

Crusade for rights of children set to begin

By FREDA 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. Children and child advocacy advocates will gather together at the public forum to express their needs, 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 commission 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 Midwestern child, will be considerably broadened by the work of the commission when we hear in the Detroit metropolitan area."

According to Diana Thattungal, 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 those concerns we have relating to our children," she said. We are especially glad to see that the commission is mak-

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 can we do to help the elderly play in the nurturing and educational role? 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 Preschool 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 negating a very large percentage of the people who are concerned 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 Dorsey, a Birmingham pediatrician and member of the Michigan branch of the American Academy of Pediatricians, sees the hearings as an opportunity to address the issues of health care for children. High on his personal agenda is accident prevention and regulation 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 phone for submitting written and oral testimony prior to the hearings and on the spot through Citizens for the International Year of the Child, by calling 352-3194 or 224-0055.

m.m.memos



By MARGARET MILLER

Pausing in a department store last week, I couldn't miss a trio of consumers: 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's 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 teenagers.

It is right, for instance, to buy the new off-the-rack 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 (I wish I could claim that put as an original) that my judgment sometimes gave way to temper and bad decisions. As a matter of fact I sometimes considered 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 formula — probably also unoriginal but quite

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

A few years ago, we agreed that, from then on, a clothing allowance would be dispersed. A given sum was determined after due consideration, and it was understood that it was to cover all clothing purchases and a chance for 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, but I require for my sewing time, in the main I have great delight watching my girls grow, absorbing responsibility and being 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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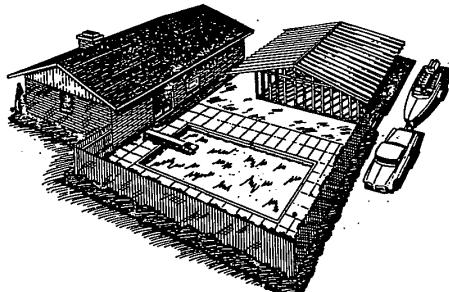
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