

FORUM

Protection: Children Need It

Last year, the Children's Defense Fund did focus group research of black teens and parents to learn how they viewed teen sexuality and pregnancy. One striking result was that the teens didn't relate to the terms "family planning" or "contraception." Rather, they used the term "protection" to refer to birth control.

I was struck by the appropriateness — and the irony — of the term, in a time when teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases are growing epidemics. The danger is that, even when well-educated about the risks of pregnancy and disease and how to prevent them, many teens consciously choose to put themselves at risk.

And, in a time when crime and terrorism are turning our neighborhoods and schools into war zones, the term "protection" takes on even more meaning.

Besides the bullets that claim more young lives every day, our children face the dangers of preventable (and sometimes deadly) disease, abuse and neglect at home, violence in and outside of school, and the epi-

dem of hopelessness that underscores it all. that will not only equip them to better handle themselves, but hopefully, begin to decrease the violence that overshadows their lives and holds their futures in hock.

We can campaign, vote for and hold accountable our political representatives at the city, state and national levels. We can work with our churches to provide not only spiritual sustenance, but after-school and weekend activities that offer a haven from danger.

We can come together with others in the community and take steps, as others have, to look crime and drug-dealing and gang violence in the face and say: "NO MORE!"

We can lead our social and professional organizations to the forefront by putting the



GUEST COLUMNIST

By MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

needs of our children at the top of their agendas and at their bottom line. We can support the expansion of the Head Start program so that every eligible child can be prepared to succeed

"We can lead our social and professional organizations to the forefront by putting the needs of our children at the top of their agendas and at their bottom line."

How can we protect them? When they're very young, we can vaccinate them against polio, measles, mumps and other diseases. We can locate and fix environmental hazards like lead paint, polluted water, substandard housing and needle-littered yards and streets.

When they get older, we can caution them against the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse and encourage them to delay sexual activity until they are mature enough to handle the responsibilities of parenthood and possible consequences.

At any age, we can begin to demonstrate — and to teach — creative conflict resolution skills

in school and in life.

Protection. Our children need it. They deserve it. And, they're counting on us to provide it. It's a word they shouldn't need to understand so well.

The Black Community Crusade for Children is dedicated to solving these and other problems. Give us a call at 1-800-ASK-BCCC to find out how you can get involved.

(Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund, a national voice for children, and a leader of the Black Community Crusade for Children.)

Economics Through Self-Help

Let us build together a friendship strong and sturdy, beginning with a collective trust that's made to last for many years.
(Author Unknown)

There are two universal factors or truths about economics. First, production follows cheap labor. Second, capital follows high interest rates. Ask yourself the following questions: Is there an incentive to invest in America, if interest rates are down here and higher, elsewhere? Is business motivated to leave this country? Is labor, the last factor in this equation, willing to change?

Our unions should "raise" the educational and technical level of the masses, instead of striking, and supporting, strikes to hold onto "the way we were." Civil rights groups and unions should lead the charge into highly skilled and technical fields of work. It is counter-productive to resist improvements. Failure to do this means that

would grow up to be a direct threat to their children's employment opportunities.

Controlling education maintains the social status of the "upper-middle class" and the "world economic elites." Could this explain the annual crisis, solved by cuts and take-aways in public education?

We must teach our best and brightest, on Saturdays and Sundays, a sound, basic education in reading, math, writing and thinking. The churches in our communities should open their doors and begin this task "yesterday." We have plenty of qualified, talented, and retiring teaching volunteers. They would be willing to help complement public education and children who are willing to try.

The preceding comments on self-empowerment over education and economics were written by Calvin Pearce who is executive director of The Learning Logic Foundation,

BUSINESS EXCHANGE

By WILLIAM REED



the first intergenerational think-tank in Illinois.

"We must teach our best and brightest, on Saturdays and Sundays, a sound, basic education in reading, math, writing and thinking."

our people must compete with unskilled labor, all over the global community. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is better understood with these factors clarified.

As a community, we are responsible for the education of our children. Not the "they" we always blame. "They" are the "world economic elites." "They" always get more than their share of the wealth and services around the world. "They" have no countries or boundaries. Their support base is the "upper-middle class." The "upper-middle class" has a creed they live and die by: Make sure their children do better than they did.

This "upper-middle class" under the leadership of the "world economic elites," do not want public education to educate more than 50 percent of the masses. If the masses are educated any more than this, you can no longer tell them what to think. If the "elite" and "upper-middle class" allow great numbers of "unlearned masses" an opportunity to the same educational conditioning, those "unlearned"

The think-tank's purpose is to promote educational discussion and experimental programs between senior citizens and school-age youth. The mission of the Foundation is to decrease illiteracy, homelessness, drug addiction and domestic and gang violence.

Pearce's group is trying to organize objectives around the social problems of the community. A community needs to hear its own voice. Our communities need voices publicizing mutual feelings, problems and hardships. But, the majority of a community's time can be spent reacting to the negative effects of problems highlighted by the media. The actual quality of life in a community depends on how well it maintains the standards, morals and values of its people.

(Want to do more toward building together with people where you live? Contact the Learning Logic Foundation, P.O. Box 805233, Chicago, Ill. 60680-4133. Or call (312) 233-4442.)

Doonesbury

BY G.B. TRUDEAU

A Government Above the Law

For all of those who break the law and try to get something for nothing, President Bill Clinton put on a textbook seminar in breaking the law legally.

Beyond a shadow of a doubt, he showed us just how corrupt our system of government has become as he paid for votes for NAFTA with tax-collected money.

The last estimate was \$1.7 billion — or an average of \$7.5 million for each of the 218 House votes needed to win. Compare that to the \$500,000 the Republicans allegedly paid to keep the black vote down in New Jersey and you'll get "peanuts," says Ross Perot.

Thing like giving \$1.4 billion to build two C-17 cargo planes to win the vote of Rep. Eddie Johnson, a Democrat from Texas, bothers Perot so much that he wants a Justice Department investigation of corruption. Fat chance that Clinton's justice will seek justice for the taxpayers.

And we can expect the Democrats and all politicians to duck the question that wonders why if it's wrong for the Republicans to buy an election in New Jersey, it is not wrong for Clinton to use public funds to buy votes?

This taxpayer-financed pork barrel should embarrass politicians, but it doesn't. Rep. Floyd Flake, a minister, calls his \$580 million payoff a "bridge to economic development."

In addition to playing Russian roulette with the jobs of Americans, Clinton has demonstrated once again that he has no principles.

Buying the NAFTA vote must be added to Clinton's lying about raising taxes; his phony promise to cut the deficit by \$500 billion when in effect, he is raising it to \$300 billion over five years; and his promise to save \$5.6 billion "reinventing



TONY BROWN

Syndicated Columnist

government" when it really adds up to only \$305 million.

These is not enough space to mention all of his broken "promises." But his image as the leader of a country founded on ethical principals is a disaster in progress.

(Tony Brown's Journal TV series can be seen on your local public television station PBS.)