

## OTHER VOICES

### Excerpts

*Symbols and superstitions of Halloween:*

\* Ghosts and hobgoblins roam the earth, but since they are invisible, children dressed as adults perform their mischievous pranks for them.

\* Black cats are Satan in disguise and can be seen cavorting with witches.

\* Pumpkins, a symbol of harvest time, are cut to resemble faces, and a candle lighted inside the pumpkin pays tribute to the sun at harvest.

\* The disagreeable custom of chalking a person's back comes from merry old England, where they drew white circles on backs to indicate that summer was over and the rule of the sun was coming to an end for another year.

\* Fortune-telling is very popular on this night and started when witches got together to feast during druid times and told each other's futures.

*From the article "Superstition, myth or fact?" in City-County Magazine's Oct. 1991 issue.*

*On the rise of country music:*

The average country music fan is:

\* A 25-year-old computer programmer for an insurance company. She makes \$33,000 a year, drives a brand-new Honda Accord, adores Clint Black and lives in a nice apartment.

\* Nope, make that a 19-year-old junior-college-student who buys three CDs a month, likes to go dancing at the clubs on Friday nights and to the lake on Saturdays. He's into the Kentucky HeadHunters, ZZ Top and hot trucks.

\* Or, he's an active, mid-60ish president of an affluent Western democracy, lives in a big white house, has a spaniel named Millie and a summer home in Maine.

In short, just about anybody!

*From the article "The Country Shows Signs of Going Country" in the Greensboro News & Record.*

### Quotables

"Democracy is being allowed to vote for the candidate you dislike least."

Robert Byrne

MAEIDY Chicago Tribune



## Up to the grown-ups City to vote on Children's Amendment

Kids don't vote. We have heard this cry so often that it's hard to know any longer if it's a lament or an excuse for the neglect of the youngest and poorest Americans.

Why don't children's concerns reach the top of the government agenda? Kids don't vote.

Why doesn't child care, child abuse, child health, child housing, get a priority bid for our tax dollars? Kids don't vote.

Why doesn't the White House, the State House, City Hall pay more attention to their needs? Kids don't vote.

There is something sad about this generic, all-purpose answer and something cynical as well. It's as if the every-man-for-himself, me-first wrestling for tax money were a given, as if there were no longer any belief in the common wealth. And as if politicians were helpless in the face of the "reality" that -after all- Kids don't vote.

But this fall, as national concern grows about the deteriorating condition of our young, the people of San Francisco have become part of an experiment. On Nov. 5, this city with a smaller percentage of children than any other of its size will vote on a Children's Amendment. Proposition J, as it is formally listed on the ballot, would change the city charter to mandate the use of a small portion of property tax money specifically for children.

A group of advocates, frustrated and despairing, have decided to bet everything on the hope that the public is miles ahead of the politicians. As Margaret Brodtkin, the ebullient head of Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth which authored this amendment, describes: "Kids have been just so shortchanged. Even the most liberal, progressive politicians have been wonderful on the rhetoric and wanting to do the right thing

ELLEN GOODMAN

*The Boston Globe*



But when push came to shove and the resources were limited, they didn't want to waste political chits on a constituency that had no clout."

In San Francisco, as in every big city, the budget brokers have been juggling all the mounting woes of urban life. But as reports of child abuse in the city increased 400 percent, with 5,000 children listed among the homeless, with the day care waiting lists reaching 8,000, the children's share of the budget, according to Coleman Advocates, went down.

So this spring, with 68,000 signatures in a city of 750,000, supporters got children on the ballot. "This is an experiment. We're asking if the people are going to be more farsighted than City Hall," says Brodtkin. Despite one poll that showed 75 percent support, she adds, "I don't sleep at night."

The Children's Amendment doesn't ask for new tax dollars. It asks that for the next 10 years kids get a larger portion. Exactly 1.25 percent of property taxes would go to this purpose the first year and 2.5 percent in each of the next nine years, adding about \$13 million more to child care, prenatal care, job training for teen-agers, health and social services.

This is by no means a perfect idea, as even its advocates agree. The money that goes to children must come from somewhere else and

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## Victims of crime also have rights

Do you know what it is to be a victim of mugging? I do. I was one. It happened nearly 12 years ago, but I doubt that a week has passed when I have not remembered it. I remembered it here in Jacksonville the other day, but in a very different way. I had come to see a good dream coming true.



JAMES KILPATRICK  
*Universal Press*

The nation's first comprehensive Victim Services Center is primarily the good dream of City Councilman Eric Smith. He is an attorney, a former

prosecutor in Duval County. He served for four years as a member of the state's House of Representatives. His professional life is devoted to financial counseling, but the center is his baby.

The idea began to germinate as far back as 1969. As prosecutor and legal advisor to the police, Smith was impressed by an imbalance that has impressed millions of others. Criminals get everything. Their victims get nothing.

This is an oversimplification, of course, but it contains a striking nucleus of truth. Typically the mugger or rapist is not arrested at all. If he is arrested, he may not be tried. If he is tried, he may go free. If he is found guilty, he rarely goes to prison. If he goes to prison, he won't stay there long. Set free on parole, he is eligible for counseling at public expense.

What of the mugger's victim? What about the woman who is raped? Well, what about them? Except for their brief value to the law, it is as if they did not exist. They might identify stolen property or point to a suspect in a lineup. Otherwise victims are ciphers.

This picture struck Smith 20 years ago as dreadfully wrong. At

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