as Blacks, have plenty of problems, and we would appreciate having access to our officials on a regular basis throughout their terms of office.

The mothers of over half of all children aged six and under work outside the home, and too many of their nearly ten million youngsters are not adequately cared for because of the dearth of quality day care programs.

While affluent parents can afford day care and nursery school facilities, low-income families cannot.

The limited number of programs run by churches and community social welfare institutions is far below the level needed to satisfy the demand, and deep cuts in federal subsidies for such programs have severely worsened the situation.

In 1981, Congress cut \$700 million out of a key federal social service program and dropped requirements that earmarked funds for day care services. Since then, state and federal funds for child care and low-income families have been cut by 14 percent.

The United States is now the only major industrial nation without a nationally subsidized child care system, and it

is even cutting back on the limited available programs in the face of increasing needs.

The spotlight thrown on day care by child molestation scandals in some centers has led to a debate about licensing child care providers and regulating day care centers.



John Jacob

But the debate should not be limited to preventing isolated cases of child abuse. It should be broadened to include the role of subsidized child care services as an integral part of national policies designed to strengthen families and nurture children.

Day care should be seen as a means of maximizing children's development and potential.

There is plenty of evi-

dence, especially from studies of the Head Start program, that early childhood education makes a real positive impact on children.

One such study reported on 123 poor black children in Michigan. It followed them for 22 years, and proves the benefits to society from quality preschool programs. The study compares children who were in preschool programs

age pregnancies and were much less likely to be on welfare than those who were not in the preschool program.

The demonstrated positive effects of Head Start have helped it survive the heavy budget cuts felt by other social service programs, but even so, Head Start serves less than one out of five eligible children.

A comprehensive nationwide child care

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with others from the same background who were not.

Two-thirds of the children in the program graduated from high school compared with less than half of the others. Three out of five were employed, compared with only a third of the others. Two out of five enrolled in college or a postsecondary school compared with only one out of five in the control group.

The people who had been in the preschool program as children also had far fewer arrests, half as many teen-

program will not happen all at once. It will probably evolve from a number of developments, including the necessary expansion of Head Start and similar programs.

But as the growing need for quality child care programs impacts on public policies, it is essential that parental and community involvement be an integral part of institutionalized child care programs. Without that necessary element, such programs will just amount to warehousing kids.

TOWARD EMPOWERMENT Liberalism and Black Inequity

Our latent and occasionally verbalized contempt for Black people is but an unconscious manifestation of our contempt for life as we experience it in general. Society tends to seek order, while individual life seeks fulfillment. When the two purposes do not agree, difficulties inevitably follow. So it has been in America. New groups of people have poured in, making constant adjustment a basic condition with

which we have had to deal. Had our vision of a "melting-pot" been different from that of a type of "puree-production," and more in the direction of "the creation of a tasty and variegated stew," we would not be faced today with the inevitable frustration that comes from any attempt to make all life alike.

The White people who

have come to America are not all alike. Many have kept some semblance of their basic ethnic character and integrity and have continued to greatly enrich our common life. But the uncritically examined predisposition toward conformity is a sad sign; for life at its best involves the continuing

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