

Crusade for rights of children set to begin

By FRED A. BERNSTEIN

On the morning of March 22, the U.S. National Commission for the International Year of the Child opens a two-day session of public hearings in Detroit on the problems and needs of children in our society. Children and child-care advocates will come together at the public forum to express their views on their grievances and make specific suggestions to the National Commission. These open sessions are the only public hearings in which the National Commission, based in Washington, D.C., is currently scheduled to participate directly during 1979. The sessions are part of a year-long effort by the commissioners to gather citizen input to aid them in preparing a final report for President Carter on the living conditions of children in the U.S.

Carol Tice, National Commission member from Michigan, commented

on the Commission and the hearings. "I have never seen a group of people so eager to grasp hold of the realities of the situation with respect to children's needs," she said. "That is why we made the commitment to come to Detroit and invite public hearing. I would expect our outlook on the needs of the American child, the Midwest child, will be considerably broadened by the wide range of testimony we will hear in the Detroit metropolitan area."

According to Diana Thottungal, coordinator of the Southfield-based Citizens for the International Year of the Child, the impact of the hearings will be similar to that of the International Women's Year.

"We, in the metropolitan Detroit area have an opportunity unique in the nation to make ourselves heard on these concerns we have relating to our children," she said. We are especially glad to see that the commission is mak-

ing an effort to hear not just the professionals but also the real experts, the parents and children themselves."

The public hearings will take place on Thursday, March 22, in the Community Arts auditorium at Wayne State University from 9-12:30 p.m., 2-4 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. On Friday, March 23, the sessions will be on the 13th floor auditorium of the City-County Building in Detroit, from 9-12:30 p.m. A business meeting which is open to the public for observation only will take place from 9-12:30 p.m. on March 23.

Anyone concerned with the problems of children may attend and submit oral or written testimony. That includes individuals and community agencies or groups, adults and children, professionals and non-professionals. All written testimony will be included in the official record of the hearing. Joan Young, chairperson of the National Commission will open the sessions.

A wide range of subjects is expected to be discussed, including child nurtur-

ing in the family and community, health, education, juvenile justice, recreation, play and the arts for children's development, fostering equal opportunity and cultural diversity, impact of media on children, children around the world.

Translated into everyday terms, these issues come down to questions such as: What are our children eating? Where can we turn for help in a family crisis? How can teenagers best be prepared for the working world? What role can the elderly play in the nurturing and education of the young? What are our kids watching on TV? How can the working parent secure quality day care? Why are so many children vulnerable to drugs and alcohol and what can we do about it?

Stephanie Riley, director of Lowry Pre-school at Oakland University and member of the Metro Detroit Association for the Education of the Young Child, said it is appropriate that the public express their opinions to the Na-

tional Commission directly.

"If we pass up this opportunity to involve the general public, we are neglecting a very large percentage of the people who are concerned on a daily basis with children and their needs," she said. There's a great need to coordinate services to children so that we can deliver the very best social services and education."

Chris Magnus, public relations coordinator and co-founder of the 3 o'clock Lobby, a statewide organization of high school students, run by students, hopes to see lasting results emerge from the consciousness raising happening during the Year of the Child.

Members of the 3 o'clock Lobby will attend the public hearings and present our views on critical decisions that have to be made by legislatures around the country regarding issues in juvenile justice, institutionalization of your people, status offenses, children as property of parents, rights and protection of abused and neglected chil-

dren. We feel there is a real need for youth to participate in the decision making processes on issues directly affecting their lives."

Dr. John Dersey, a Birmingham pediatrician and member of the Michigan branch of the American Academy of Pediatrics, sees the hearings as an opportunity to address the issues of health care for children. High on his personal agenda is accident prevention and the legislation of mandatory automatic seat restraint systems for infants and children, or alternatively, tax credit for purchasers of the restraint system.

A lounge will be available for parents with small children at the site of the hearings. Further information is available on the procedure for submitting written and oral testimony prior to the hearings and on the spot through the Citizens for the International Year of the Child, by calling 352-3194 or 224-0055.

m.m.memos

Pausing in a department store last week, I couldn't miss a trio of conversants — a mother and two mid-size daughters. They were jacket-shopping at the next rack.

"It was fairly obvious that Mom had gone into the store planning to buy one girl a new jacket, but equally obvious that she wasn't going to make it home with sanity and temper intact unless she purchased two jackets."

Certainly I felt for the mother. I've stood right in her spot many times, and through those experiences I learned that what's fair isn't always equal when it comes to outfitting clothes-conscious young ladies.

Is it right, for instance, to buy the new ottener for the older and taller, when the younger and shorter is perennially well supplied with almost-new garments? Should equal value be considered? And how about special occasion purchases? These momentous matters come in for regular debate in families of girls.

I also learned in a series of clothes encounters (wish I could claim that pun as an original) that my judgment sometimes gave way to temper and bad decisions in a matter I sometimes considered was taking too much time and attention.

Anyway, I write this mainly because somewhere along the road of rearing four daughters I came up with a farming — probably also unoriginal but quite



By MARGARET MILLER

successful in my clan. I only wished I had started earlier.

A few years ago, we agreed that from then on, a clothing allowance would be dispensed. A given sum was determined after due consideration, and it was understood that it was to cover all clothing purchases and a share of beautification matters like haircuts.

I agreed I'd make no impulse purchases on their behalf; they agreed they would try to plan ahead to cover major items.

That was about five years ago and I report great success with the system. The "can I have?" requests with respect to new finery were ended. Instead I asked them "can you afford?"

Loans have been negotiated occasionally, and requests for my sewing time, but in the main I have with great delight washed my hands wardrobe responsibility and been able to sit back and enjoy the fashion show.

Maybe the mother at the rack would like to try it. After she's paid for those two jackets.

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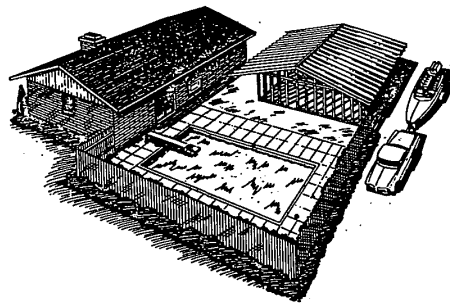
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