Analysis: studies show day care is a disaster

By Ernie Lambright
EP News Service

While half our society is desperately fighting to maintain God-given and constitutionally protected "parental rights," the other half is discarding parental responsibility, turning to day care centers in their quest for self. These people justify their efforts with terms like "women's issue," "employment rights," and "productivity concerns."

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As researcher Karl Zinsmeister notes, nobody asks, "Is it good for the children?"

Zinsmeister's new book, *The Child-Proof Society: Are Americans Losing Interest in the Next Generation?,* answers that question with a resounding "No!"

Zinsmeister's research and documented findings on day care in America show that the emerging day care generation is "less cooperative, less tolerant, frustrated, insecure, seriously aggressive toward others, depersonalized, socially withdrawn, and academically sub-standard."

Zinsmeister's findings are not based on the findings of the "right wing fundamentalists" which day care activists are quick to dismiss. They are based on research involving the American Medical Association, nationally-known child psychoanalysts, child psychologists and psychiatrists, hospitals, university studies, and many independent researchers.

Medical dangers of day care centers include "rising levels of diarrhea, dysentery, giardiasis, epidemic jaundice, hepatitis A," and

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ear and virus infections. A University of North Carolina study on day care found that "five to eight-year-olds who had spent most of their first years in day care were more likely to hit, kick, threaten and argue than those not in day care, or those who started later." Other studies report the same disturbing trend, with the added finding that this behavior probably results from the child feeling insecure in relation to the mother.

Despite evidence of the harmful effects of institutionalized day care, the nation's media continue to denounce the lack of "state and governmental day care control and licensing," emphasize the potential of abuse in unlicensed day care centers, and call for government-operated child care.

Research is demonstrating that highly structured group day care facilities, whether licensed or unlicensed, provide the least "individual personalized care" and cause the greatest number of "insecure, depersonalized, academically inferior, intolerant, withdrawn and misbehaved children." In contrast, situations in which a neighbor or family member provides personalized care—while still detrimental—are found to be less harmful to the child.

Zinsmeister explains, "The deepest problem with paid child-rearing is that someone is being asked to do for money what very few of us are able to do for any reason other than love." The bottom line of the day care dilemma is selfishness, self-seeking attainment, and a lack of love.

Currently the child-care tax credit funnels about $4 billion to parents who pay others to care for their children. This credit is not available for parents who care for their own children at home.

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Traditional homes where mom raises her children are slowly becoming an endangered species, due in part to this economic disadvantage.

The proposed Act for Better Child Care being considered in Congress will only make matters worse by allowing funds to go only to state-sanctioned centers, bypassing informal child care arrangements with family and friends, and probably bypassing most church centers for "separation of church and state" reasons.

Homes that desire to teach religious and moral values may some day face government intervention. Certainly churches with day care facilities, after submitting to state licensing, will find their ability to teach and practice their Christian faith severely restricted.

The religious freedom aspects of day care are of immense importance to Christians, but the broad issue of day care itself looms still larger. What will day care children be like when they reach adulthood, to lead our nation and become parents themselves? Only time will reveal the length and extent of the consequences today's obsession with day care will bring for future generations.

Ezekiel Hopkins, a 17th century Puritan, soberingly reminds parents, "If it be the usual method of Divine Providence to visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, see then what great reason parents have to beware that they do not lay up stock of plagues and curses for their posterity; nor clog the estate which they leave them, with so many debts to be paid to the justice of God as will certainly undo them."

Solid families will win the war on drugs

By William Murchison
Heritage Features Syndicate

William Bennett is to be our country's "drug czar," but his imperial writ runs only so far. It is bad enough when your popular title makes you sound like a crime overlord, but Bennett will experience much larger problems, running the Office of National Drug Control.

What do we expect, once Czar Bill has duly been enthroned—that with a wave of the scepter, he can make drugs go away and leave us alone? Bill Bennett can do no such thing. We have commissioned a capable and eloquent man, the former secretary of education, a public servant with his head screwed on straight and tight, to battle a problem whose solution is outside his domain. It is not unlike instructing the weatherman to make it stop snowing.

The drug problem is—what? A packet of powdery white stuff? A field of poppies? Ready cash waved by a bejeweled monster in the faces of low-income youngsters who need work?

It is these things, yes; and it is much more. It is broken or demoralized families—such families as have become the hallmark of the late 20th century.

We are targeting drug lords in Central America. This is fine. Bury them under the jail, feed them bread and water for the rest of their miserable lives, and the public will rightly applaud. But expect, nonetheless, that new scum will arise, ready to batten on human misery.

Go ahead likewise and expand drug testing. Make schools, prisons, and workplaces drug free. Measures like these will likewise draw

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warm applause. But there are other places to do drugs besides school, prison, and the workplace.

For anything lasting to be done about drugs, the country is going to have to repair what might quaintly be described as the bourgeois family—Mom, Dad, and the kids, living together in something like amity and mutual respect. This is not "Leave It To Beaver." It is human life, wherever you look in history, at least until recent years.

The family is the foundation of society. Government is only the roof, architecturally speaking. If the foundation will not bear the load, down must come the whole works, never mind how imposingly designed.

The crumbling of the family—the product of divorce, desertion, cohabitation, and emotional detachment—is the central sociological fact of modern times. It is a baneful fact. Nothing but tragedy has come of it.

Defense of the family has come to be identified with the New Right, which is too bad, because the family should not be a political question at all. A socialist is theoretically as able as a Pat Robertson supporter to appreciate that families, not newspapers, teachers, or bureaucrats, are the great civilizing influence.

Allan C. Carlson of the Rockford Institute, in a report prepared for

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the Education Department during the Bennett era, weaves together various studies pointing to "the unraveling of American life, seen in the statistics on drug arrests."

As long ago as 1950, and on through the '60s, Carlson writes, "researchers in sociology and psychology who looked at the family-drug equation moved toward a common conclusion: Family life, properly structured, could and did insulate children from drug experimentation and use; and the more traditional the family, the greater the degree of protection."

One typical study found that "low-risk" families (those whose children were least likely to use drugs) were characterized by regular church attendance, mothers more interested in home life than in careers, high levels of youthful obedience, and strong, protective fathers, actively involved with their children. After a lull in the '70s—when it was unfashionable to speak ill of drugs—researchers took up those themes anew.

"The sum of the research data," Carlson writes, "is unambiguous: Children are insulated from the use of illegal drugs within intact families that are father-led, where mothers give their first priority to home-centered activities, where religion is an active and vital force, and where one finds numerous siblings and meaningful linkages to other relatives. Conversely, children and adolescents will frequently use drugs in a society characterized by divorce, cohabitation, out-of-wedlock births, and men and women giving highest priority to activities and interests outside the home."

What does Czar Bill do about all this? What edicts does he publish? Be faithful? Be loving? Be involved? Would that the task were so easy.

It is a long haul, back from the garbage heap to which late 20th century society has consigned "antiquated, archaic" family values. The most arduous journey is that which blacks—the chief victims of the drug problem—must take. Welfare, which drove or lured black husbands from the home, has found no way to replace them. The

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black family, once comparatively strong and united, has been fragmented.

At the very least we know the enemy, which is Selfishness, Indifference, Materialism. I mean, we know if we look steadily and, seeing, refuse to let Czar Bill do all our fighting. It is not his war alone. We are all in it for the duration.