

Corporate life called strain on families

AP — Competition is pressuring American businesses into a survival mentality that is damaging families and communities, according to a report called "The State of Families."

Researcher J. Morton Darrow said in a Washington news conference that pressures to make profits, fend off takeovers and battle market competition will erode corporate social consciousness.

His report was prepared for Family Service America, an organization of 290 local non-profit family-service agencies across the nation.

The United States is one of the few nations without a formal government policy on families, Darrow said, and in the current changing economy there is no longer even

agreement on what constitutes a family.

WITH GROWING divorce and remarriage, the United States is moving from a nation in which parents had many children to one in which children have many parents, he said. This results in different needs and pressures for families.

While in past years many corporations developed a sense of social responsibility in dealing with their employees and the communities where they operated, this is often no longer possible, Darrow said.

Today the picture is one of massive layoffs, plant closings, transfer of jobs overseas and middle-management changes, reducing the quality of work life, he said.

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Darrow said the trends create fear among managers, who are restructuring business into a "lean and mean" situation that reduces the resources available to promote employee and family loyalty to the company.

THIS is compounded by the need for many women to enter careers and to balance job and family, he

said, but child-care facilities are lacking.

He predicted a result will be increasing pressure for the institution of comparative work pay scales in coming years.

"This is going to be the hot issue of the 1990s," he said, stressing this effort to raise pay for women will become a major family policy question.

Chamber to start petition drive

The State Chamber of Commerce will start a petition drive to place the Accident Fund of Michigan question before Michigan voters in November 1988.

The board of directors also reaffirmed its support for independent operation of the Accident Fund, the state's largest carrier of workers' compensation insurance.

The Accident Fund has been in conflict with state officials over its status since 1976, when Attorney General Frank J. Kelley ruled it a state agency, contradicting previous opinions.

The fund was created by law in 1912 when the first workers' comp law was passed and private insurers had no experience ratings in the field.

"THE STATE Chamber believes that in order to avoid unfair competition with the private sector, the Accident Fund should remain an independent organization or be permitted to become a mutual insurance company," said the chamber's resolution.

"If the Accident Fund has accumulated a surplus, we think the surplus should be returned to the fund's policyholders."

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"We are opposed to additional state-ordered rate decreases because further intervention by state government in an already competitive market is unwarranted."

The state Senate in March passed a bill to clarify the private company status of the Accident Fund. It is stalled in a House committee.

MEANWHILE, the state Court of Appeals in October issued a stay of enforcement of an Ingham Circuit Court ruling that held the Accident Fund to be a state agency.

Frank Nerat, Accident Fund assistant manager and general counsel, said he appreciated the state chamber's action calling for a voter petition drive.

"The Accident Fund has been operating as a successful private insurance company since 1912, and a state takeover of the Accident Fund would be detrimental to the insurance industry in our state because the state would be in the insurance business and at the same time, regulating other insurance companies — clearly a conflict of interest," said Nerat.

Cut deficit more, Chrysler VP says

It will take a budget deficit cut of \$100 billion — not the \$23 billion Congress and the president are talking about — "to convince the world that we're serious about" solving our economic problems, Chrysler Corp. vice chairman Robert S. Miller said.

Speaking to a regional conference of business students in Novi, Miller noted that the only ways to reduce the budget deficit are to reduce spending and raise taxes.

"Nobody likes higher taxes and fewer government programs, but until we face up to the inevitable, we'll continue to be stuck with the intolerable," he added.

Miller noted that Americans —

more than \$7 trillion in debt, "nearly \$35,000 for every man, woman and child in America. We're consuming more than we're producing and borrowing like there's no tomorrow."

"The stock market finally woke up to this, and all hell broke loose," he said. "The days of paper profits and the 'feel good' times they fostered — are over."

Miller also called for a reform of the tax code, and said "someone ought to show a little courage for a change and propose shifting the national tax burden from producers to consumers through some form of a consumption tax. That's the way it's done in every other industrialized nation."

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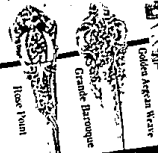
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