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BATTLE ACTS

"...no more traditions chains shall bind us..."

Child Care Is A Right!

by Becky, age 5



Special: YAWF Women's National Day Care Survey

*The right of the best
educational preschool care
belongs to all children*

Child Care: Yesterday and Today

by Diana Leech

a former day care worker
New York City YAWF Women

When my youngest turned four last year, I looked around for day care for her. Not only did I want to go back to work, but I also wanted a place where she would be safe, enjoy herself, and learn a thing or two. A public day care had just opened in my neighborhood, so I rushed over to register her. I found out that you had to be on welfare or close to it in order to qualify. If a family earned \$7,000 a year, the fee was \$1,200 a year for one child, with an increase of \$800 being proposed by the state. And so, ironically, my going to work would make my daughter ineligible for day care at a cost which wouldn't have made my working worthwhile.

Women have been faced with the problem of child care outside the home ever since the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century. Although women had worked before that time, for the most part their jobs could be done at home by spinning, weaving, or doing handicrafts, or working in the adjoining fields. But the development of capitalism and the growth of industry changed this. As millions of people were forced off the land, women for the first time were needed to work outside the home in large numbers to provide for themselves and their families.

Families flocked to the towns, where they found work in the spinning mills and wool factories. Children were either left on the streets or the young ones were brought to the factories by their mothers, who hid them in corners while they worked. This arrangement was not good for efficient



production as the women would stop working to nurse their infants, and babies would get caught in the machines. So in England, some small towns set up what they called "knitting schools" where "babes too little to be apprenticed" were put in a room with a woman who watched over them. Here they were taught "such skills as their little hands could master and some moral education lest their idle minds be beset by evil." However, this was not free, so not too many children "benefited from this service."

A similar "service" was set up in the U.S. during the Civil War. Women were needed to work in the clothing factories that were reaping huge profits making uniforms. Mothers had no place to leave their children but on the bundles of rags in the midst of the filthy factories. Once again, this affected production and profits, so some bosses set up a small room for the children who were guarded from the most obvious dangers.

Of course, the wealthy women who wanted leisure time free from the routine chores of child rearing never had the problem of day care. They merely hired servants or nannies or forced slaves to care for their children. The servants' and slaves' children were, of course, left alone while their mothers cared for the children of the rich.

Through the early decades of the twentieth century, what child care there was for poor and working families was a last-ditch effort to keep destitute children from starving on the street. It was poorly financed, often providing substandard health care, and lacked any kind of governmental attention. It was usually sponsored by a church, settlement house, or occasionally, voluntary social agencies. Women like Jane Addams, Julia Lathrop, Lillian Wald, Florence Kelley, and Grace

Abbott worked, often single-handedly, to alleviate some of the misery and provide minimal legal protection for children's rights.

In 1898, a National Federation of Day Nurseries was formed which attempted to encourage day care as well as provide better health and educational care and encourage trained personnel. But it was not until the 1930's that the social work profession began to see day care as an essential part of the child welfare program. And then it was only because the system started to fall apart during the Depression.

During the Depression, there was a major expansion of day care with the government for the first time giving public funds for child care. This was done mainly to provide jobs for unemployed teachers and maintenance personnel. By 1937, 40,000 children were in day care. However, no new centers were built; the children were put into already existing schools or public buildings. Large areas of the country, particularly rural and Southern, never benefited from the legislation.

At this time there was a changing attitude among some social workers and educators that an educational environment in early child care is essential to the child's development. However, this liberal philosophy did not lead to the conclusion that day care is the right of all children, free of charge. What it did lead to was the establishment of prestigious nursery schools for the well-to-do. These nurseries cost a great deal and ran, in general, for just half a day. In some cases, the nursery school which a child attended would determine (and still does), the child's eligibility to enter certain private elementary and secondary schools and even Ivy League colleges. Clearly no

working mother could make use of them even if she could afford to.

But while the rich debated the pros and cons of one early childhood school with another, poor and working mothers then, as today, had very little choice in who would watch, much less educate, their preschoolers. The working mother who sent her children to publically run day care was looked upon as a failure — inadequate and unable to provide for her family. The patronizing attitudes of the authorities who ran the limited amount of day care was the same as we find today in the Welfare and Social Services departments.

When the Second World War came, however, women were again needed in huge numbers to run the wartime industry. As hundreds of thousands of women went to work, millions of children were left alone at home all day, locked in parked cars, or brought to the job. This situation threatened to cause so much absenteeism and slowing down of production that the government was forced to provide day care.

In 1941 the Lanham Act made federal funds available for day care for children of working mothers. Most of the day cares were located in shipyards and other defense industries. They were run on a 24-hour basis, 7 days a week, for children from 18 months to 6 years, with children up to the age of 12 admitted after school and on the weekends and holidays. There was even a 24-hour home food service provided, where mothers could pick up a takehome dinner at the end of their shift. Even though the benefits to industry were enormous, these day care centers were run on a profit-making basis, subsidized by the federal government as well as written off on tax forms as business expenses.

The liberating effect that these new work and child care facilities held for women — the implications of the enormous social changes that could take place were women allowed to become a truly independent part of the productive force — was well recognized by the government. The Children's Bureau said at that time that they were afraid that providing day care services would be looked upon as "public sanction of the employment of women" and that "federal stimulus to day care would in the long run be destructive of the family and contrary to the basic American values." It makes you wonder what basic American values they are talking about. Could it be the one that allows families to break up or starve for lack of services that would enable mothers to provide decent lives for their families?

The need for women workers was so great during World War II that by 1945 there were about 1,600,000 children in day care. When the war ended and industry no longer had need for working women, federal funds were withdrawn, and the day care centers were closed down. This situation drastically affected families who had come to rely upon the women's added income. For instance, Chicago, which had 23 centers during the war, and Detroit, which had 80, had none in 1965.

In the sixties the rising pressure from the growing civil rights struggle forced the government to make some concessions for day care, and Head Start programs were set up under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. However, there was a catch — states had to initiate the program to get matching government funds. So huge areas of the country that were either very poor or had extremely racist administrations received little or no benefits. Community control, which was stressed in the act, was a farce: mothers whose children were in the program were made to feel degraded and inadequate as parents and therefore were not encouraged to participate. This led to militant struggles in many cities for community control of Head Start. So far, many communities, particularly in the South, have been forced to set up day care services, although on a very limited scale, with marginal help from the government.

By the middle of the 1960's, as production for the Vietnam war was reaching its peak, women were again being recruited into industry. This, combined with the upsurge of the Women's Liberation Movement with its demand for free, 24-hour day care, sent big business scurrying to investigate the profitability of day care. The result: franchised day care — or "Kentucky fried children," as one businessman called it — run on a profit-making basis. In the summer of 1970, there was a conference of top executives in New York City to discuss investing in day care. A brochure for the conference made it very clear where they were at — it was called "How to Fleece the Pre-School Sheep. Is It Profitable?"

Checking out some of these franchises, I found that Romper Room Inc. is now offering plastic, prefabricated day care on any site the prospective buyer chooses. They will do everything for you from financing the building, to providing training, equipment, advertising, and even prepackaged meals, all weighed out according to the age of the child. Another franchise is called Kays Kiddie Kollege (KKK). They stress that you don't have to have any educational background to run a day care but you must qualify with sound business sense and management experience!

In 1972 day care services in the U.S.

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WANTED: Quality Child Care for All

compiled by Sue Davis, New York City YAWF Women

YAWF Women is one of the few national organizations of women that was founded since the Women's Liberation Movement began several years ago, and the only one that represents poor and working women. We all agree that as one of the prerequisites for the liberation of women there must be free, 24-hour, parent-controlled child care that provides for all the child's needs. So YAWF Women decided to conduct its own informal survey of day care in 1972 in the cities where YAWF Women live and work to find out just what facilities are available and what the conditions are.

Nine cities took part in the survey, with varying degrees of success in ferreting out pertinent facts. But the difficulty of finding out what the day care situation really is sheds light on the problems: there is no centrally organized planning and coordinating body that is in charge of day care, nationally or locally.

Day care outside the home in licensed centers providing for more than five children at a time—whether run on a private profit-making basis; as a church- or community-affiliated service; by city, state, or federal funding; or with any combination thereof—provides for only 3 percent of the arrangements that the 12 million working mothers in this country make for their children. Only 650,000 children are in day care in the U.S. Day care, then, is insignificant, at best a band-aid perched on top of a gaping wound—a service totally out of reach of most working women, let alone the women who would like to work or mothers who need time to themselves. To say that day care doesn't begin to meet the needs of women is really an understatement. As such it is an excellent measure of the backward and undemocratic character of American life.

Historically, only when the U.S. was besieged by economic crisis, during the Depression and during World War II, when it needed to put women to work, has day care been provided for working mothers. And in both cases the centers were virtually disbanded after the crisis passed. Over the last 10 years the number of day care centers has mushroomed; this can be attributed to only one factor: the militant rebellion of millions of oppressed Black people determined to have the best life a society can offer. The U.S. government only seems to be able to react to economic and social crisis, as it did after the Black rebellions during the summers of 1967 and 1968. In Cleveland 30 of its 59 centers have been set up since 1968, and in Wilmington 11 of 30 centers were set up since 1968. The only city that reported free day care centers was Detroit, the scene of the most devastating and widespread rebellion of 1967. The federally sponsored centers are "free only to those living in a certain area of Detroit, which is a very poor area, mostly Black and southern white." Clearly the system only responds to the needs of the people when it is forced to.

The table on page 11 lays out the more statistical data for the nine cities studied here: population, number of working women, number of day care centers, number of children enrolled, weekly average cost, and day cares set up during

World War II that are still around today. The overwhelming conclusion: day care is expensive, limited, and barely satisfies the need for child care of the working mothers it does serve. For example, the average working woman in Wilmington, who is paid \$3,550, "day care at \$20 per week would take \$1,000 per year per child," a little less than a third of her salary!

Other findings also seem to follow a pattern. Most of the centers are racially segregated, serving the neighborhoods they are in. Black and other minority children as well as all welfare children are cared for primarily in federally funded centers that charge fees on a sliding scale based on family income. Schools that refuse to accept welfare children are the private ones, run for profit. Few centers provide transportation and the ones that do charge a fee. Most centers have waiting lists, but they don't seem to be too promising. Most take care of three- to six-year-olds; infant care is limited. Most serve working mothers, but since the costs are so high, this means primarily middle class working mothers. Centers are open during working hours, from 7 to 5:30; all cities reported no 24-hour facilities or centers that were open on the weekends, except Cleveland, where one will open in the fall, New York City, where there are two, and Wilmington, which found one in all of Delaware. Each city had some unique findings that help to paint the overall picture:

BUFFALO

"Centers operated by community groups average the lowest number of available spaces...a sharp reflection of their inability to buy off the eagle eye of the Health Department and their limited resources."

"Despite the fact that the vast majority of working mothers are found in the inner city of Buffalo and the poor, working class areas surrounding the major plants, fourteen out of the thirty-five licensed day care centers in Erie County are located in the middle-class suburbs."

For the centers organized by Puerto Rican and Black community groups, which have the greatest potential for parent and community involvement, "the high cost of meeting requirements for obtaining federal funds has seriously limited their enrollment so far."

"One of the largest and best known day care centers in Buffalo is a privately owned operation, with two locations under different names...but both with the same notoriously deceptive policies. They are beautiful, well-equipped, and expensive...and they offer 'unparalleled' group play and learning experiences to many welfare mothers (while they reap 'unparalleled' profits from county funds)...but what they actually provide is ten hours of television, crackers and water, repressive punishments, racist and sexist propaganda, and a bottomless well of lies for parents who want to know why their children are frantic. In varying degrees, these policies are reflected by the majority of day care centers in the county."

Ellie Dorritie and Betsey Harris

CHICAGO

"The hospital where I work, Edgewater Hospital, provides day care for children of the employees. Yet the facilities are by necessity used only by nurses, doctors, and other professionals. The fee is \$5 a day! This eliminates automatically all the Latin and Third World workers in the kitchens, cafeteria, laundry, and housekeeping departments."

Mary Kay Lama

"Working women with children are forced to resort to privately owned facilities, with registration fees, inadequate transportation, discriminatory practices concerning welfare mothers, Black and Third World families in general, and overall high weekly fees. Or they can hire private babysitters, whose fees are also high and who are often not much older than their own children or who are very old.... Working women, and all the women who want to work but have young children, are in no way having their needs met by the type of day care that exists in Chicago now. We know also, because child care is another profit-making industry, that the supervision is inadequate, the facilities run down, and the care as a whole inadequate. Most centers served only one hot meal for the whole day."

Mary Kay Lama, Jill Roundtree, and Diana Sava



CLEVELAND

"There was day care available during World War II in Cleveland. Emergency child care centers cared for 1,500 children, preschool and school-age, and operated 12½ hours a day from 1941-1946."

"In many day cares welfare mothers are charged higher fees because the check comes from the city. Some centers, usually publicly funded, require parents to either work or be in training programs. Some parents need to send children for parents' medical reasons (physical, mental) or for the child's own development (he or she needs companionship of other children) and the day cares which meet these needs are usually only available to people who can afford them—certainly not government-sponsored programs in low-income areas."

"The attendance in many day cares goes down during the summer when older children in the family who are through with school until fall watch the younger children. This eases the financial strain."

Dorothy Kover

DETROIT

"No co-ops or part-time centers are state certified. If the center has less than 15 percent on ADC (welfare), the state will pay for those 15 percent. If they have more, the center must get its own financing. Most centers have no ADC recipients using them."

MADISON

"Even women who do utilize the day care centers have complaints and are dissatisfied with the service. Due to problems such as lack of transportation for their children, lack of adequate safety precautions within the centers themselves, lack of proper discipline due to understaffed centers, and in many cases, a racist problem that develops, their complaints are legitimate."

"A good number of women who could possibly utilize the centers, cost problem aside, cannot because no day care centers in this area have hours coinciding with jobs requiring women to work evenings and weekends."

"...many people either have misconceptions about the purpose of day care centers or they know nothing at all about them.... The problem itself is that information about day care centers is not that readily available."

Jeanne Jones

MILWAUKEE

"No specific rules, of course, exclude poor and Third World women's children, but the rates are extremely high and lack of transportation is prohibitive."

"Seventy percent of all full-time spaces are paid for by the Welfare Department."

"It is difficult for working women to use Milwaukee's day care facilities, since there is a marked lack of day care centers which operate for 9 or more hours. Only 184 of the 600 licensed centers are for the full 8- to 12-hour day. As a result, most children in day care outside their own homes are in homes of neighbors or other unrelated women who care for three or fewer unrelated children."

NEW YORK CITY

One-fifth of all day care service in the country is in New York City. There are 228,000 children under the age of 5 who are potential users of day care, but only 64,000 of them can take part in the city's public and private preschool programs.

"Day care in New York City is a key element in the plan to make welfare into a vast pool of slave labor.... In many cases the day care provided will be nothing more than taking the children of several welfare families and placing them in the home of another welfare recipient who cannot be placed in a 'job.' This practice which has been going on for some time, will be greatly expanded. This applies to both the new and projected public centers as well as the older established public centers which are already required to take children from welfare families as a priority."

Carl Glenn

New York City day care worker in YAWF

ROCHESTER

"No rules exclude women in need except money or space available. Private centers were in 'good' wealthier neighborhoods. State, federal, and city funded centers were in the very poor and working class neighborhoods."

"Genesee Hospital and Gerber Baby Foods were the only places that we found that provide child care for their employees."

Katie Allen

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YAWF day care

by Fran Meyers

New York City YAWF Women

When I think of YAWF Day Care, I think of a sweltering Saturday afternoon in the summer. The only relief was to jump into cold, cold water. So the day care center of Youth Against War and Fascism made sandwiches for lunch, packed some fruit, and locked up the loft to start on our journey to a neighborhood park that had an outdoor swimming pool. When we got to the park, some of the staff watched the younger children who were too young to go in the pool. I went with the children to the swimming pool, and the fun began.

Everyone came dressed in a bathing suit -- but me. Standing by the edge of the pool, in my shorts and blouse (you weren't allowed to go in the pool with your clothes on) I watched the children splashing around as the sweat dripped down my face. The kids, seeing that I wished to join them, started playing the game, "Let's get Fran wet." They did a pretty good job, too, for by the time they came out, my clothes were sopping wet. The children came out of the pool with as much water as would stay in their hands, to be poured down my back.

We all had a great time and were sorry when we had to leave. The children went to get into dry clothes and head back to the loft. With my wet clothes, I was cooled off for the whole afternoon. We walked, ran, skipped, jumped back; some of the children's parents had already arrived. The rest of us went upstairs and had some snacks before the other parents came.

This is just one of the experiences enjoyed by the children and staffers of YAWF Day Care. The day care program was first organized in September 1970 by the Women's Caucus of Youth Against War & Fascism. Many women in the organization were very tied down on weekends because they couldn't



leave their children home alone or had to pay an enormous amount for a babysitter. The women of Youth Against War & Fascism decided that we had the resources to set up a day care program on Saturdays, to help share the responsibilities of taking care of children, and to offer the children a place to go on Saturdays, where they would feel loved, taken care of, and stimulated with different activities.

Many people in YAWF showed enthusiasm for this new project, and over 30 people, men and women, parents and nonparents, volunteered to regularly staff the day care center. We found that we need four adults to care for the 18 children, ranging in ages from 1 to 11. Young babies always have one person to take care of them. Frequently, some of the older children enjoy helping take care of the little ones. In fact, some close friendships have developed in this way between some of the
(continued to page 10)

WORKING AT DAY CARE

by Judy Sham Ali, Milwaukee High School YAWF

I'm an aide at Braids Day Care Centers. My job there is working with the four-year-olds. There are two, sometimes three, teachers to take care of 20 four-year-olds.

The children who go there are not given nearly enough attention. The only ones that even get noticed are the ones who act cute. There are two boys in the room known as "problems." They do act up quite often, but they're just pushed away in some corner. There is absolutely no communication between the children and the teachers.

There are two or three girls in the room who cry from the time they come there to the time they leave. They're just ignored. Nobody asks them why they're crying; the teachers just say to leave them alone and they will stop crying. They never do.
(continued to page 10).

THE CHILDREN'S ARMY

by Joyce Betries
New York City YAWF Women



Part I

My name is Emma Lawrence, and I grew up in a town in Pennsylvania where everybody worked in a mill where silk thread was woven into cloth. The boss gave my mother one day off to give birth to me. After I was born, she kept me in a little box by the loom. Ever since I was tiny, I knew the wizzing sound of machines. I had to go to work when I was six, going between the spindles to tie together snapped threads. I was lucky, because my little brother Timmy had to start work when he was four, and he was just helping out—the boss wouldn't pay him for what he did. By the year of the strike, 1903, I was 11 years old,

and I had lost my left pinky in the machine.

A strike takes place when all together, everyone stops working. We refused to go back to work for the bosses until the working conditions were improved, and the salaries were raised, and the working hours were shortened. We were on strike for all these things.

My mother said she would rather stay on strike until she died than see everyone in the family go back to work in the mill. She said she never wanted us to work 10 and 12 hours a day for so little money that we went hungry most of the time. The bosses said they liked to hire children because we would never go on strike, but 10,000 of us strikers were children. We wanted the things that other children had.

The manager of the mill lived in a big house on a hill on the north side of town. He had a daughter who wasn't much older than me. Sometimes I would see her riding in the back of a big black shiny car. She wore bonnets with lace on them, and she had a little dog that sat right on the seat next to her. Once I saw her laughing and petting her dog while she was sitting in that car. It was like a dream or a fairy tale. Some of the children who worked in the mill said she went to school and learned French.

Why couldn't we ride in cars and have nice clothes and go to school too? The only mill children who went to school were those who had a hand or a leg lost in the machinery, and couldn't work anymore — and they didn't learn anything in school. All that happens in school for us is the teacher hits you if you don't sit still. Well, we mill children were on strike. We wanted our share.

Mother Jones, who helped us organize the strike, had an idea. She asked our parents if she could take the children on a march for 10 days, to demand that laws be passed so that children wouldn't have to work any more. Late that night, when we were sitting in front of the cooking fire, my father asked me and my brother Timmy if we wanted to go on this march. He said that if we were old enough to work so hard in the mill, we were old enough to decide for ourselves if we wanted to march for our rights.

My brother was only 9, but since a spindle fell on his chest, he can't always breathe right when he has to do some walking. We knew he couldn't go, but my father asked him anyway. I looked at the faces of my mother and my father and my brother. Even in the firelight their faces were so gray and thin from working in the mill all their lives. I could see in my mind the face of the manager's daughter sitting in her car — her cheeks had been so pink. I told my father if I could go on strike, I could march too.

There were 75 of us that left the next day with Mother Jones. We were all children who had worked together in the mill. Well, we were together again, but in a different way. We were together as an **army of children**, and we were proud. One boy had a drum, and another boy had a flute, and they played and we sang as we marched.

As we passed through other towns, more and more striking children joined us. We carried signs that read "We want time to play," "We want more schools and less hospitals." We carried this sign because many of us in the army were missing hands, or fingers, like myself — ripped off in the silk mill. But it didn't matter that some of us didn't have fingers or hands. We were used to helping each other. We had learned that in the mill. Our brave children's army was determined to march and fight until we really won time to play and time to go to school.

(to be continued)

What Worries a Working Mother Most?

by Sharon Black, Delaware YAWF Women

Almost every working mother in this country faces the desperate dilemma of "Who'll take care of my children while I'm at work?" And for millions of mothers who are forced to work — whether they are the sole support of their families or helping to make ends meet — this becomes an almost constant nightmare. Such a nightmare haunted my own mother, who worked to supplement my father's meager paycheck.

Both my younger sister and I were raised in the 1950's when day care centers virtually did not exist. After World War II ended and it was no longer profitable for the huge corporations and military contractors to employ women, millions of women were pushed out of the work places and with them went child care. In fact, in the area in Delaware where I was raised, even kindergarden was unheard of. Most children were lucky if they attended school by the age of six — the only available elementary school was a one-room union hall.

And so, my mother had to find a babysitter. But this was hardly a solution. She always worried about how we were being taken care of and how much longer she could afford the babysitter. During this time she was working 9 to 10 hours a day for less than \$.90 an hour.

Finally after both my sister and I were brutally beaten by a babysitter, my mother was left with only one choice — letting us take care of ourselves.

I had just finished first grade. From then on, I cared for myself and my younger sister. But we were both somewhat fortunate — neither of us ever fell victim to the gruesome accidents that have happened to so many other children who are left alone.

During much of my childhood I was not sharply aware of my mother's hardship or my own. I never realized that leaving us alone wasn't my mother's choice. In fact, it was not until 15 years later, when I had a child of my own, that I really began to understand the problem that faces poor and working mothers and the necessity and possibility for change.

By the time my son was two, both my husband and I were deeply in debt. Both of us were unemployed and bill after bill had piled up. In the dead of winter our gas, electric, and heat were shut off.

Finally my husband found work on the waterfront as a longshoreman. But this was inadequate; he was not yet in the union and work was anything but steady. After much searching, I was forced to work two low-paying jobs: as a waitress during the day at Woolworth's counter and as a night waitress at a nearby hamburger joint.

This began another job — the tormenting one of finding decent child care. At first I attempted to rely on a babysitter. But this was almost as impossible for me as it had been for my mother. Both my husband and I have extremely irregular working hours and no transportation other than bus, so we had to rely on a nextdoor neighbor. But this didn't work long. My neighbor could not subsist on the pitiful little I could pay her and she soon found a job outside the home.

After this I began frantically looking for a day care center. For three months I searched for an opening in a center located in Wilmington, all the while carting my son from one friend to another. Finally I found an opening.

My problems are in no way unique. In fact the hardships I



face are mild in comparison with those of many women. At least my husband and I can afford day care. But for many of the waitresses at the restaurant where I work, the problem of finding day care is greatly compounded by the lack of child care facilities, the expense of day care, and the callous attitude of the bosses towards women with children. One woman, in particular, who has two small children, was forced to pay almost \$40 a week for day care. We average between \$50 and \$60 a week in pay — tips included. It doesn't take any mathematical genius to figure out why she was soon forced to quit.

Just recently, another woman with whom I work was forced to work overtime; she had no other choice but to bring her two children to work, leaving them in the kitchen.

Our boss's rule is — "you work when we want you to or else." Even if our children are extremely sick, he demands that we work. "If we don't like it, then we can choose to leave." Yet 80 percent of the women with whom I work are the sole support of their families and literally have no choice whatsoever.

But it doesn't have to be this way. The potential for decent, adequate child care for all children exists in this country that purports to be the wealthiest and most democratic in the world. A strong, unified movement of poor and working women to demand 24-hour community-controlled child care for all children is what we need and decent well-paying jobs for all women.

— Child care

(continued from page 3)

rank far behind those in most countries in the world. In Africa, in the underdeveloped, newly emerging countries, more money percentagewise is being budgeted to day care services than in this wealthy country. However, many of the day care facilities are in the hands of western-controlled religious institutions. In France, there has been a law since the mid-nineteenth century that requires all communities over 2,000 to provide "ecole maternelle" for children from 2 months to 6 years.

In Cuba, China, North Korea, North Vietnam, and other socialist countries, day care services have top priority. Housing, hospitals, schools, and day care are considered the primary needs of the nations. Women are encouraged to get out of the house and participate in satisfying, productive jobs. Free day cares are built on the job where women get time off with pay to nurse and play with their babies. At the end of the day, after eating at the workplace cafeteria if they wish, the parents can pick up their children, who are fed, bathed, and ready to go home to the relaxed, comfortable atmosphere of family life.

In the Soviet Union, child care services are fully supported by the government and there are more than nine million children in preschool centers. The U.S. and the Soviet Union have about the same number of working mothers — 12 million — yet in the U.S. there are places in day care for only about 650,000 children.

Over six million children under the age of six in the U.S. have working mothers (or two out of every five working mothers have children under six; a larger proportion of these mothers are nonwhite and head the household). Only 25 percent of children under six have day care arrangements outside the home. The

majority of these are cared for by relatives or women who take a number of children into their homes as a way of earning a living. Only 3 percent are in any kind of day care facility. Hence organized day care provided today is insignificant, and can even be termed a "luxury" for those who can find it and then finance it.

Of the 75 percent who are left at home, the vast majority are cared for by relatives — the father, grandmothers, or sisters or brothers under 16 — or by neighbors and babysitters. Statistics show that 7 percent are left alone, but estimates run as high as one million preschoolers left to fend for themselves. (How many mothers are going to tell the census taker or researcher that they are forced to leave their babies alone while they work?) Of course, it's poor and Black, Puerto Rican, and other minority group children who are deprived of care the most.

The need for day care is incredibly obvious and grows more so every day, but it's equally clear that the U.S. government is not going to meet that need. Last December, when Nixon vetoed a child care bill, he said that any extension of day care services would be a threat to the "integrity of the family." Instead, the HRL Bill was passed, the essence of which is to force welfare recipients to work at menial jobs just to get their welfare checks. Several states passed their own version of HRL, including New York and California.

The thrust of these bills is to open the few public day care spaces to children of welfare recipients. Day care will be "free" to welfare children, but will soar (as I found out) for children of working mothers. The centers will be turned into little more than babysitting services for the children of the poor — some call them "concentration camps for children."

In addition, some welfare mothers will be forced to take children of working welfare recipients into their homes in order to qualify for their welfare checks.

The federal, state, and city governments seem to be collaborating in every possible way to stymie the development of day care under the guise of passing the buck. The red tape and confusion are incredible. Today there are six or seven different governmental agencies that can administer day care funds. The very latest day care bill which was approved by the Senate June 1972 wipes out the breakfast program and almost totally eliminates any form of community control. The moneys are in the hands of the federal agency that will administer child care services for welfare recipients whose checks are in the hands of the state. You can just imagine what goes along with this arrangement. There is some offer in the bill to provide day care for non-welfare recipients; the Conservative Senator Buckley from New York is worried that this "will have the insidious effect of subsidizing parental neglect."

Communities are beginning to resist these reactionary measures by protests and sit-ins. In New York City, parents and day care workers have banded together for over a year to fight cutbacks in day care funding and increased fees for working families. Last March, mostly poor and Black families went to Washington on the Children's March for Survival to demand decent living conditions for all.

At a time when women comprise almost one-half the work force, with the number increasing daily, the struggle for day care, free, 24-hour, and parent-controlled, is growing. The right of the best educational preschool care belongs to all children, not just to the few who are well off. Only when it is provided for all children can we begin to know what true human love and family relationships can be.

WANTED: CHILD CARE

(continued from page 5)

WILMINGTON

"Many schools also include the rule that a woman must be working to place her child in the day care centers. This starts a vicious circle—how can a woman get a job until her child is in a day care center?"

"It was a shock to find that there were only two Spanish-speaking day care centers in Wilmington, since 15 percent of the city is Puerto Rican."

Charlotte Flounders

The need for day care is growing by leaps and bounds. A Department of Labor study predicts that during the 1970's the number of working mothers of preschool children will rise by 43

YAWF day care

(continued from page 6)

children, with the older child assuming an "understood" responsibility over a younger child. This has helped to overcome one of our biggest problems — gearing activities to suit children of such varying ages.

When the weather is too bad to have outdoor activities, we've organized many activities inside, including arts and crafts, cooking, exercise classes, making birthday or get-well cards, while the youngest ones have toys to play with. Lunch is provided, which the children help make and clean up. In the warmer weather, we go on trips as much as possible. This year we've taken the children to see an outdoor play held on the docks, a special children's showing of the Chinese ballet "Red Women's Detachment," the Museum of Natural History, Central Park, and the Staten Island Ferry. Sometimes the older children have gone on special trips.

We feel that our day care has been a rewarding experience for those of us, parents and nonparents, who have participated in it, and it has given the children an opportunity to build relationships with other adults aside from their parents.



Working at day care

(continued from page 6)

of these girls managed to get out of the building. She was found a block away by the janitor. When I asked her what was wrong, she said she didn't like the head teacher, Miss Baker.* Miss Baker overheard it and said to all the workers in the room: "Nobody baby her. She's just acting like a brat." Most of the other kids are treated the same way.

In the morning they do an art project, play around in the room, and then go outside till about 11:20. At 11:20 they wash up to eat. The meals are pretty good. Miss Baker is always complaining about the aides taking too many breaks. She starts at 11:00, but doesn't come in until 11:30, just in

time to eat. At 12:00 the kids take a nap, from 12:00 to 2:30. Miss Baker waits till they're asleep and then takes a two-hour break. She gets away with it because she has almost ten years of college in child psychology. So, whenever she has a problem, she takes it out on the kids. The kids either hate her or are scared of her.

The teachers tell the parents that this is the place where kids love to be, but I don't know any kids who would agree with that.

*The name was changed to protect the innocent from the guilty.

	Population	Number of Working Women	Number of Day Care Centers	Number of Children Enrolled	Weekly Average Cost *	Day Cares set up during WW II that are still around today
Buffalo	1,500,000		35	4,000 includes unlicensed cooperatives	\$20-25	?
Chicago	3,500,000	1,282,174 or 46.7% of labor force	2 state sponsored the rest private	6,420 100,000 need day care	\$20-28	?
Cleveland	770,000	121,644 16,514 have children under 6	59	26,444 10% of children who need care	\$25	7
Detroit	1,570,000		500 (includes Wayne county)	16,495	\$22.50 - 28.50	all disbanded
Madison	172,000	22.2% of full-time workers are women with children under 6 and married	17 (37 part time)		\$25 - 27 \$4 a day	1
Milwaukee	750,000	130,473 or 48.2% of labor force - 13,241 have children under 6	62 ** (69 part time)	5,640 ** spaces available	\$120 a month (\$85 - 160)	all disbanded
New York	7,975,000		950 250 run by NYC	64,000 spaces available	up to \$35	?
Rochester	295,000		50		\$20-25	2
Wilmington	90,000	14,500 2,000 have children under 51X	30	1,050	\$20	?

* Not all who use the centers pay the full cost since there is governmental assistance. When funding is available, fees are set on a sliding scale depending on the parents' income.

** Figures are for the state of Wisconsin.

percent. That one out of two marriages end in divorce, as revealed recently, is one basis for making this prediction a reality. Working mothers can't be stereotyped either. They are in all racial and religious groups, from all educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. In fact, the highest number of working mothers live in rural nonfarm counties.

This means that the concept of day care as a social welfare service designed to provide for the exceptional troubled or disadvantaged family should be thrown out. This concept has helped to promote day care as a glorified group babysitting service—"commercialized custodial care." From several nationwide studies comes the inevitable conclusion that day care can and should be "a valuable supplement to family life" for all children—set up on a nationwide basis like elementary school.

To do this is to make radical changes in the day care system. First of all, it must be free. Transportation must be provided or centers should be easily accessible to any neighborhood or near every workplace. Centers should be open round the clock, seven days a week, and well-staffed by decently paid, well-trained women and men who love children. That means that many poor, Black, Latin, and other minority group people, who now are being excluded from working in centers because of educational requirements, could work and study at the same time. Parents who now have little say over their children's care should be advised of their child's growth and development and

their criticisms should be followed up. Infants need special, more individualized attention; older children from 9 to 12 who are the ones most neglected now should have afterschool programs that encompass weekends and vacations and that provide developmental experiences. Of course, the child's health, mental and emotional, as well as physical, and nutritional needs should be provided for. Every aspect of human life must be planned for to nurture, develop, educate, support, stimulate each child. In the past the needs of children have come last; the concept should be changed from day care to child care. Here the child should be the center of the universe.

An impossible dream? Or a way of life worth fighting for? Because that's what it would take. The only concessions to meet women's need for child care have been won through struggle in the U.S. and the only countries that already provide such care are the ones that have had socialist revolutions. There isn't much choice, is there?

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Stop the of Noemi

by Eve Neiblum
New York City High School YAWF

The minute Noemi Velázquez entered Forest Hills High School the afternoon of May 2 she was immediately suspect. In the mind of the teacher's aide Scher, she had to be a trouble maker. What made Noemi different from the majority of other students who walk through those doors each day? What was the supposed threat she posed?

Noemi is Puerto Rican, and in a community where a low-income housing project, still under construction, has provoked a torrent of racist hysteria, this made Noemi guilty. The fact that she, a high school student, had been invited to speak at the school was irrelevant.

Noemi, along with two other members of the Prisoners Solidarity Committee, had received the invitation to speak from the school's Afro-American Society. When the young Puerto Rican woman walked into the school, she was stopped by the teacher's aide, Mrs. Scher, who was just doing her job as a school cop. Scher proceeded to harass and interrogate Noemi. She had Noemi physically dragged into an office where she was once more interrogated by school administrators. Then she was taken to the police station where she was booked on trumped-up charges of assault and trespassing. If convicted, she faces at least 6 months in a reform school. (It just happens that Scher's husband is a cop himself. He has been more than willing, from that day on, to assist his wife in her "distress.")

Noemi is innocent of both the charges against her, but the Forest Hills High School administration is really pressing the case against her. They want to make an example of her to other "troublemakers" who dare to visit the school, as part of the racist campaign they are waging against Black and Puerto Rican students generally, but particularly the Afro-American Society.

Noemi has been in court three times and will be in court again on August 18. Each time High School YAWF has been there to support Noemi, and we will continue to do so. A few weeks after her arrest, we demonstrated in front of the Board of

Education, demanding that teacher's aide Scher be fired and that all charges against Noemi be dropped.

On June 27, these same demands were made at a public meeting of the Board of Education. The meeting was packed with angry parents and students who had come from all parts of the city to demand an end to budget cuts which particularly affect Black, Puerto Rican, and poor white students. The Board is attempting to curtail so-called "special" programs, like bilingual instruction and remedial reading.

Speaker after speaker arose to denounce the Board of Education and to demand the right of a decent education. A sense of solidarity developed in the audience as every speaker was cheered and the Board of Education's lame excuses were booed.

The audience gave enormous support to the speakers from High School YAWF who came to expose Noemi's frameup. I spoke, along with Luis Ruben, a Third World student from Seward Park High School, Mike Soriano, Jaime Veve, and Dave Schecter, an ex-teacher, who all came to explain Noemi's case and to expose the police role of teacher's aides, the racism in the schools, and the general lack of funds for education.

Clearly the people wanted a solution to these and all the other problems being raised that night. Finally, when the Board refused to give a direct answer to a Puerto Rican mother who was demanding to know why over twenty teachers were being laid off at her child's school, we all walked out.

Noemi's case is part of the struggle of Black and Puerto Rican students and their parents for a decent, relevant education. As long as the public schools refuse to provide this, oppressed students are going to get together to educate themselves, as they were doing when the Afro-American Society invited Noemi and the PSC to speak.

The courts know, Mrs. Scher knows, and the school administration knows that Noemi is not alone in her fight. We will continue the struggle to free Noemi. As we have packed the courtroom other times, we will pack it again on August 18.

FREE NOEMI! FIRE SCHER!

Frameups and Benita



by Milwaukee YAWF Women

Benita Orozco faces up to three years in Taycheedah Women's Prison in Wisconsin on charges of assaulting a police officer. She was beaten and arrested, along with two other members of Youth Against War and Fascism and a Black photographer, during a demonstration last September called by the Milwaukee Prisoners Solidarity Committee (PSC). The demonstration was in support of the rebelling inmates at Attica. The frameup charges brought against Benita, a leader of the PSC, are clearly an attempt by the police to silence her and the PSC in its support and aid to the prisoners.

The PSC and Milwaukee YAWF have turned this attack around, exposing the racism of the police in their attack on a Chicana sister, and the inhuman conditions in the prisons, as well as explaining the PSC's work to the poor and working people of the city. We are going to put the police on trial!

Benita's trial date was set for May 9. As the day approached, massive leafletings were conducted throughout Milwaukee. Two rallies were held to build support. One was sponsored by the Women's Defense Committee to Free Benita Orozco, an organization of women which has worked to build support around Benita's trial since her arrest, and at 8 a.m. the morning of the trial, a YAWF and PSC demonstration was held outside the court before Benita's supporters went in to pack the courtroom.

The state showed the seriousness of its intentions to remove Benita from the struggle. All pretenses of justice were gone as has been done in so many recent political trials. In an attempt to prejudice the jurors and to intimidate supporters, all spectators were searched and checked with a metal detector. A member of the subversive squad of the police department photographed those sitting inside the courtroom as well as others lined up outside who were waiting for a vacant seat.

The women lawyers who were to defend Benita suddenly withdrew from the case the night before the trial was to begin. YAWF obtained another lawyer at that late time, but he clearly

needed a postponement to prepare for the case. Benita's judge, Judge O'Connell, is the same judge who sentenced the Milwaukee 3, Black Panther Party activists, to the maximum penalty of 30 years on frameup charges. In a blatant denial of Benita's constitutional rights under the sixth amendment, he denied the postponement, thus forcing Benita to go to trial with lawyers who had already indicated to the court a desire to withdraw.

As jury selection began, Judge O'Connell continually sustained the DA's objections to the defense's questioning of potential jurors on racism and the events at Attica. He even went so far as to suggest objections to the DA, and then to sustain these objections! The final result was the typical jury of older whites, over half of whom admitted to being either acquainted with, or related to, policemen.

The most flagrantly repressive measure occurred when Benita herself was forced to stand in line and be searched on her way back to the courtroom from lunch. Because of this search, she was nine minutes late, although she had arrived on time. For this the judge stunned the courtroom by revoking Benita's bail and ordering her into the custody of the state.

During a recess we learned, however, that Benita's arresting officer had provided her supporters with a lucky break — he tripped over his own feet and broke his collarbone! The prosecution asked for, and immediately received, an adjournment. Benita was released from custody of the state and her bail reinstated. The new trial date is September 7.

For Milwaukee YAWF and the Women's Defense Committee the case has not been adjourned. We are fighting the battle for our sister every day. Our efforts have only served to strengthen us and our determination to free all our sisters and brothers in jail. Free Benita Orozco!

Babysitting is a full

by Noemi Velázquez, New York City High School YAWF

In poor, Black, and Puerto Rican families, when the oldest is considered of age, he or she must take care of the young ones. So at the age of 10, I started taking care of my younger brother who was one year old and my two younger sisters who were two and four years old. I took care of them whenever my parents had to work or do important things. I learned what it meant to be a poor mother, experiencing the worries and responsibilities. My parents had to face the facts: we couldn't live on what my father was making as a custodian in the post office, so my mother went to work in a garment factory.

Mom didn't have time to teach me how to do many things. I learned as I watched her every day. I learned to clean the apartment, cook (for the children and for my parents when they returned from work), wash the clothes, and all the other jobs poor housewives and mothers have to do.

September came and school started. Many parents were looking forward to sending their children to school, but my parents couldn't. Their first worry was whether we would eat a meal that night and how to pay the rent and the gas and electric bills. My father continued working in the post office and my mother worked on and off so that I could go to school **as much as possible**. However, soon another problem arose. Mother had to stay in the hospital because she was pregnant, so I had to stay home **a lot more**. My father sure couldn't stay home now — he had to pay the hospital bills!

Shortly after my mother entered the hospital, the public school I had been attending decided it was time that they played the part of a concerned school administration. They proceeded to harass me by prying into my personal family life. These white, middle class administrators continuously came around our apartment when my father wasn't home, trying to find out why I wasn't attending school. They would come into our poorly furnished apartment, looking around disgustedly. They would stop me from doing important and necessary things around the house, and sit down with me for hours and hours **trying** to drum into my head that my parents were irresponsible and didn't care enough about me to send me to school.

They especially enjoyed discussing the fact that since I was "exceptionally intelligent for a Puerto Rican" (from fourth to sixth grade I was in IGC classes — for intellectually gifted



children), my parents should be very proud of me. I went to school. **I felt so ashamed!!** The IGC classes were for white, well-off kids, and I knew that I was different from them with their younger brothers and sisters.

I knew why I was home instead of at school. My parents were poor. I tried to explain this to them, but they didn't understand. My father had a high school diploma from a different school than what I was learning in school, so why didn't he come with me and teach me to read harder books and advanced math, among other subjects? I could tell! They never had any money, so they just harassed me about them. I went back. I later found out that at that time I was at a high school math level. So they put me in years of SP (special pupils) classes, and I finished ninth grade in one year.

With all the problems and harassment, the situations are very clear in my mind. When I was cleaning the apartment, my four-year-old sister climbed a dresser and it fell on her,

Full-time job for a ten-year-old



very proud of me and let me go to IGC classes mainly consisted of that they weren't home babysitting I sisters.

instead of in school — because we to them. I tried to explain that my a from Puerto Rico and he knew when he **could** he would sit down hard books. He also taught me ects. But they didn't really care. ny solutions for my problems — en), saying I was going to be left t age I had a college reading level they were forced to put me in two sses. I skipped from seventh to

harassment I went through, two mind.... One night while I was -year-old sister was playing. She er, causing a serious cut between

her eyes. Another time while I was boiling some water, the pot slipped and the water fell on my stomach, causing serious burns. Looking back, I remember the panicky feeling inside me. Both times I was without money and we didn't have a phone because we couldn't afford it. The neighbors couldn't really help because they **also** had problems of their own, mostly because they were poor too.

One neighbor had a phone and both times she called an ambulance. I waited desperately for the ambulance. After what seemed like hours, it arrived.

As if waiting for the ambulance wasn't enough, when we reached the hospital, they left us waiting for hours, all the time harassing us, threatening that they couldn't treat us because we were minors. They kept interrogating us: how were we going to pay, where could my parents be reached, etc. We were finally treated because of the seriousness of our injuries. It always ended with **long lectures** about how horrible our parents were for leaving us alone!

Looking back over the last six years, I now realize these are just minor problems compared with the ones we read about in the press, where many times parents return from a hard and frustrating day at work to find that their children have burned to death in the firetrap slum buildings they are forced to live in. The press is always quick to condemn the parents, never once condemning the real criminals — the rich who live in mansions in the suburbs and who can afford professional nurses or babysitters and nursery schools for their kids.

I also realize that, contrary to what the school administration was telling me, it wasn't my parents fault that I couldn't go to school. While the rich worry about how to stay rich, we have to worry about staying alive. That is why we, the poor and oppressed, will continue fighting until we get what is rightfully ours — free day care, an adequate school system for all our children, decent and free medical care. In other words we must have everything for an overall decent life!

My mother doesn't have to work any more because my father has two jobs. It's hard on him, but it's a little easier for the rest of us. My mother won't let me miss school now. It's almost like she's trying to make up for my being out of school before. But I still help out by babysitting when I'm not in school. That hasn't changed at all.

"...On the making of human garbage"

AS TOLD BY A SURVIVOR

In 1971 there were 10 million children in the U.S. living below the poverty level — only 24 percent lived in their own homes or homes of blood relatives. The rest, some 7,600,000 children, were living either in foster homes or institutions, including orphanages, detention homes, and reform schools. (Statistics are from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.)

Over the years, a small number of orphanages have been built to provide these children with decent living conditions and care. However, the vast majority of institutions for children, particularly the Black, Latin, and poor, have changed very little from the children's hellholes of 40 years ago described here.

by Hannah Tompkins

The room was cold, dark, and immensely gloomy with its high medieval ceiling. Bare except for the long, dark, wooden benches attached to the walls on all sides. It was *that* Sunday of the month — "Visitors Day." All the nervous, sallow-cheeked children crowded the benches, their hollow eyes fixed on the imposing iron-grilled, plate-glass doors, portals to the outside world.

We waited. One by one came relatives and friends, bearing the inevitable sacred "package." Kin would claim their orphan and depart through the rear door into the high walled "yard," there to open and explore the package with its usual array of coveted prizes: a candy bar, some bobby pins, a bar of soap, 10 cents beads, shoelaces . . . all the luxuries of belonging to the outside world.

One by one they came and left by the rear door . . . we waited, my brother and I. We waited and waited and waited, till closing time. One by one the relatives returned by the rear door, red-eyed and heavy hearted. Despite the crying, clutching, pleading bits of flesh and blood, they shuffled their way through the big glass gates.

We waited still . . . my brother and I . . . but no one came for us. The attendants had to remove me by force. I resisted and struggled and protested: "My mother DOES love me and she IS coming!"

They took me to the house doctor (nobody had heard of psychiatrists in those days). In his usual, patronizing voice he asked, "Does something hurt you?" "Yes, doctor, I hurt all over, but mostly here," showing him my heart. With a futile pat on the head, he dismissed me to go back to the "jungle," for that's what we called the yard.

It was survival of the fittest. It was the training ground where tender, innocent kids were transformed into a brutal, animal savagery that was fearful to witness, let alone live in and become part of. Sensitivity was snuffed out in one day, and a new education was undertaken with amazing alacrity.

Lying, stealing, and physical violence were daily activities

in this holocaust of hate — proper preparation for the outside world, we were told. Fear, insecurity, and perpetual seething anger made up the emotional environment into which was cast this conglomeration of young humanity, like so much rancid garbage to rot and decay in this hellhole they so righteously called the Brooklyn Hebrew Orphan Asylum. Or the B.H.O.A. as it was stamped on the sheets and referred to by alumni who survived.

That was more than 40 years ago when it stood on Ralph Avenue and Dean Street. I understand it's been torn down, but the hurt is still here . . . the scars of hate, anger, and confusion.

At the age of three or four or five, it is difficult to understand what poverty is, why one is ripped away from a family and sent to a place where nobody knows you and nobody loves you and nobody cares. To be deprived of an identity, of belonging, to be the victim of torment, anguish, and excruciating fright....

My god! Is there no pity? No feeling? No compassion? No comforting hand to wipe away the tears at night when little bodies tremble from the exhaustion of energies spent in defense against daytime aggression? Nobody . . . nobody to say "I love you and I care."

At night, when the lights are turned out in the dormitory, save for the small green bulb at the door, making all the iron beds look like rows and rows of coffins, there is a secret sharing in silent, stifled sobs . . . all together and yet so all alone. And always, by day or night, the ceaseless, gnawing question, "Why am I here, why can't I go home?" "Where is my mother?"

We could not understand perhaps that mother was poor, that there was no father and she had to work. Her pay as a janitor could not support the many children. The older ones took off to shift for themselves. The younger ones were "institutionalized" by welfare agencies, taken out of the demoralization of a Williamsburg slum and given kosher meat and 2 pairs of underwear. This was accompanied by 2 pairs of socks and 2 cotton dresses (contributed by clothing manufacturers as an act of charity and a tax deduction) but which were always either too big or too small.

On Saturday mornings we stood in line at the laundry to exchange this weekly allotment, and received only what was turned in. If somebody thieved your dirty underwear from your locker in the cellar, you either managed with one pair or stole somebody else's. On Friday night we were herded into the "synagogue" to pray to a god that didn't belong to us, and on Saturday morning we stole underwear that didn't belong to us.

Nothing belonged to us and we belonged to nothing. We were the forgotten, abused, abandoned fragments of humanity. The overwhelming motive was "STAY ALIVE."

This factor of survival became especially significant on garbage day, when gangs of kids would congregate in the yard back of the kitchen. Object: "Seizure". . . of salvagable edibles and/or empty cans. Cans were a most important medium of exchange and a most invaluable possession. We'd punch a hole



in the side and wear them around our necks. They were used to scoop milk from the big tubs in the cellar locker room. They were used to carry off leftovers from the table or to carry one's soap, shoelaces, etc. And besides the lids could be sharpened on the side of a stone and used in razor fights.

Oh, the sweet childhood memories of garbage day, when ravenous, snarling child-packs contended with ravenous, snarling dog-packs for supremacy. All the greedy little hands foraging in chicken guts and slime to retrieve a can! The dogs only wanted the chicken guts.

The social agencies should be commended. They fed us and clothed us and housed us. They also taught us to cheat and lie and steal. Killing and hating came close by. We were considered and treated like subhuman commodities — and rejects at that! Only because our families were poor, or broken, or had to work to stay alive. We all became victims of deprivation and injustice.

Somebody is guilty. . . somebody must pay for our suffering. Too often those matriculated from the orphanage go out in the world with a bitter, venomous chip on the shoulder with the express intent to shaft everybody in the world, the sort of

retribution that breeds crime.

Yet there were some of us who looked elsewhere for the causes and joined the workers' movements. Here we found identity . . . here we found a belonging, a comradeship with brothers and sisters fighting to restore the dignity of Humankind and peoples' rights. "Peace...Homes...Jobs" — that was the slogan 35 years ago. We marched and demonstrated against the war-makers, the hate-makers, the orphan-makers, and the dehumanizers of little children.

And listen, little children... all my little children, whoever you are... wherever you are... "I LOVE YOU AND I CARE!"

We will not let you suffer, we'll fight, even if we have to do it with can lids, to provide you with a decent life in your home away from home. And then we will say as William Shakespeare said:

"O wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in it!"
("The Tempest")

Women United for Action

ROLL BACK FOOD PRICES 25%

by Ruth McCormick
New York City Women United for Action

.... One woman who has shopped at the store for more than ten years said, "I've never had much money to spend on food for the family, but at least I used to be able to get some good bargains here. . . but if the prices keep going up the way they're doing, pretty soon I won't be able to feed my kids at all."

.... A young working woman told us even though she'd received two raises in the last two years, she's paying so much more for rent and food that she is actually spending her savings just to keep going.

.... A welfare mother said that she had finally gotten together with a number of other women in her building to buy the largest sizes possible, the "economy" sizes, of all kinds of products, to try to cut costs, but that all she and her friends are saving is still pennies.

.... An aging Black woman, a widow who had hoped to be able to live out her life in some kind of minimal comfort on her Social Security, told us that she had had to give up her dog, which had been both a companion and a protector, just to make ends meet.

.... Another young working mother laughed ruefully and said, "Do you know that there was actually a time when my husband and I tried to buy organic health food because we thought it was better for us and the children? Now we can't even afford regular food!"

.... A Puerto Rican man who was doing the family shopping while his wife took the children to the beach said, "My wife always tells me to look for the bargains when I do the shopping-- well, there aren't any bargains any more!"

Such comments are typical of those I've heard since early July, while we in Women United for Action have distributed leaflets at the neighborhood Key Food where we shop on New York City's lower east side. Entitled "Food Sale! 25 percent off If We Fight for It!" the leaflet calls for an end to run-away food prices. Specifically we're demanding that all food prices be rolled back 25 percent because that's the amount prices have gone up since the height of the war in Vietnam.

The leaflet shows what a 25 percent roll-back would mean on certain items. We purposely chose items "on special" because the prices are really like those on yesterday's luxury items. For ground chuck at 89 cents a pound, the 25 percent roll-back puts it at 67 cents. If a two-pound box of rice is 59 cents, its roll-back price is 44 cents. On a can of tuna at 52 cents, it's 39 cents with the roll-back.

To expose all the other ways chain stores try to get rich the leaflet includes a list of other demands. (For a complete list, see the accompanying petition.) For example, because supermarkets in poor communities charge higher prices for inferior goods than those in richer neighborhoods, we're demanding that chain stores charge the same prices in all neighborhoods -- 25 percent less than the lowest now charged. With prices marked up on the 1st and the 16th of the month when welfare checks are issued, we're demanding an end to mark-ups on welfare-check days.

Women United for Action was formed after a number of women, so disgusted and angered at the outrageous food prices, decided to organize to fight rising food costs. As working women, working mothers, welfare mothers, housewives, and students -- Black, Puerto Rican, Chicana, and white women, old and young -- we've had enough of racking our brains each week trying to figure out how to stretch out our dollars to pay for decent meals for ourselves and our families. And we know millions of people in this country have too.

Millions of people in this country know only too well about the exorbitant amounts of money they've been shelling out in order to eat for a long time now. And we women generally know this better than anyone, since we usually do the shopping and cooking while week after week, the money coming in certainly hasn't increased. Lately all these newspapers, magazines, and TV newscasts have publicized the "crisis." They give a lot of reasons for the almost ridiculous growth in the prices of food, but never any solutions.

The reason usually given by government "experts" for burgeoning prices is that the farmers are losing money. Now that doesn't mean a family eeking out a living on their farm somewhere in the West or Midwest; the small farmer is fast growing obsolete. The "farmers" that concern the press and the government are the huge plantations owned by big corporations, many of which are either food processing concerns or themselves large food chains! And don't believe they're in any kind of financial trouble-- last year agribusiness's after-tax profits rose 15 percent as food prices jumped 12 percent, and this trend is continuing this year at an even more lively pace. That's why food prices have skyrocketed 25 percent since 1967!

Another reason, given by the food chains themselves for rising prices, is that "increasing production and labor costs" threaten to "drive them out of business." This is nonsense. They have been making nice healthy profits all along. Advanced technology in agricultural production has made foods of all kinds cheaper to grow and process, and has actually made it quite possible to provide everyone in this country with good, plentiful nourishment. And as to labor costs-- workers who harvest the crops and who work in food chain markets are among the lowest paid and least unionized. The great progress that has been made is not being used to give low-paid workers better wages or you and me better meals -- it has been used exclusively to make even greater profits for large farming interests and for the giant food conglomerates and supermarket chains.

We're not fooled for a moment by agribusiness's friend and spokesman Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz when he has the nerve to tell us that "The price of beef in the supermarket is not being set by the cattlemen; it is set by Mrs. Housewife who is willing to pay the price of good beef." What "Mrs. Housewife" is he talking about? Mrs. Rockefeller? Mrs. Mitchell? Mrs. Butz? Certainly not the vast majority of women, who might even want to spend \$2.35 a pound for a tender steak, but can't because they just don't have the money. Now that unemployment rolls grow, while others have used up their unemployment benefits, and welfare checks get smaller, and wages remain frozen, many people can't afford meat at all!

When Mr. Nixon tells us to "tighten our belts," it's time for us to ask him why he doesn't tell A&P, Grand Union, Safeway, General Foods, Borden, and some of the other giants of the food industry, and their millionaire bosses and stockholders, to do a little tightening up, too. But, of course, he won't.

The Price Commission in Washington—that's supposed to be the federal "watchdog" on prices to protect the public—talked last spring about a roll-back in prices. But we can all see how fast and fervently it's been pursuing that! Recently it's even suggested rationing as a possible solution.

Any real solution depends on us. The agribusiness boys and their protectors in Washington aren't about to change their policies unless we get together and do something about it. So on Wednesday, August 16, Women United for Action is going to confront the Price Commission in Washington at one of its regularly scheduled meetings with our demand for a 25 percent food price roll-back. It just so happens that this will be exactly one year since wages were frozen, and we want to expose that the Price Commission has done nothing to keep food prices in line with our limited budgets.

We're coming from many different cities with our empty shopping carts and bags to show that women are uniting to fight for decent food at prices we can afford. Then we're going to march over to the National Association of Food Chains that is an organization of 10,000 food chains that lobbies in Congress to keep their profits rolling in. Then we're going to let them know that we're getting out a petition to the top executives and directors of the food chains to meet our demands. We're specifically demanding that at some as yet undecided date in the future we want them to answer our demands in a meeting where Women United for Action will be a representative of those affected by high food prices.

Every week, Women United for Action is forming new groups around the country for Operation Food Price Roll-back. In Houston, Texas, recently Women United rallied so much community support at one market that management was forced to lower prices on some items. This is a small but very promising beginning.

In Detroit, Buffalo, and Rochester the campaign has gotten rolling and the people's response has been tremendously enthusiastic. Everywhere Women United have gone to stores in neighborhoods where there are poor and working people, old and young, nonwhite and white. Almost everyone is friendly, and quite a few people have already offered to help work for the roll-back. When Women United went to an A&P and Key Food on Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn on a Saturday morning recently, people filled in four petitions in just over one hour.

Anyone interested in working on Operation Food Price Roll-back or coming to Washington with us on August 16 can contact Women United for Action at 58 West 25th Street, New York, NY 10010. Let's get rolling.



Demonstrate at the Price Commission August 16

A petition to the top executives and directors of the food chains:

ROLL BACK FOOD PRICES 25 PERCENT

Whereas: The cost of food has skyrocketed more than 25 percent in the last five years, during the inflation caused by the Vietnam war;

Whereas: The profits of the huge food chains have increased tremendously during the same period;

Whereas: The quality of food we buy in the stores has been steadily going down;

We demand:

- (1) An immediate 25 percent roll-back on all food prices.
- (2) That chain stores charge the same prices in all neighborhoods, 25 percent less than the lowest now charged.
- (3) That the stores hire enough checkers and packers from the neighborhoods and pay them the highest union wage.
- (4) No more rotten food on the shelves.
- (5) Honest food packaging and food without harmful chemicals.
- (6) Sanitary conditions -- no roaches or rats in the stores.
- (7) That stores stop mark-ups of prices on welfare-check days when welfare recipients are forced to shop.

We demand that the heads of the food chains answer these demands in a meeting with Women United for Action, representing those affected by high food prices.

Children Condemned

by Rose Marie Bellet
Buffalo YAWF Women

Some people know what it's like to live a nightmare. Mine began when I was 15 years old and a sophomore at Hutchinson Central High School. I ran away from home because I couldn't take the recurring beatings and the sexual oppression of a stepfather I hated. Because I ran away, my mother swore out a complaint and had me picked up by the local police, who kicked, beat, and dragged me into Juvenile Court.

The judge said, "Seeing that you are a good student and this is your first arrest, I'm going to give you a break." He sent me to the House of the Good Shepherd on Best Street for one to three years. I screamed at the judge and tried to run from the room, but two cops grabbed me, dragged me into a police car, and drove me to the Good Shepherd Home.

I spent three terrible years in this Catholic Concentration Camp. Why they refer to places such as these as "homes" I'll never understand. The very name "home" carries the connotation of love and warmth, but the Good Shepherd Home lacked both these things. Instead, one found within the walls the icy indifference of the wealthy Catholic bureaucracy. The home was under the domination of a dictator whom we were forced to address as "Mother Superior." The Mother Superior was neither a mother nor was she superior. Adolph Hitler could have learned a few things from her.

The inmates of this home had committed no crimes against the law of the community or the state. Most of us were confined because we wanted to find love and, in doing so, violated the laws of Judeo-Christian morality. (Sometimes I wonder if there is such a thing!) For the crime of wanting love, we were imprisoned behind stone walls with barbed wire at the top. We slept in dormitories and were watched 24 hours a day. Even while we slept, a nun would walk up and down past our beds.

We were forced to go to church every day, even if we did not believe in it, and if we refused we were beaten and locked in the dormitory with all our clothes removed, sometimes for 3 or 4 days with hardly anything to eat.

All the physical labor was performed by the inmates of the home. We worked 12 hours a day, with just a half-hour break for lunch. Some of us scrubbed floors and paste-waxed these floors. Others ironed by hand in the laundry. Every garment had to be ironed just so or we were beaten over the head with thick rulers and forced to kneel perfectly still until we were told that we were forgiven. Only then were we permitted to rise and continue our work. For this labor we were not paid.

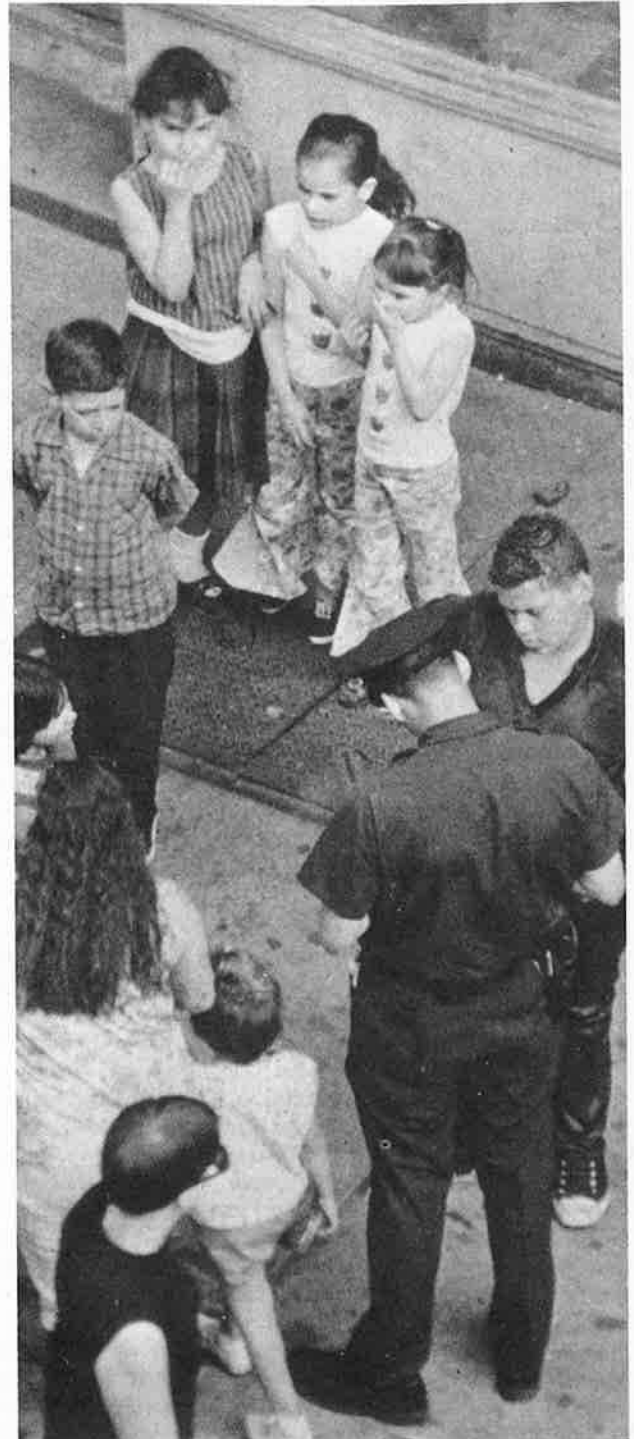
It was often very cold at night, and we had nothing to cover us but thin blankets. When we were being punished, our pillows and blankets were taken away and we were left to sleep on a cold sheet.

The place was full of roaches and all kinds of vermin. There wasn't a sympathetic or competent doctor in the home. There were many different reasons why the girls were there, but we all had one thing in common: none of us were rich. We knew that our being there was only because we were poor.

Our only recreation in the evening was watching TV for about two hours. Even that was always censored. We could watch only programs which the Mother Superior felt would have "no sinful influence on us." Two of the programs were Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scout Show and the Red Foley Show. We weren't permitted to watch the news on TV or to read a newspaper. We were not allowed to become friendly with another girl. If we were seen talking to each other, we were locked up in the dormitory. One of us was locked in the dormitory and the other was locked in the dormitory bathroom.

Once I endeavored to escape by scaling the wall. I glanced around to make sure no one was following me. I slipped into the yard. Someone had carelessly placed a bench near the wall. I found that by climbing up the

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The Retarded : Discarded & Forgotten People

by Beth Marino, New York City YAWF Women

I don't remember exactly when I began to realize that my sister was different. Perhaps it was when I suddenly outgrew her as a playmate or when we were sent to separate schools. Or maybe it was when the other kids on the block laughed at her. At any rate, the knowledge that my sister was mentally retarded and would never reach a normal capacity was a painful and shocking reality.

Family life was difficult while we were growing up. My parents made many sacrifices for my sister — too many, in fact, because she became stubborn and spoiled in many ways and not very easy to handle. When Ann turned 20 and was no longer eligible for special school, my parents decided that institutionalization was their only choice. They feared the outcome if they were to die and Ann were to be left alone. They felt strongly that my other sister and myself should not have the burden left upon us. So the decision was made and my parents — because of no other reasonable choice — were forced to give up their daughter to the state.

Because of my concern for my sister and others like her, I decided to work with retarded people — first as a camp counselor for many summers and later as a teacher. Through education and experience, I learned about the causes and effects and how best to work with the retarded. Mental retardation, which affects more than 3 percent of the population, or 5½ million people, has many causes both environmental and genetic. Much is still unknown but evidence exists that environmental factors constitute three-quarters of all retardation. The economic conditions that determine the quality of life for the rural and urban poor — the lack of proper medical care, nutrition, and educational stimulation in the home and community — are the primary causes for mental subnormality. Other known organic causes, which could easily be linked to living conditions, involve infections during pregnancy, brain injury at birth, and mongolism determined by an extra chromosome.

The majority of retardates fall into the educable category, which means that with special training and guidance they can become independent in the community. Many are able to hold down a simple job and even support themselves with minimal supervision. The other categories involve the more severely retarded who will always be dependent on others for their care. Yet they can be taught to maintain themselves and even function to some degree independently in the community, but they will never be self-sufficient. The lowest level, the profoundly retarded, must be cared for at all times. This group constitutes not even a quarter of all retardates in the U.S.

Most parents try to keep their retarded children with them as long as possible. Those who have the money spend literally thousands of dollars going to different doctors, hoping that one will tell them that their child is really normal. When the child reaches school age, the parents and the child undergo the heartaches of unacceptance in public school classes. Here parents have no say over the often stifling situation in special classes where the kids become aware that they are different.

When the school years are over, many, like my sister, enter state institutions. Many, especially the most oppressed whose families cannot afford even minimal fees, have no choice but to stay at home, only to vegetate and become more and more burdensome on the family. The privileged few can afford to send their children to exorbitantly expensive private schools. A small minority are lucky enough to enter special community programs, mostly on the east coast, that are funded by state and federal governments.

I work in a community day center for mentally retarded adults. The program cares for 200 people in all of New York City and its fees are set on a sliding scale. It is structured so that an IQ of 35 is average for those who attend this program. We teach the "trainees" basic skills needed for self-care and for community living. These adults are fortunate enough to live at home and have a place that's meaningful to go every day. In the center they are accepted as people with limited capacity, yet at the same time they are not coddled or overprotected. They learn how to cook their own lunch, groom themselves, and do various domestic chores so that they are more of a help in the home.

The program gears activities to expose the retarded people to the community and, of equal importance, to enlighten the general population about the retarded. We take our trainees out to lunch, food shopping, bowling, and to various places in the city. They learn to use public transportation, and over one-half have been trained to travel independently to and from the center. Some will eventually leave our program and find employment in a sheltered workshop, but for the majority our center is the last hope.

But what becomes of the growing retarded population who don't get into these programs? Many studies have been done to prove that a child's ability to learn drops significantly after he or she has left their own home and been put under institutional care. Studies have also shown that when removed from these institutions and given the chance to grow, as in the program where I work, the ability to learn increases, along with the retardate's ability to cope with the environment.

What are the conditions for the thousands of people who are stuffed away in state institutions, isolated and apart from the mainstream of society? In 1958, for mentally retarded children between ages 5 and 9 in New York State institutions, the mortality rate was 61 times that of the general population. At Willowbrook State School in Staten Island, recent exposes have shown that they hold twice as many patients as they can handle, and desperate and helpless, parents have been coerced to sign papers to have their child submit to certain tests just so they will be taken in. These children are then used as guinea pigs for testing hepatitis.

In my sister's institution in New Jersey, the situation is overtly less appalling but nevertheless intolerable. She resides in a "cottage" with 70 girls. They are lucky if they have two attendants on at the same time. Although the grounds are quite lovely, a drab, unstimulating, and prisonlike atmosphere

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WELFARE WOMEN SPEAK OUT!

by Joyce Tascketta

At noon on Thursday, July 20, 200 women, most of us Black and Latin, came by two's and three's to fill a hot, stuffy, public high school auditorium on New York City's Lower East Side. We slid into the rows of seats meant to settle down energetic young people and waited while representatives — mostly men and mostly white — of the City's Human Resources Administration took chairs up on the stage. Most of them looked nervous and most of us looked mad, because they were the lackeys who were supposed to make us "understand" and cooperate with Nixon's HR1 Bill, the union-busting Incentives for Independence, etc., etc. — changes designed only to make an already oppressive welfare system even more smothering. But as Alice Diaz, our spokeswoman for Women United for Action, said, "no one is an expert of the Welfare System unless you have lived under its laws." Her speech is reprinted below.

by Alice Diaz

New York City Women United for Action

Those of you who have set up this public hearing and are known experts in your field concerning Welfare, I'd like to tell you that no one is an expert of the Welfare System unless you have lived under its laws, which are only designed to degrade and humiliate those who receive it, rather than help them. As only one of the over 1 million people who live on Welfare in New York City, I'd like to tell you of my experiences and those of the people close to me.

I remember when my mother first applied for Welfare. There were 8 of us at home. My father had to undergo surgery and my mother wasn't receiving any form of compensation. My father was not due out of the hospital for 8 to 10 days. She went to the Welfare office, barely knowing how to speak English and tried her best to explain her situation at home. She was flatly refused, with no explanation given. Knowing nowhere to go to, she went to a church close to where we lived at the time and there she was given \$5....

Living on Welfare isn't easy. Besides the rats, no heat, no hot water, and dope as soon as you open your door, there's rising food prices which constantly eliminate more and more food from the Welfare recipient's table.

On the first and the sixteenth of the month, which are known as check days, Welfare recipients have to pay even higher prices to big supermarkets that raise their prices as much as 50 cents on such products as rice, beans, and coffee. Many have had to substitute fruits and vegetables for meat because of the high prices of meat....

Statistics show that unemployment is at 6 percent. Yet if you multiply that by three, you'll get a truer picture of unemployment. And yet with this high rate of unemployment, New York State has a version of Nixon's slave labor bill, HR1, called the public service Work Opportunities Program and Incentives for Independence, to force Welfare recipients to work as slaves for their checks. How are they to find jobs when there aren't any? The few that they will get would be from union busting at \$1.20 an hour, which is below the federal minimum wage and which doesn't include sick pay, vacations, or raises. While big

business makes their super-profits, welfare recipients will sweat for \$1.20 an hour in order to stay alive.

The Incentives for Independence Program has been designed to modify the behavior of the poor. By that I mean that a child who lives with regularly employed parents can go out and play after school, while a kid on Welfare would have to sweep garbage from the streets so that he can bring money home so his family will have enough to eat.

There has been a lot said about Welfare chislers, that nearly 40 percent of those living on Welfare don't really need it. Yet let's see who really are the chislers. Nixon in his genocidal war against the Vietnamese people spends in one hour what a

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welfare recipient receives in one year. Talk about chislers, the war being waged against the people of Vietnam is being paid by the cuts on Welfare and the taxes of the poor and working people.

Nixon, if reelected, will sign a slave labor bill known as HR1, which sets an amount of \$2,400 per year for a family of 4, or about 19 cents per meal per person....McGovern has gotten the most delegate votes in the very two states where HR1 has been introduced — New York and California — and he said nothing during the Democratic convention that would help the Welfare recipients in these two states.

Either way, with Nixon or McGovern, the Welfare recipient loses, but not if we fight back, not if the poor and oppressed people unite and fight against the degradation that welfare recipients, as well as poor working people, are constantly subjected to. The welfare recipients have suffered enough. We as Women United for Action have already started a campaign to demand that food prices be rolled back 25 percent so that all the poor and oppressed people will have a decent way of life.

THE LIFE OF AN ARMY KID

by Peggy Geden, Camp McCoy 3 Defense Committee



drawing by Lallan

The chain of command within the military is a simple and obvious one, especially to those at the end of the line. The General shits on the Captain, the Captain on the 1st Sargeant, the 1st Sargeant on the enlisted man (EM); and the EM goes home and takes out his frustrations on his wife and children. It is no coincidence that child beating is the number one cause of admittance to military hospitals. For all its talk to the contrary, the military pays the least, if any, attention to children of low-ranking GIs.

For starters, the military doesn't even recognize "illegitimate" children, as if it has the right to judge any child this way. This is especially harsh for children born to Vietnamese or Korean women, but it is true wherever there are U.S. bases here or abroad. No recognition means that no money is given to the parents for the child's support; the child is not allowed on any military reservation, has no access to post privileges, and cannot receive any medical care from military facilities. Money is scarce enough for any rank-and-file GI; to deny support for a child can mean starvation.

As to "legitimate" children, if you're a Private 1st Class and you can get through the red tape, you might get \$30 a month for one child. Once you've reached the rank of E4, though, you have to have two children to get any allotment at all. And if you should be one of the many who has more than two children, you're out of luck — the military just doesn't recognize them.

My sister has five kids. She gets \$45 a month to feed and clothe them. This doesn't even put enough food on the table, never mind clothes on their backs! She considers herself lucky to get on-base housing. She and her husband and five kids live in a 2-bedroom cardboard box called a house. According to military regulations, for on-base housing a boy and girl cannot sleep in the same room if they're over five years old. So my sister has her daughters in her bedroom and the boys in the other. This is the housing provided by the military and they claim to take care of their own!

Children of lifers are called "military brats"; this is how the service views dependent children. Talk to any child who has grown up as a dependent and they usually feel nothing but hate. They have no security: Dad is away for a year in Vietnam; Mom usually has to work to bring in some extra money, so you never see much of her either. Life is being uprooted, always moving from one place to another. You can't make any lasting friendships — you're never around long enough.

IS A BUMMER

Most women dependents have to work. Military towns are often small, out in the middle of nowhere; but the labor force is enormous. Jobs are scarce, so the women's wages are usually below minimum. The poverty conditions of all EM's are compounded for Black and Brown families: the men get paid the lowest in the military and the women dependents are the last to be hired and the first to be fired.

If a woman has children, she really is in a bind. Babysitters are expensive; and by the time you take out the cost of babysitters from the already meager paycheck, you may as well not bother to work. Although most military bases have day care centers, they are too expensive for an EM's pay of \$200 a month. Only officers and lifers can afford them. One that I looked into cost \$20 a week plus food for each child, or \$5 a day. Since there was no transportation available, it would be almost impossible for a working woman who lives off base (as do most EM families) to take her child to a center and then to get to work on time. It is clear that only lifers and officers use the day care.

The day care center I saw was typical of everything else the military supposedly provides; besides being expensive, it was shoddy and inadequate. Not only was there no consideration for working mothers, but the parents had absolutely no say in how the center was run. The building used to be a ward of a hospital, which was then used as a barrack; yet it still looked and smelled like an old hospital. All that had been done to change the atmosphere was to add an outside playground. The walls were almost completely bare. All the children were herded into one large room where all the furniture and most of the toys had been bolted down to the floor.

Military regimen was stamped on everything. Loud noise was not allowed. All the children were very quiet; they were just sitting or standing around. When I asked about the playground, I was told that the children could go out to play only all together and at special times. They could play for no more than one hour outside. To top it off, this day care center named Kiddie Kommunity Kollege (KKK for short) was almost totally surrounded by a fence — you had to go through two locked doors to get in or out. It was nothing but a jail!

I've talked to several women about military schools and schools around military posts and the answer is usually the same: "Terrible! I'd never send my kid there if I didn't have to." Most of the teachers aren't certified and have had little experience. The pay is inadequate and few teachers remain

very long.

Large bases even have separate schools for officers' and EM's children. The school for officers' children is usually a nice, new building; the EM's school is the old barrack bit again. Both schools are absolutely stifling. Military discipline and indoctrination are enforced. The children are supposed to act like "little soldiers." This goes for schools off-post as well, because they are influenced, and to a large part controlled, by the post commander.

The children subject to the most contempt by the military are those of Black and Brown families. Racism is rampant in the classroom where white superiority and patronage are crammed down the kids' throats. White children, be they EM's or officers' kids, aren't supposed to associate with Black or Brown children.

This racism is carried through even to such things as the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, which are controlled by the Brass. In these activities, every effort is made to keep *all* EM's children out. At best they are "invited" to join, but they are never allowed to forget that some Major is the scout master, some Lieutenant the assistant, and some Colonel chairman of the committee.

Children's safety is of no concern to military authorities. A friend of mine lives in off-base military housing. Behind their place was an open hole into which hot water pipes flowed. There were no markings around the spot. Three children stepped into this hole of hot steam, including my friend's small son. He had second and third degree burns almost up to his hips.

The whole neighborhood protested and demanded that the military do something about the steaming hole. Because it was military property, they as "just parents" weren't authorized to do anything to it without getting permission first. They waited a year, and two more burned kids, before an inspector finally came to see what the parents were "bellyaching" about. When he went to look, he fell into the hole and got second degree burns. Then and only then did the military agree to put up warning posts and lights around the hole.

The medical attention that children receive is as bad and dangerous as it is for GI and EM women dependents. You literally take your life and your child's life into your hands when you go to a military hospital or doctor. Not once did my daughter ever get examined by a military doctor with any competence or thoroughness. When she was two, her whole body was covered with a rash. When I took her to the clinic, the doctor asked me what was causing the rash. He got out a book and said that it could be a heat rash, but since it wasn't where it was supposed to be and it didn't "look" like one, he really didn't know! What kind of competence is this! After repeated experiences like this, I finally gave up and paid to take her to a civilian doctor.

There is absolutely no reason why children have to be subjected to these kinds of daily abuses. The military is powerful in bombs, guns, planes, and the most macabre kinds of torture and death devices, but not in caring for those whom it forces to carry out its dirty work. Whether a child eats or starves, lives or dies is of no concern to them — no matter what U.S. army base throughout the world.

We army dependents must demand decent jobs and wages, decent schooling, housing, medical care, and free, parent-controlled day care. The oppression of our children must be stopped. We are only just beginning to make known our demands for a decent life; but together we will fight to win!

VICTORY TO THE VIETNAMESE!

For almost a century, the Vietnamese people have suffered the cruelties of the most vicious genocidal wars, first by the French and now by the U.S. Despite this, the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam and the Provisional Government of South Vietnam have taken as a priority the liberation of women. Free, 24-hour day care centers have been set up to allow women to take full-part in the liberation of their country.

The millions of homeless and maimed children are lovingly cared for in special homes which in no way resemble the hellholes called orphanages in this country. For in this war-torn nation, nobody is considered homeless — no child, no woman or man is without a brother or sister, without a loved one. Together they are struggling as a people; and with the new offensive, have virtually defeated the U.S.

To counter this, the U.S. has continued its bombing, extending it to the North once again, in a new and vicious attack on its extensive dike system. We extend total solidarity to the Vietnamese women, men and children in their just struggle against U.S. imperialism.

LONG LIVE THE VICTORY OF THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE!



— Cuba

(continued from back cover)

The other aspect of education in Cuba is respect for the workers and for work itself. Students not only study but help to build, to work in the fields and factories.

The students know that it is the workers of the country who provide everything, that they are the backbone of the system. The young people know it, and the women know it, because their needs and the needs of all the people are met by what all the workers produce. There is no one who profits off the misery of others.

Sisters, I hope this letter gives you a glimpse of how we all can live.

Veronica Golos

Veronica Golos recently returned from Cuba where she worked for two and a half months on the Venceremos Brigade.



Photo by Grace Mitchell

—children condemned

(continued from page 20)

back of the bench, my fingertips would just reach the top of the wall. Through much painful effort, I began to reach the top, only to become entangled in the barbed wire. Finally, cut and bleeding, I dropped over to freedom, only to fall into the hands of two waiting cops, who slapped me and dragged me to the front door of the home, calling me a whore and other obscenities.

My experience is typical of the living hell that is inflicted in the so-called homes run by the Catholic Church and managed by the so-called sisters Sisters of Charity. I dream about the day that it will all end and all children will be free.

—the retarded

(continued from page 21)

prevails. Many of the more capable "inmates" must work to keep the institution running. Yet they are paid slave wages and the state legislature continues to cut back on funds.

Behavior problems occur and the punishment is solitary confinement for a day. When this method is no longer effective, a doctor is brought in to administer shock treatments. If the first technique doesn't work, the second definitely will. They produce the desired result — a mindless and vegetable-like person. I saw what the effects of the treatment are on twins my sister lives with — the one who had the treatment was obviously in a stupor.

Although there is no question that the mentally retarded would be better off in the community, locking them away in institutions is more expedient and less expensive for those who control this society. For people like Nelson Rockefeller who run

the government and sit on the boards of directors of both institutions and industry, material gains, high productivity, status, and wealth are the driving forces of their lives. And they view humanity in those terms: if you don't produce, you're nothing — you don't deserve to live like a human being. If you're retarded and will never be highly productive, you deserve to be pushed aside, like the old or the unskilled, the dregs of humanity, only spoken of when election year comes around. In 1968, one of Governor Rockefeller's big campaign pledges was more money for New York State mental institutions. But when the Willowbrook horror story broke earlier this year, he didn't even apologize for it as an "oversight!"

Obviously, these crimes against humanity are being exposed — by the families of retarded people who cannot let their loved ones suffer and be forgotten by society any longer, and by the people who work with the retarded who are fed up with the lack of facilities and meaningful alternatives in the system. Retarded people deserve to participate to their fullest measure in all that a society has to offer.

The following letter is dedicated to poor and working women and their children:

Dear Sisters,

I have just returned from Cuba and have seen how the Cuban society treats its people, especially the children. Since I have come back, many women have asked me what such a major social change as the Cuban Revolution would mean for us in this country. The only way I can explain it is to say, "Try to imagine yourself in Cuba."

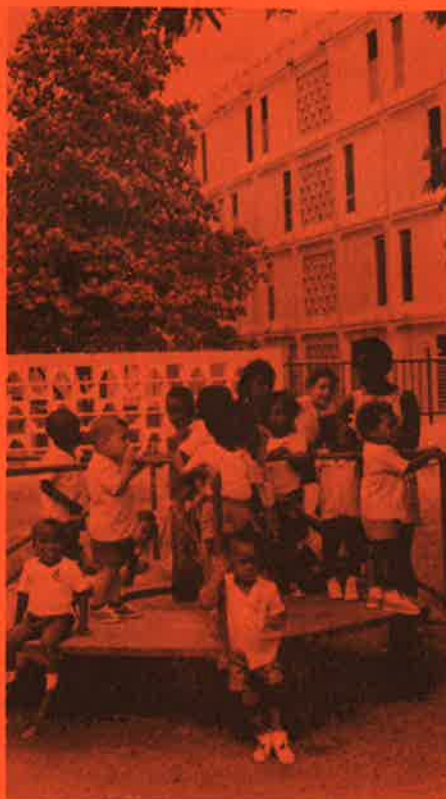
If you are pregnant in Cuba, rather than dirty clinics, long lines, and huge doctor's bills, you have the best medical care, free of charge. Clinics are being built in every housing project, along with stores, laundries, and schools, so everyone's needs are provided for in the immediate, living community. You don't have to go begging for a doctor to examine you; instead, nurses come to your home. A special diet is provided.

If you choose to, you can work while you are pregnant. But whatever your decision, you never have to worry about losing your job, or risk losing your baby because you're forced to work until the last moment. In Cuba, the paid maternity leave is 1½ months before and after the birth.

And when your child is born, you would desperately worry, wouldn't you, about who is going to care for the baby when you go back to work — if you still have your old job, or how you will pay for the babysitter. But, not in Cuba. There is a free day care center where, at 45 days, your baby can go and receive medical attention, meals, clothing as well as constant loving care. You need not worry if the child misses you, for the day care center is right near where you work. You are given at least one hour a day off with pay to tend to your child.

How many times have you feared when your child gets sick because it means you might have to take off work, without pay, or take your child to a clinic you don't trust or a doctor you can't afford? Why should we have to dread anything about our children's getting sick, other than sickness itself? You wouldn't worry if you were a Cuban mother, because if you had to stay at home to care for your child for a day, a week, or even a year, your job would still be there and you wouldn't lose any pay. And you wouldn't have to worry too much about the illness either, because your child would be getting the best medical care available — free, of course.

Cuba Loves



Her Children

And if your child is in the hospital, you can stay with her or him day and night. Not only that, the *clinics* make sure that all children get their shots and check-ups.

Now, when school begins, will your children receive a good education? Will they have clothing, food, and books? Will they continue school and if they graduate, will they have any skills so that they can get a decent job? In fact, will there be any jobs?

In Cuba, education is the right of every single child. Illiteracy has been completely wiped out. Schools are being built all over the country, especially in the countryside. I know, I was part of a work team that helped build one.

The young people help build and care for their schools. They have their own student organizations which take part in governing the school. All students are fed and clothed; boarding school is available for those who want it. All schools and educational facilities are free. One school I visited was the Camillo Cienfuegos School, which had been built by the rebel army

right after the revolution in 1959. It was for the children of the peasants who had been the poorest sector of the population. The students at this school are learning to become teachers.

What happens if you have a child who is mentally or emotionally ill? Will they suffer ridicule and humiliation? Will the school give them drugs so that they sit in a stunned stupor all day? Will they finally be forced to drop out and go to a state school, perhaps a Willowbrook, where the child might be brutalized, starved, used as a guinea pig, and forced to vegetate its life away?

My dear sisters, in Cuba the women would tell you not to worry because there are special schools built — new, beautiful, and clean. Every facility is made available, free of charge, to the mentally ill or retarded child or adult. They are taught how to live to the best of their ability, as productive, working members of society.

I saw one such mental hospital, and my first thought was that if you loved someone and they were mentally ill, this is the place that you would build for them. There are huge rose gardens tended by the patients, whose roses are famous throughout Cuba, as well as chickens to raise and crafts to produce. Sports are an important part of everyone's day. There are no guards or cells. The rooms are light and airy, and flowers are everywhere. The care, yes, is excellent.

Or perhaps you are worn down and brutalized because you are Black, Puerto Rican, Chicana, or an orphan or an "illegitimate" child. In Cuba, every child by the right of birth is heir to all that society can offer. I saw school after school where Black and white, boys and girls, are involved in their own education and that of others.

When there are any "disciplinary" problems, they are worked out in a most compassionate way. Perhaps this is because the idea of competition is never instilled in the students. Instead, everyone is thought of as being responsible to and for each other. A good student, for example, is not necessarily the one for whom study comes easily, but the one who tries to offer what she or he knows to others. The underlying idea is that the better you do, the better all the rest do. There is a slogan for education: "Those who know more teach those who know less."

(continued to page 26)