POINTS OF VIEW

# Rising poverty rate due to never-married mothers

William F. Buckley's conservative National Review had a bit of doggerel that's particularly appropriate to Michigan this year. It purports to be a Liberal's definition of "family."

"FAMILY, n. A social unit involving a mother, a father and children; a father, a father and children; a mother, a mother and children; a father and children; a mother and children; children and children; a social worker and children; a lawyer and a child; the Children's Defense Fund, a lawyer and a child; or any group of people who appear together on 'Donahue'."

In Michigan, the Children's Defense Fund's line is being circulated and supplemented by a Lansing outfit calling itself "Kids Count," a collaborative effort of the Michigan League for Human Services and various offices of Michigan State University.

The point of their poorly done documents is that child poverty is due to societal — particularly governmental — neglect. Naturally, they propose increased federal spending for Job Corps, something called a "children's initiative" and federal support payments when deadbeat parents fail to meet their obligations.

Well, I find the same flaw with the Children's Defense Fund that I've been finding with Michigan's Department of Social Services. The welfare lobby won't point the finger at the cause of rising poverty rates — births to never-married women.

The welfare professionals are slick. They put the issue in terms of children. The truth, of course, is that government doesn't make welfare payments to children. It pays parents with children.

There are two basic kinds of welfare recipients: divorced or separated mothers who need help for an average of 18 months, then get on their feet; and never-married, never-will-be-married mothers who will raise their children on welfare.

TIM RICHARD

**I find the same flaw with the Children's Defense Fund that I've been finding with Michigan's Department of Social Services.**

I'm proud our government helps down-and-out people for a while. I'm not so happy about helping permanent "clients" of the system, having child after child as if they didn't know what caused it. The reason is that their numbers just grow and grow and grow.

When times are bad, the caseload goes up. When times are good, the caseload still goes up. You can't blame the economy.

Children's Defense Fund and the welfare lobbyists gloss over this extremely important distinction by referring to "single" parents. They abhor pinning responsibility. Our problem is the never-married group and the males who sire their children, not those who need temporary help.

Welfare lobbyists tell us how poverty in Michigan affects persons under age 18:

- 12.4 percent of whites.
- 46.2 percent of blacks.
- 18.6 percent of the total.

What the welfare lobbyists hide is the census data for births to never-married women. It's 12 percent among whites, 60 percent for blacks and 22 percent overall. Now compare those numbers to the poverty percentages. The correlation is almost one-to-one.

The conservatives, religious right and evangelicals have their cure: Say no to pre-marital sex. Their cure hasn't worked, but at least they know the cause.

The liberals in the welfare lobby don't even know the cause.

*Tim Richard reports regularly on the local implications of state and regional events.*

LETTERS

## On Warner Block

Nice story on the beautification awards in the Nov. 23 Observer. All accolades were well deserved, as well as that wonderful Farmington spirit of keeping our hometown front and center beautifully cared for.

Also well-deserved were the kudos to the Sakutas for their fine restoration of what seems to be called the "Cook Building," but which for many decades and far after Fred Cook had it was always known hereabouts as "The Warner Block."

The beautiful brick two-story Italianate commercial building was built in 1874 by P. Dean Warner. It was never the Cook Building either before or 40 years after the fire.

Its second story tall windows were Italianate, very much like the side and second story windows in the Governor's Mansion (The Farmington Museum) which was also built by P.D. Warner, foster-father of Gov. Fred Warner, in 1867-69.

The commercial building east of Farmington Road (known for many years as Division Street) was the Warner General Merchandise store and later hardware emporium. See picture p. 33 in the Governor Warner biography. Fred Cook clerked in this store from the later 1890s on. When Warner was elected governor in 1904 he sold the store to three of his employees (see p. 122). It was not until 1911-1915 that the store was remodeled (modernized) by its new owners and as part of the modernization program bore the lettering F.M. Cook Building. The tall 19th century second story windows were enlarged to an early 20th century wider program.

But it was still known as "The Warner Block" despite its new owners and sign change. Yes, it was also the Fred Cook Building, and it is only fitting that Fred's granddaughter, Judy Cook, devotes so much time and energy to the community and is a member of the Historical Commission.

But this does still not allow today's modernist to wipe eternally from the slate "The Warner Block" which adorns all the postcards of Farmington from the early 20th century and which occasionally turn up at antique sales.

If Sakuta wishes to know more about his building's builder, a step inside Farmington City Hall will reveal a copy of his 19th century portrait and a partial list of his achievements.

He was also the first president of the new Village of Farmington in 1867, the 125th anniversary of which this community has just finished celebrating. But Farmington didn't "begin" in 1867. It had been here since 1824 and was already 43 years old when 1867 came along.

We are very grateful to the Sakutas for their fine job of restoration in our business section. But Farmington has a long and noble history, and in the mist of the 19th century our revisionism must not lose sight of what really happened long ago.

**Jean M. Fox, Farmington Hills**

## Many made a difference

For over 15 years, Lighthouse has been assembling Thanksgiving baskets for thousands of residents of north Oakland County. This year the goal of Lighthouse in Pontiac and Lighthouse North in Clarkston was to feed 2,050 families. It almost seemed an impossible task. However between Sunday, Nov. 22, and Wednesday, Nov. 25, seniors in Waterford got meals delivered, families in Pontiac picked up baskets, and single moms and their children in Independence Township had a turkey and all the trimmings.

May God bless all of you that made Thanksgiving 1992 a success!

Your church, your school, your business, your club, your neighborhood and your heart made it all happen! We had to turn away volunteers because of lack of space! Volunteers helped us deliver baskets to homebound seniors and carry bags and boxes for the weak and the lame (and there are so very many).

We can't thank you individually in this letter but you know who you are. On Thanksgiving day your turkey tasted better and your pies tasted sweeter because you knew you really made a difference on that special day.

**K. Noreen Keating, chief executive officer**

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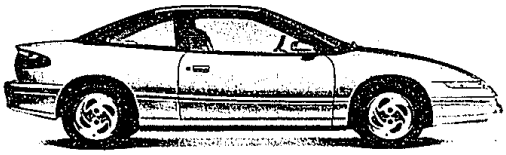

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