

# Dr. Spock urges more help for working parents

By Kathy Friedrichs  
special writer

The pediatrician of the postwar baby boom says this country is falling down in its programs for today's babies and young children.

Specifically, Dr. Benjamin Spock takes Ronald Reagan's administration to task for considering cuts in day-care programs and thinks there should be help for working parents like the support systems he has seen in Sweden and Hungary.

"It's time for us to get angry and put some fear of God into Reagan about the need for good child care," he told the fifth biennial conference of the Childbirth Without Pain Education Association, meeting in Detroit.

Describing administration budget cutters as being "like vandals who chuckle as they destroy things," Spock urged convention delegates to write to congressional representatives about projected day-care cuts.

The question of child rearing by working parents is the largest one he has encountered in recent times, the author of "Baby and Child Care" told an audience of about 100 in the McGregor Memorial Conference Center at Wayne State University.

He said he supports parental care for the first three years, and noted that in Sweden and Hungary there are governmental subsidies for mothers who do

not hold outside jobs during that time.

"I think our government should subsidize parents willing to stay home with their children," he added. "But after three years almost all children can benefit from good nursery or day care." Bias against group care, he said, is a holdover from the days of "baby farms" and is no longer valid.

THE LAST FEW decades have seen major changes in views about birthing and early nurturing, the pediatrician, now 78, told his audience of natural childbirth advocates.

He mentioned particularly the use of drugs for mothers in labor and forceps in the birth process, the hospital stays of 12 days and the hospital policies discouraging breastfeeding.

"It is a good example of how medicine gets off on the wrong track for years and years before someone has the sense to question it," Spock said.

"Back then nurses did all the care of babies, and mothers could hold them only during the last couple of days in the hospital."

That situation, he said, led to the first edition of his famous book, because he and other pediatricians tended to receive an enormous number of calls from new mothers in their first weeks at home.

"Baby and Child Care" sold more than 750,000 copies in each of its first 20 years on the market, Spock said.

In his talk, the famed baby doctor reiterated a favorite theme, that parents should trust their own instincts.

"The commonest problem in American society today is the insistence that true knowledge rests with the professionals," he said.

HE CONDEMNED American society as "tense, aggressive and much too competitive." He cited examples of "ordinary, visible abuse of children that you don't see in the rest of the world."

"We must change the direction of society to one that relies on spiritual values such as love and family," he added. "Family life is the most important part of life."

Spock denied once again the label of "the grandfather of permissiveness" which he said has been hung on him.

"That accusation first made by the Rev. Norman Vincent Peale Jr. was a political one," he said, "because people resented my stand against the Vietnam war."

He added that statements by Spiro Agnew had done the most damage to his reputation.

"And he turned out to be a crook," Spock said. "No one can blame me for having brought up Spiro Agnew."

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