I. PURPOSE

To urge congressional action on child care, and release two reports which focus on efforts of the business community to meet child care needs: (1) the Treasury Working Group on Child Care report, *Investing in Child Care*; and (2) the Department of Labor report, *Meeting the Needs of Today's Workforce: Child Care Best Practices*. You will also announce a new commitment by the Department of Labor to reach out to 1,000 new companies by this time next year, to serve as a clearinghouse for businesses interested in child care, and to set up a business-to-business mentorning program on child care.

II. BACKGROUND

Legislative Update on Child Care

The primary goal of the event is to urge Congress to act on child care this year. Numerous child care bills have been introduced by Democrats and by Republicans since you announced your child care initiative earlier this year. Many of the bills incorporate the Administration's key child care priorities -- substantial new subsidies and tax credits to help low- and middle-income families pay for child care; investments to help states and communities improve the quality of early childhood programs; a new tax credit for businesses that provide child care services; and an expansion of before- and after-school programs. Further, several of the tobacco proposals (Conrad, Fazio, and Kennedy) would direct a portion of tobacco revenue to child care and early childhood programs.

While the challenges facing child care legislation are major, there are strong Congressional leaders who are committed to urging action this year. These include Senators Dodd, Kennedy, Kerry, Chafee and Snowe, as well as Representatives Kennelly, Tauscher, and DeLauro. Importantly, the bipartisan Congressional Caucus for Women, lead by Representatives Norton and Johnson, recently released a letter to Speaker Gingrich urging that Congress pass child care legislation.

Despite the interest in child care, there are serious obstacles to the Administration's proposals. As you know, the Senate Budget Resolution targets all tobacco funds to Medicare. While the Resolution allows for up to $9 billion for expanded child care tax credits and $5 billion to increase discretionary spending for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, cuts in other essential programs would be required to offset the discretionary spending increase. Further, the Republican leadership has attempted to pit child care investments for working families against tax credits for stay-at-home parents. Both houses passed sense of the Congress resolutions emphasizing that any child care proposal must include significant new funding for stay-at-home parents. In addition, the Republican leadership is intent on stalling child care legislation. Despite a push by the its Democratic members, the House Ways and Means Committee has not scheduled any hearings on child care. Only recently was Senator Chafee able to schedule a child care hearing before his Finance Subcommittee (which was held today).

Release of Final Report of Treasury Working Group on Child Care

Investing in Child Care is the final report of the Treasury Working Group on Child Care, which you had asked Secretary Rubin to lead. The working group is made up of business, and includes Sandy Weill, CEO of CitiGroup; Randy Tobias, President of Eli Lilly; and John Sweeney, President of the AFL-CIO. Children's advocates have been particularly excited about this initiative, as it represents the first time a Treasury Secretary focused on child care issues.

The Treasury report discusses what businesses can do to promote access to affordable, high quality child care for their employees, highlights a wide range of best practices, and presents evidence that investing in child care makes good business sense. The report features the results of the most comprehensive survey to date of the effects of work/family policies on companies' bottom lines. The study reported more than two-thirds of respondents find that the benefits from child care programs are greater than the costs, or that the programs are cost-neutral.

Release of Labor Department Report and Announcement of New Commitment

The Labor Department report that will be released at the event, *Meeting the Needs of Today's Workforce: Child Care Best Practices*, also highlights best practices of the corporate sector to offer child care assistance to their workers. The examples are primarily gleaned from the Labor Department's Honor Roll of companies with model family-friendly workplace practices. In addition to releasing this report, you will announce a new Department of Labor initiative to reach out to 1,000 companies over the next year to provide technical assistance to employers who want to offer child care to their workers. The Department will provide information directly to companies through the launch of a new website and will connect businesses that have led the way on child care to businesses who are just starting to think about the work and family demands of their employees.

While the Rose Garden event will spotlight best practices in the corporate community and urge greater private sector commitment to child care, the message from the event and the CEO's themselves will be that child care problems can only be fully addressed with significant new government investment.

Take Our Daughters to Work Day

April 23rd is the sixth annual Take Our Daughters to Work Day. The Ms. Foundation for Women began the program in 1993 to address issues facing adolescent girls aged nine to fifteen. The program gives girls the opportunity to visit a work setting with a parent or friend so they can see all of the different jobs women do. This year's theme is "Imagine A Day," encouraging girls to imagine what it would be like for them to work anywhere and do anything. Daughters will be accompanying many of the guests participating in the Rose Garden event.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Clinton Crisis (Cont'd)

Kevin Merida's article on why female supporters are sticking with President Clinton despite the headlines of the past couple of weeks seems to tell half the story ["He's Just Their Bill," Style, Jan. 31]. The fact that President Clinton has appointed women to important posts in his Cabinet and courts has, no doubt, not been lost on women. It's also true that he has lined up with women on issues such as day care and choice, and that Hillary Rodham Clinton stands by him on these issues and his denial of certain events.

Perhaps the most important reason that most females tend to remain supportive of President Clinton, however, is the fact that the Republican alternative seems so lacking on the matter of helping and promoting women. If the Republicans were fielding more female candidates such as Nancy Johnson, Connie Morella and Christy Whitman, women would take notice. If the GOP got behind someone like Colin Powell, who is pro-choice and for reasonable gun control, it would seem to be more female friendly. As long as the Republican Party stands in stark contrast to the Clinton administration on issues favored by the majority of women, the gender gap will continue.

GEORGE A. DEAN
Southport, Conn.

■

When the story originally broke, I viewed President Clinton's alleged sexual tryst with the intern Monica Lewinsky as something separate from the fabric of my daily life. It was little more than an intriguing but increasingly monotonous news story that the press was stretching out of proportion. I am and have been a champion of President Clinton. I am a young liberal who sleeps infinitely better at night now that Ronald Reagan and George Bush have left Washington. My attitude is reflected in the polls: I approve of what President Clinton is doing in office and don't really care what he does in bed and with whom.

A recent experience changed my (admittedly) blase view. I am a teacher at a Quaker school, and on a recent morning I had to confront two of my middle-school students whom I suspected of cheating on a test. Given the substantial evidence, I hoped that they would admit to their crime, suffer the consequences and grow from the experience. However, as I listened to them claim an innocence that I could not believe, I was for a moment pulled in by their storytelling.

I know in my heart that either one or both were lying. And a thought came creeping in, unbidden, as I stared into the wide eyes of the two students: How can I expect or demand honesty from these children if I can't expect even a modicum of veracity from my national leaders? Images of President Clinton's pallid denial of an improper sexual relationship with that woman, Monica Lewinsky, surfaced as I confronted my pupils.

I am but one of a thousand teachers trying to help raise strong, competent and moral citizens; I control my actions carefully, because adolescents always seem to monitor the shortcomings of adults most quickly. But I am now braced, trying to stave off the harsh demands of cynicism, and feeling as if we've been stepped on nationally, tarnished in some indefinable way. It also disturbs me, as a person who tries to hold true to core values such as truth and honesty, that I don't really want to know President Clinton's truth because of the partisan repercussions.

It does indeed take a village to raise happy, healthy and good children. However, it takes a village of committed truth-tellers, not wordsmiths. And it takes a chieftain whom we can believe—not just in our minds but in our hearts.

ANNE MILLER
Kensington

■

There's been a lot of talk, from the president on down, about what's wrong with our schools. The problem is neatly epitomized in a news story The Post ran Jan. 28 about Monica Lewinsky's former high school teacher who confessed (or proudly announced) that he'd had a "long-running affair" with her. He went on to acknowledge that this liaison had created some stress in his marriage, saying, "It has been a very difficult time for my wife and I." Between his morals and his grammar, Andy Bleiler, the teacher, serves as an index of the sort of problems this nation faces.

ANTHONY HECHT
Washington

First in San Francisco

Sen. Dianne Feinstein not only praised the late Joseph Alioto but also dealt a gratuitous slap, perhaps inadvertently, to former San Francisco mayor George Christopher with her comment that "Joe Alioto was the first mayor that made San Francisco into a big city" [Metro, Jan. 31].

The fact is that Mayor Christopher had already accomplished that feat in his own eight years as mayor (1956-1964). His dealings with world figures from Charles de Gaulle to Nikita Khrushchev put San Francisco on the global stage. He was praised by President Eisenhower for his handling of Khrushchev at the height of the Cold War. He brought a political convention and major league baseball to San Francisco.

His signature is written all over the biggest building boom in the city's history, from Candlestick Park to the Western Addition and the financial district. He reconstructed the police department into a respected, world-class force. He played the key role in winning approval of the Bay Area Rapid Transit System. So widely was he recognized that in his first term he was elected chairman of the American Municipal Association.

This is not said to diminish Joe Alioto's contributions to the city in any way. But first is first—and George Christopher was a builder and a doer of gigantic proportions. He earned San Francisco its big-city ranking as never before. Recently he was honored again in ceremonies and editorials on his 90th birthday.

I had the honor to serve as his confidential secretary in the office of the mayor from 1961 to 1964.

ROBERT M. SMALLEY
Arlington

Power From the Air

In his op-ed article "So We Control the Air" [Feb. 3], Joseph C. Cyrulik directs his obvious frustration over Iraq's defiance of the United Nations at the U.S. Air Force and air power in general. Unfortunately, he is confused and mistaken about the relationship among policy, use of force (and its limitations) and military capabilities, especially when it comes to current air and space capabilities.

On the most basic level, military capability means little without the will to use it. The logic of deterrence was based on a formula that included both capabilities and will. In the case of Iraq, Mr. Cyrulik confuses recent U.S. and U.N. policy indecision with the U.S. military's ability to achieve a military objective.

What aerospace power provides our national leaders is a tremendous capability that is flexible enough to be used in a situation such as Bosnia, where it did play a role in bringing the warring parties to the peace table, the Gulf War, where air power was applied across a theater of operations with devastating effect, or in the myriad humanitarian relief missions flown regularly by the U.S. Air Force.

As for air-power advocates, we don't say that air power won the Gulf War; we say that it was the decisive element in the coalition victory. The 38-day air campaign destroyed Iraq's command-and-control system, closed down bridges and supply routes and put the world's sixth-largest army out of business for the duration of the war. Air power also stopped Iraqi tanks headed toward Khafji in their tracks, and it destroyed two-thirds of Iraq's armor before the ground war began, saving countless American and allied lives. As spectacular as that record is, today's capabilities in air and space power easily exceed the standard set in the Gulf War.

Gen. Colin Powell, then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, put the Gulf War in context: "I have said it before, and I will say it again. Air power was decisive in that war. It made the rest of what we had to do much, much easier. Air power won the game ball in that contest. On another day in another war, the game ball may go to someone else."

No air-power advocate would claim that air and space assets, impressive though they are, can provide our policymakers all the intelligence they need, either. In the case of Iraq, there is no substitute for the work of the U.N. team painstakingly and intrusively inspecting suspected sites related to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. An intrusive inspection regime has always been a critical element of effective arms-control efforts.

Overall, Mr. Cyrulik dismisses the importance of air dominance too quickly and simplistically. If given a choice, U.S. ground commanders will opt for air dominance every time. But controlling the skies and effectively attacking ground targets does not necessarily neatly solve foreign policy problems. It can, however, play a role—sometimes a decisive role—as part of a broader political-military strategy.

DOYLE E. LARSON
President
Air Force Association
Arlington

The Washington Post

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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1998

JUDY MANN

Looking Out for the Children

Thirty years after mothers started entering the work force in significant numbers, we still do not have an adequate system of child care. That may finally be changing.

President Clinton is putting a series of children's initiatives, including a $21.7 billion plan to assist families with child-care needs, at the top of his agenda. For the first time, the President's Council of Economic Advisors' annual report on the economy contains a chapter devoted to the state of America's children and what needs to be done to help them.

Council Chairman Janet Yellen, in a briefing, said the official child poverty rate has fallen by 2.2 percent since 1993, yet one in five of all families—and one in two female-headed families—had incomes below the poverty level in 1996. This is a critical predictor of how well children will do in school, how will they perform on standardized tests and, ultimately, how much they will earn.

Among the president's proposals is one to expand health insurance coverage, with $24 billion over five years for uninsured children. His "children's budget" also would reduce class sizes, build and renovate schools, and expand affordable housing.

The proposals would be funded in part by $7.1 billion in receipts from the tobacco settlement legislation that Congress is expected to pass.

One key proposal would increase the tax relief for families with child- and dependent-care expenses. He would also index the expenses to inflation. The greatest tax relief would go to families with incomes of $20,000 to $40,000. Their maximum tax credits would at least double, according to an analysis by the National Women's Law Center.

The president's proposals also include $3.4 billion over five years to expand participation in Head Start and Early Start. He would also create a $3 billion "Early Learning" fund to improve the quality of care for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, along with spending $7.5 billion to expand programs for children up to the age of 13.

His program incorporates key elements of two child-care bills that were proposed last year by Rep. Rosa L. DeLauro (D-Conn.). These were bills that increased the funding for the Early Start program and created state grants—with Rep. Constance A. Morella (R-Md.) as chief Republican sponsor on the grants measure—to improve the quality and availability of care for very young children.

Clinton also wants to provide $500 million over five years in new tax credits for employers who offer child-care services for their workers.

Rep. Nancy L. Johnson (R-Conn.) has introduced a child-care bill that is similar to one introduced in the Senate by John H. Chafee (R-R.I.), Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah), Olympia J. Snowe (R-Maine) and Pat Roberts (R-Kan.). While they differ from the president's proposals in details and expenditures, these bills share a common framework with his plans.

They go far beyond the simplistic approach of cutting taxes for families and presuming that helps with child-care issues. In fact, cuts would have no impact on the quality or availability of child care. The Republican measures go the extra step on child care through increased tax credit relief, increased block grant funding to improve health and safety standards and added tax credits to employers who develop and run sites for their employees.

They also, for the first time, would make the Dependent Care Tax Credit available to families with a stay-at-home parent for a maximum $900 a year.

"It's very important," said Nancy Duff Campbell, of the National Women's Law Center. "It's the first Republican proposal out of the box, and it's saying, 'Let's not just cut taxes, let's do something about child care.' " She notes that a group of liberal senators led by Democrat Christopher J. Dodd, of Connecticut, introduced a child-care proposal this week that also would provide help for stay-at-home parents.

"What is significant is that all three of these are similar in the types of things they want to do. We are beginning to see that there is a real bipartisan interest in doing something on child care."

The various child-care proposals are coming early in the session, and they are signaling to both Democrats and Republicans that the proposals' backers are treating the issue seriously. By seizing the initiative with a broad-based plan, child-care proponents are marginalizing conservatives who see a tax cut as the solution or, worse, who claim we don't have a child-care problem at all.

Recent headlines about a child being accidentally locked in a center after it was closed are a painful reminder that we do have problems. What's encouraging is to see both the White House and Congress moving in the same direction on one of the most critical issues for America's families.

The Washington Post
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1998

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Abiding Repression in Vietnam

Despite reports to the contrary, Vietnam still does not have free emigration and does not deserve a waiver to the Jackson-Vanik amendment. The Post's Dec. 19 news story "U.S. May Waive Anti-Communism Law to Lessen Trade Restrictions on Vietnam", reported that, according to the White House, Vietnam has recently shown sufficient cooperation with a U.S. program to resettle repatriated Vietnamese boat people to justify a waiver of the free emigration requirement under the Jackson-Vanik amendment. The White House must have been either seriously misinformed or seriously misquoted by The Post.

With its eyes on most-favored-nation status, Vietnam indeed no longer requires exit permits as a precondition for repatriated boat people to gain access to U.S. interviewers. However, this rather minor technical modification can hardly qualify as a major improvement. Even for this limited group of repatriated boat people, Vietnam does not really drop its requirement on exit permission; it only delays this requirement to a later stage—successful applicants still need exit permission to emigrate.

For all other Vietnamese citizens—including many former political prisoners, political dissidents and religious leaders—exit permission remains a precondition for access to foreign delegations. The White House, if not misquoted by The Post, is once again sending the wrong signal to Communist Vietnam.

In establishing diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1995, the administration argued that "constructive engagement" would help promote political liberalization in that country. Since then more dissidents and religious leaders have been imprisoned. Freedom of the press has been much more severely curtailed than before. And this trend continues.

Last month the Ministry of Interior established a new center to further tighten its grip on the press. Less than two months ago, the chief editor of a trade journal was arrested on charges of divulging state secrets when in fact he only exposed corruption. Earlier in 1997, the government promulgated Executive Decree 31/CP, authorizing the administrative detention of all political suspects for up to two years without trial.

The United States should not reward Vietnam with trade privileges until the Vietnamese government makes significant concessions on human rights by truly honoring the right of its citizens to freely emigrate and by releasing all political and religious dissidents from its system of prisons and labor camps.

NGUYEN DINH THANG
Executive Director
Boat People S.O.S.
Fairfax

The Clergy: There Till the End

The Gallup poll numbers showing that "only 36 percent of respondents expected that a member of the clergy would offer real comfort to them in their dying days" is not as, Richard Morin suggests, "a stunning indictment of the clergy" [Unconventional Wisdom, Outlook, Dec. 15]. It might be so if 100 percent of the respondents were members of a house of worship and attended services there. My guess is that the 36 percent is made up of the same people who regularly worship and thus have a relationship with their priest, rabbi or pastor. The other 64 percent don't know us and so don't expect us to be at their bedsides as they die.

Most of us clergy willingly go to people who are dying, even if we don't know them. We take turns in local hospitals being with families who have no regular church.

These figures, far from indicting the clergy, may be a more realistic description of those who are serious about their faith than the overwhelming number who say they believe there is a God. I, for one, encourage those who think they are missing out on the care from clergy to begin worshipping regularly.

THE REV. THOMAS VAN BRUNT
Rector
St. Peter's Episcopal Church
Delaware, Ohio

Plugging Up the Pike

Having lived in Garrett Park—within walking distance of Rockville Pike—for almost 40 years, I have great familiarity with the enormous increase in the number of motor vehicles there over that time ["Is Rockville Pike at Its Peak?" front page, Dec. 26]. Some statistics from the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration indicate how we got into the colossal traffic jam on the pike, but not, I'm afraid, how to get out of it.

On April 30, 1953, 71,870 pleasure vehicles were registered in Montgomery County as well as 8,515 commercial vehicles, for a total of 80,385. On Nov. 30, 1996, the number had soared to 605,950 for vehicles of all categories. That's an increase of almost 800 percent in 43 years.

If that increase continues at the same rate, in 2040—43 years down the pike, so to speak—the number of vehicles registered in Montgomery County will be 4,847,600. The staff of the county Motor Vehicle Registration office will have to be increased, maybe even by 800 percent. We certainly hope not.

PAUL E. EDLUND
Garrett Park

Missing Citation

How—in his Dec. 28 op-ed column, "The Brooks Brothers Appeal"—did George Will omit the most famous literary mention of Brooks Brothers of all time? I refer to Mary McCarthy's story, "The Man in the Brooks Brothers Shirt." Since the story first appeared in the Partisan Review in 1941, it's been reprinted in 1942, 1946, 1960 and 1975, if not more often.

CHARLES OLSEN
Washington

A Skeptical Reader

I note some important inconsistencies in Lucy Murray's comments on the behavior of the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority's (WASA) employees, ["Cleaning Up the Water Authority," letters, Jan. 5].

First, Ms. Murray, who is on WASA's board of directors, says the employees' wrongful behavior "will not be tolerated." May I point out that it already has been and continues to be tolerated, so much so that The Post can report on it?

Second, she says that we can "expect more such horror stories" of defrauding D.C. taxpayers. Does she know more than she's telling but won't let us in on it?

Worst, does she really think that we will believe that "I also expect employees to know right from wrong. I expect them to say no to illegal and unethical behavior and to report all wrongdoing, no matter how uncomfortable it may make them."

These employees are "double dipping" off the taxpayers. And now Ms. Murray expects them to turn themselves or colleagues in? Get real. She gives me zero confidence in any future action by this WASA board.

ELAINE RAND
Washington

Judge Mason's Hands Were Tied

Steve Twomey's personal attack on Montgomery County Circuit Court Judge Michael D. Mason was lacking in facts regarding the legal process for dealing with adoption ["Wouldn't Bet His Life on It," Metro, Jan. 1].

Why didn't Mr. Twomey mention the legal burden that needs to be established in order to take away a child from its biological mother? Why doesn't he place the blame where it belongs: on misplaced social policies promulgated as a result of weak sociological studies rather than simply attack Judge Mason as a "gambler"?

We are a country of laws, for better or worse. There is not a scintilla of evidence that Judge Mason made a decision that in any way is inconsistent with the laws of this country.

For Steve Twomey to attack Judge Mason does a real disservice to Judge Mason. More important, The Post's readers probably believe that this awful result came about because the judge didn't do his job, rather than because we live in a country that hands a judge some bad choices.

DAVE SISLEN
Rockville

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The Washington Post, Wednesday, January 14, 1998

Michael Kelly

The Child-Care Experiment

BY JOHN OVERMYER

In the background paper that the White House provided for its child-care proposals last week, there was one page describing, in hard numbers, the way Americans care for their children. It was a depressing document.

In 1995, nearly 13 million—more than half—of the nation's 21 million preschool children were receiving child care from someone other than their parents. Of children under the age of 1, 45 percent were under such care. And these infants and toddlers and preschoolers are, on the average, in child care for a large chunk of their little lives: a 1990 study found that more than half of child-care children were in child care for 35 hours a week or more. Of school-age kids, every week an estimated 5 million come home to empty houses.

We are engaged in a vast and radical experiment on our children. We are betting, against the wisdom of the ages and the lessons of our own childhoods, that it does not really matter if parents leave to others the quotidian business of raising their young. The increasing evidence is that this is wrong. While it may sometimes be necessary for both parents to work full time, it is undeniably better for children that they be raised in their own homes, mostly by their own parents.

As the White House's data sheet noted, children in child-care programs are not, in a great many cases, well cared for. One four-year study of child-care centers rated only one out of seven as of good quality. This absence of quality reaches catastrophic levels in the care of poor children. In the bland bureaucratese of one report: "Many children living in poverty receive child care that, at best, does not support their optimal development and, at worst, may compromise their health and safety."

Most parents know the obvious truth, and they refuse to trust the raising of their children to the kindness and competence of strangers. In 22 percent of families where both parents work, the parents still care for their children themselves. When they turn to others, 25 percent use relatives, 17 percent use babysitters or nannies who mind the children in the sitters' own homes, and 5 percent use sitters or nannies in their own homes. Only 30 percent choose child-care centers.

In 22 percent of families where both parents work, the parents still care for their children themselves.

So, what would an intelligent child-care policy look like? It would seek to strongly discourage out-of-wedlock births. It would seek to strongly reinforce the idea that it primarily takes not a village but parents—two of them—to raise a child. It would offer help for parents who must work, but it would send an unmistakable message that, whenever possible, it is better that one parent stays home with the kids.

The policy put forward by the Clinton administration last week fails this. The main proposal, to increase funding for child-care block grants to the states for more subsidized child care for poor children, is a good and necessary idea. And it is not a bad thing to provide more after-school programs for kids, or to give businesses tax credits for child-care programs, or to enforce higher standards for health and safety in child-care centers.

But the policy as a whole is irrationally biased toward the form of child care most parents like least—institutionalized group care—and against what most parents want most: to be able to afford to have one parent stay home. This bias is most obvious in the proposal to offer tax credits of up to 50 percent of child-care expenses to low- and middle-income two-worker families—but nothing to families who keep a parent at home. Why does the administration seek an economic incentive for parents to choose work over child-rearing?

It doesn't, says Bruce Reed, the president's domestic policy adviser. But extending tax credits to all families with children would be awfully expensive, Reed worries. He's right. But if the administration is serious about the best interests of the children, it will correct the anti-home-care bias in its policy.

One possibility would be to enlarge the $500-per-child tax credit signed into last year's budget law. Another would be to give a parent who stays at home a tax rebate for at least the early years of a child's life, in partial reimbursement for the income sacrificed by the parent's lost job. Another is "income splitting," in which a one-income family may, for tax purposes, divide the income between husband and wife, both thus bumping down to lower tax brackets. Reed says the White House is "completely open to ideas on how best to help families where one parent decides to stay home with the children." He should be taken at his word and tested.

Michael Kelly is a senior writer for National Journal.

The Washington Post

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 1998

The President's Budget

THE BUDGET President Clinton sent to Congress yesterday contains no surprises. The White House flashed the main proposals well in advance, part of an effort, thus far successful, to have the president rather than the Republican Congress set the election-year legislative agenda.

The document's most important feature is something it does not contain—a large further tax cut of the kind that many Republicans advocate. A broad tax cut would be a mistake, which the president rightly seeks to head off by urging that any budget surplus be used to "save Social Security first" by paying down the debt. That's doubly good policy, and deft politics as well.

The president proposes some tax cuts of his own, but they would be confined to certain purposes—defraying the cost of child care, for example—and would be financed by offsetting tax increases rather than an indeterminate surplus. They and the proposed spending increases in his budget are also a good deal smaller than the surrounding rhetoric on either side would suggest. The imposing numbers both sides use are five-year aggregates. The president has more to boast about that way, the Republicans more to attack. On an annual basis, the proposals, while not trifling, are far more modest.

Mr. Clinton would pay for a fair amount of his program with a tobacco bill that he has thus far not submitted. He is relying on Congress to write it. He says that as a deterrent to smoking, it should raise the price of smoking $1.50 a pack in real terms over 10 years, and he proposes a division of the revenue. The problem with that will be if the money becomes more important than the rest of the bill, and the tobacco companies are able, as is their intent, to buy weaker legislation than might otherwise be passed.

The largest of the president's initiatives is the increase he suggests in child care subsidies, partly through tobacco-financed block grants to the states to help lower-income families, partly through an expansion of the existing dependent care tax credit for the middle class. The opening-up of Medicare to retirees below the age of 65 if they can afford the cost would be less important in fact—not that many could pay the premium—than as a political gesture and possible precedent for the longer-term restructuring of the program. Likewise, the environmental initiative in the budget is at least in part a repackaging. The president proposes increases in federal aid to elementary and secondary education, but that is a vast realm in which the federal government would continue—rightly—to play only a minor role.

The modest size of these proposals is in a way a tribute to the president. The budget sticks to the fiscal discipline only recently achieved. The president says in his budget message that the surplus now in sight "brings to an end three decades of fiscal chaos, a period in which Americans had lost confidence in their government and the ability of their leaders to do the people's business." But in fact, as his own good position on Social Security attests, this budget doesn't solve the long-term fiscal problem. It provides a platform from which it may be possible to solve it. The tax-cutters ought not be allowed to knock the platform down.

The Washington Post
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1998

E. J. Dionne Jr.

Day Care: A Two-Party Opening

It was odd and, some said, ironic that President Clinton issued his strongest denial of an affair with a White House intern at a news conference called to tout his child-care initiative, including more after-school programs for kids and teenagers.

The second was justified, rightly, as especially important because the hours from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. are the time when teens get into the most trouble and need something useful to do.

At the risk of putting aside the great scandal in favor of what we used to call, quaintly perhaps, "the issues," what hope is there for a sensible child-care initiative this year?

Scandal or not, this is one question where there is an opportunity for bipartisan concord—if the Republicans are flexible enough and if Democrats take into account the Republicans' reasonable objections to the president's ideas.

The worst thing would be for the argument to devolve into a fight over whether "the child-care crisis" is real or not, and whether Clinton is trying to foist a "big government" solution on the country.

There doesn't need to be a crisis for there to be a problem, and on child care, there's a problem. In many families, both parents work, either because both want to or because both have to, and often for the two reasons at once.

Upper-income families, understandably, complain about their child-care problems. But at least they have the money to solve them.

Families with moderate or low incomes often don't, and the government has not responded to changes in our work habits over the past three decades. As Clinton noted, our school system is geared to an agricultural economy in which children needed to go home by 3 p.m. With both parents in so many families working until 5 or 6 p.m. or later, the schools should adjust.

There is suspicion among some conservatives that this is a way to expand the time in which kids are under "the government's care," as if day care is some vast scheme to impose welfare-state brainwashing on kids. Gary Bauer, president of the Family Research Council, has offered a more tempered version of this argument. He is suspicious of any incentives created by government to make it easier for parents to hand off responsibility for their kids to government.

Well, yes, especially for young kids, parents should spend as much time with their kids as they can. But in real-life families, parents already struggle to find good things for their kids to do after school. Shouldn't the schools themselves help?

Rep. Marge Roukema, a moderate Republican from New Jersey, has some useful words here. "Our party would make a terrible mistake if we did not recognize that most women are out there working out of economic necessity," she said in an interview.

Although some Republicans, including Roukema, bridle at how much Clinton wants to spend, his proposal already makes concessions to Republican sensibilities, notably by putting a lot of the new spending into a block grant to help states create more day-care openings for lower-income families.

But the Republicans ask a fair question about expanding the dependent-care tax credit to help families with day-care expenses: Should the government discriminate against stay-at-home mothers—or, for that matter, fathers?

Roukema, who can hardly be seen as an agent of the far right, puts the issue plainly: "There has to be an explicit credit for the stay-at-home moms. They cannot be penalized. There should not be an unequal benefit for those who go to work."

Margy Waller of the Progressive Policy Institute, a moderate, Democratic-oriented think tank, notes that nearly 40 percent of the mothers of preschool children stay at home.

"The dependent-care credit has two large flaws," she says. "It is not available to entry-level workers who do not have sufficient tax liability to receive the benefit of the credit, and it discriminates against families who do not purchase child care for their children."

This part of the Clinton proposal can be fixed by expanding the $500-per-child tax credit passed last year, Waller says. It can be enhanced further by raising benefits to the parents of preschoolers.

Substantively, the government needs to bring our child-care practices in line with our work habits. Politically, the Republicans don't want to stand against working mothers, and Democrats don't want to stand against stay-at-home parents. In this case, both parties have the luxury of doing what's right and what's politically expedient at the same time.

The Washington Post
Tuesday, February 3, 1998

U.S. to Deport Saudi Who Balked in Bomb Inquiry

WASHINGTON, Jan. 22 (AP) — A Saudi dissident who backed out of an arrangement to help investigate a bombing that killed 19 American airmen in Saudi Arabia has been ordered deported on the ground he is a terrorist.

But officials with the Immigration and Naturalization Service have not yet decided where to send the man, Hani al-Sayegh. Their first choice would Saudi Arabia, but he has said he fears for his life if sent there. Mr. al-Sayegh is a member of the Shiite minority in Saudi Arabia and has been a politically active opponent of the monarchy there.

An I.N.S. spokesman, Russ Bergeron, said that Mr. al-Sayegh can ask to be sent to any country that will accept him, but that the Government is not bound by his wishes. Saudi Arabia has asked for him.

Mr. al-Sayegh had agreed to cooperate in the investigation of the truck bombing at the Khobar Towers military housing project near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, in June 1996. He pleaded guilty to taking part in an unrelated plot against Americans in Saudi Arabia that was never carried out.

Last June Canada expelled him for suspected terrorist activity; the allegation was that he drove a car that signaled the driver in the truck carrying explosives when to pull up to Khobar Towers. He was sent to the United States to be prosecuted, but never was granted formal entry into the United States.

Upon arrival, he reneged on the agreement to avoid prosecution, saying he had not understood it, knew nothing about the Khobar attack and was out of Saudi Arabia when the bombing occurred.

In October, a Federal judge dropped the American charges, saying prosecutors did not have enough evidence. Mr. al-Sayegh's lawyer, Frank Carter, said the Government only had his client's statements about the aborted plot and could not use them once the deal fell apart.

The deportation order was made by William Yates, the I.N.S. eastern regional director, in Burlington, Vt., Mr. Bergeron said. Mr. Yates concluded that Mr. al-Sayegh had engaged in terrorism, Mr. Bergeron added.

Because the order is based on national security, Mr. al-Sayegh has no right of appeal, the spokesman said. That prohibition, part of a new immigration law, has not yet been tested in court.

Mr. Bergeron said Mr. al-Sayegh would remain in custody. If the Service fails to deport him within six months, the law says, he must be released, or the Government must again demonstrate that he is a threat to keep him in custody.

For months American officials have tried to corroborate Saudi assertions that a Shiite group carried out the bombing. Saudi officials have several dozen suspects in custody but have not given the United States access to them.

Ex-Manila Leader Backs Crime Foe's Candidacy

MANILA, Jan. 22 (Reuters) — Former President Corazon C. Aquino of the Philippines gave her support today for the presidential candidacy of Manila's mayor, who has a reputation for tough methods in dealing with criminals.

Mrs. Aquino said she would campaign for Mayor Alfredo Lim up to the vote, set for May 11, citing the need to stamp out official corruption and crime syndicates backed by the military and the police.

Mr. Lim, a former police chief, is one of at least half a dozen politicians who have declared their candidacies. He is considered an underdog.

The two main contenders are thought to be Vice President Joseph Estrada, a former movie actor and standard bearer of the main opposition party, and José de Venecia, the Speaker of the House and the candidate of President Fidel Ramos's governing party.

Mr. Lim has pleased the Roman Catholic Church by closing hundreds of night clubs which he said were fronts for prostitution. Last year, he angered human rights groups by painting the houses of suspected drug traffickers with red signs reading "A drug pusher lives here" and "Drug pusher, get out."

Kenyan Candidate Seeks Nullification of Vote

NAIROBI, Kenya, Jan. 22 (Reuters) — Mwai Kibaki, the runner-up in Kenya's presidential election last month, filed a court petition today demanding the nullification of President Daniel arap Moi's victory, court papers showed.

Mr. Kibaki, the leader of the Democratic Party, listed 76 points in his petition, filed before the High Court of Kenya, challenging the validity of the election, held Dec. 29.

Mr. Moi, who has been in power since 1978, was declared the winner, with 2.5 million votes, while Mr. Kibaki finished with 1.9 million.

Brazil Toughens Its Traffic Laws

BRASILIA, Jan. 22 (Reuters) — Brazil imposed tough penalties today on drivers who ignore seatbelts, red lights and pedestrian crossings.

"The number of traffic deaths in this country is equal to an airplane with 200 people on board crashing every two days," said a spokeswoman for the National Traffic Department.

Officials say the traffic code, which lawmakers discussed for six years, is a long overdue measure to stem the carnage on the roads of Latin America's largest nation.

Brazil recorded some 750,000 road accidents in 1996, the latest year for which figures are available. That year alone, 26,903 people were killed and 107,612 permanently disabled.

Many drivers have greeted the stringent new regulations — divided into 341 articles — with derision.

"I am a little bit skeptical about the new law," said an accountant, Aracy Rodrigues, who braves Rio de Janeiro's traffic daily.

In Rio, cars dodge and weave through traffic in a battle for control of the asphalt. Red lights are routinely ignored at night on the grounds that stopping would make drivers vulnerable to carjackers.

São Paulo's traffic policemen staged a one-day strike last year after one of their number was shot dead by an irate driver who objected to being fined. Under the new rules, which will be phased in over the next few months, drunk drivers may be jailed for up to four years and fined a maximum of $770.

The New York Times
FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 1998

Agence France-Presse

After a 50-minute meeting yesterday with Fidel Castro at the Revolutionary Palace in Havana, Pope John Paul II left the building with Jaime Lucas Cardinal Ortega y Alamino, left, the Archbishop of Havana.

Pope's Words: Family and Responsibility

By the Associated Press

Following are excerpts from Pope John Paul II's sermon delivered at a Mass yesterday in Santa Clara, Cuba. The Pope's words were translated from the Spanish by the Vatican.

The family, the fundamental cell of society and the guarantee of its stability, nonetheless experiences the crises which are affecting society itself. This happens when married couples live in economic or cultural systems which, under the guise of freedom and progress, promote or even defend an anti-birth mentality and thus induce couples to have recourse to methods of regulating fertility which are incompatible with human dignity. There is even an acceptance of abortion, which is always, in addition to being an abominable crime, a senseless impoverishment of the person and of society itself....

The social situation experienced in this beloved country has created not a few difficulties for family stability: for example, material scarcities — as when wages are not sufficient or have a very limited buying power — dissatisfaction for ideological reasons, the attraction of the consumer society. These and other measures involving labor and other matters have helped to intensify a problem which has existed in Cuba for years: people being obliged to be away from the family within the country, and emigration, which has torn apart whole families and caused suffering for a large part of the population....

The family, the school and the Church must form an educational community in which the children of Cuba can "grow in humanity." Do not be afraid; open your families and schools to the values of the Gospel of Jesus Christ....

It is true that in the area of education, public authority has certain rights and duties, since it must serve the common good. Nonetheless, this does not give public authority the right to take the place of parents. Consequently parents, without expecting others to replace them in a matter which is their own responsibility, should be able to choose for their children the pedagogical method, the ethical and civic content and the religious inspiration which will enable them to receive an integral education. They must not expect everything to be given to them.

The New York Times

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 1998

New Job Data Cast Doubt on Economy's Slowing

By JACOB M. SCHLESINGER
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON. The spate of new jobs created by American companies last month casts doubt over the conventional wisdom that the economy is slowing.

Most analysts have argued that the Asian financial crisis was beginning to rein in the galloping U.S. economy to a more manageable trot. But in the government's first official look at January economic activity, the Labor Department said Friday that nonfarm businesses added 358,000 workers to their payrolls. That was slightly more than were generated in December's robust job market and well above the healthy 267,000 average monthly rise through 1997.

The employment report also showed how the rising economic tide is lifting more and more boats, with joblessness falling sharply even among high-school dropouts. For the first time, the Labor Department started reporting employment data by level of education, and said the unemployment rate for people without high-school diplomas fell to 7.2% last month from 8.9% a year earlier. Even so, the numbers confirmed that education still matters a lot: the unemployment rate for college graduates was a minuscule 1.9% last month, down from 2.1% a year earlier. (The department had been collecting these figures in the past, but not posting them.)

Tracking the Economy is on page A4.

Pay Edges Up

The January unemployment rate for all workers stayed at the same 4.7% of the work force reported in December. The low jobless level continued to give workers more bargaining power, as average hourly earnings rose by four cents, to $12.51. During the past year, wages rose 3.8%, or about twice the inflation rate. The figures are adjusted for seasonal factors.

In contrast, other data released recently indicate some sort of economic slowdown. The monthly survey of manufacturers' purchasing managers released last week showed some decline in business, as did the government's report on factory orders in December. Consumer confidence is reported to have dropped sharply in January. Anecdotal evidence—such as disappointing profit reports and job cuts at blue-chip companies — has added to the perception of softening. Policymakers have assumed some easing from last year's torrid growth rate was imminent. That was a big reason the Federal Reserve kept interest rates steady last week.

Consistent Figures

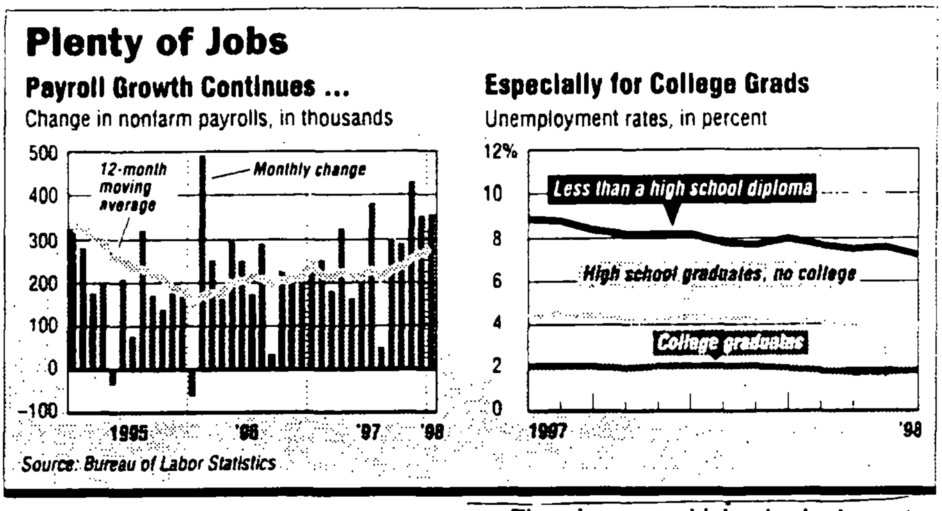
But the labor market report, economists said, is consistent with an annual growth rate in gross domestic product (GDP) of about 4%, inflation adjusted, or about the same as last year's 3.8% expansion. Most analysts are expecting growth of between 2% and 3% this year and are sticking to that figure despite the January labor numbers.

"Despite the overall strength depicted by the January report, the details offer some glimpse of a slowdown," said Marilyn Schaja, an economist with Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette Securities Corp. She noted that some sectors – such as retail and other services – showed some slowdown in job growth. Besides, added Bill Sharp of Chase Securities Inc., "labor-market trends tend to lag overall activity" and "many factors still point to a significant slowdown in real GDP in the first half of 1998."

In January, job creation was strong in most major sectors, especially in manufacturing and construction, which was helped by falling interest rates and temperate weather. Employment in help-supply services, or temp agencies, fell by 16,000 in January after rising in the previous two months, perhaps indicating the labor shortage is persuading more employers to convert part-time jobs to full-time posts.

The percentage of people unemployed

Please Turn to Page A8, Column 1



Continued From Page A2

because they quit their previous job jumped to 12.7% from 10.8%, an indication of growing confidence among workers. The percentage of working-age adults (ages 20 to 65) participating in the labor force—that is, holding a job or looking for a job — continued its record-setting ascent, reaching a new high of 67.3%.

The new education-related data – compiled for people at least 25 years old – showed that even a bit of higher education can make a difference in finding work. The unemployment rate for people who earned an associate degree, or who attended college but didn't earn a degree, was 3.2% in January. That compares with a 3.9% rate for people who graduated from high school but didn't attend college. That number, in turn, was just over half the unemployment rate for high-school dropouts.

Though more high-school dropouts have found jobs during the past year, the data showed the labor market remains hard on that group. The percentage of dropouts who had jobs was 42.3%, compared with 65.6% for high-school graduates and 80.3% for college graduates. That indicates that many high-school dropouts remain discouraged from even seeking work. Such a disparity amid the overall prosperity shows "there's progress, but more needs to be done," said Labor Secretary Alexis Herman.

Separately, the Fed reported Friday that consumer credit outstanding increased at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.9% in December, following a 3.6% drop in November.

Revolving credit – mainly credit cards—rose 0.4% after dropping 3.4% in the previous month. Automobile loans jumped 16.3% after November's 3.8% fall.

EMPLOYMENT

Here are excerpts from the Labor Department's employment report. The figures are seasonally adjusted.

	Dec. 1997	Jan. 1998
	(millions of persons)	
Civilian labor force	137.17	137.49
Civilian employment	130.78	131.08
Unemployment	6.39	6.41
Payroll employment	123.87	124.23
Unemployment:	(percent of labor force)	
All civilian workers	4.7	4.7
Adult men	4.1	3.8
Adult women	4.0	4.4
Teenagers	14.3	14.1
White	3.9	4.0
Black	9.9	9.3
Black teenagers	34.4	30.1
Hispanic	7.5	6.9
Average weekly hours:	(hours of work)	
Total private nonfarm	34.6	34.8
Manufacturing	42.2	42.1
Factory overtime	[illegible]	4.9

CONSUMER CREDIT

Here are the seasonally adjusted totals of consumer installment credit outstanding for December 1997, in billions, and percentage changes from November at an annual rate:

Total	$1235.8	3.9%
Automobile	414.6	16.3
Revolving	528.9	0.4
Other	292.4	– 7.1

Tracking the Economy — Feb. 9, 1998

INDICATOR	PERIOD COVERED	SCHEDULED RELEASE	PREVIOUS ACTUAL	TECHNICAL DATA CONSENSUS FORECAST
Nonfarm Productivity	4th qtr.	Tuesday	+4.1%	**+0.5%**
Retail Sales	December	Thursday	+0.7%	**+0.3%**
Initial Jobless Claims	Week to Feb. 7	Thursday	303,000	**308,000**
Money Supply: M2	Week to Feb. 2	Thursday	+$5.3 billion	**+$2.8 billion**
Import Prices	January	Friday	−0.6%	**−0.4%**
Export Prices	January	Friday	−0.4%	**No change**
Business Inventories	December	Friday	+0.4%	**+0.3%**

Source: Technical Data

Gains in Fighting Childhood Poverty Reflect Economy, Tax Credits Growth

By DAVID WESSEL
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON—A new Clinton administration analysis says the recent improvement in childhood poverty reflects both the strong economy and a huge expansion of tax credits for the working poor that have offset an increase in single-parent families and falling wages for the worst-paid workers.

"Nevertheless, many children remain economically vulnerable," the Council of Economic Advisers says in the Economic Report of the President, to be released this week. According to the official Census Bureau tally, one in five children in the U.S. still lives in poverty; even using a broader definition that takes account of all government antipoverty benefits, about one in seven children lives in poverty.

The analysis underscores a shift in the government's antipoverty efforts away from traditional welfare checks to the earned-income tax credit, which provides a cash bonus, but only to people who work. Cuts in various welfare programs raised the child poverty rate by 0.5 percentage point since 1993; increases in the tax credit reduced it by 2.5 percentage points in the same time period, the White House economists said.

"A single mother with two children can now earn enough, if she works full-time, to bring her income with the earned-income tax credit above the poverty line," the economists said. (For such a family, the poverty line in 1997 was $12,931; for two parents and two children, it was $16,276.)

Sweetening the tax credit was one of President Clinton's early objectives, one that initially drew support from congressional Republicans because the credit rewards people who work. But in the past couple of years, as the cost of the program has grown, some Republicans have attacked it, both because of reports of fraud and because it had become so identified with Mr. Clinton.

The fraction of children under age 18 living in families below the poverty line declined sharply in the Great Society years of the 1960s, but has trended upward ever since — except for several years of decline in the late 1980s. But since hitting a peak in 1993, the poverty rate among children has fallen.

By the official measure, which only reflects cash income, the 20.5% child poverty rate in 1996 was 4.1 percentage points higher in 1996 than in 1979; using an alternative measure that includes the value of food stamps, housing subsidies and tax credits, the Council figures child poverty was still 2.2 points higher than in 1979. But since 1993, poverty among children has fallen 2.2 percentage points by the official measure and 4.7 points by the alternative measure.

The number of children on welfare declined 23% from January 1993 to January 1997, the White House economists said, both because of welfare reform and the strength of the economy. In addition, government efforts to force absent fathers to pay child support appear to be succeeding. From 1992 to 1996, child-support collections increased 50% to $1 billion.

Children who grow up in poverty, the report says, "score lower on standardized academic achievement tests, are less likely to complete high school and are likely to have lower earnings when they enter the labor market than children who grow up in higher income families."

Cigarette Firms Ask Judge To Let Papers Be Released

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — The four largest U.S. cigarette makers asked a judge yesterday to let them release more than 33 million pages of internal documents being used against them in a lawsuit.

Information from the formerly confidential documents has been released gradually over the past two weeks in Minnesota's lawsuit against the tobacco industry. By immediately releasing the documents, the industry may hope the information would have less impact than if details come out bit by bit.

The tobacco companies turned over the documents to Ramsey County District Judge Kenneth Fitzpatrick after receiving a subpoena from the state. The documents are now in the court's possession and they can't be released without the judge's order.

It is not clear when the judge will rule on the motion.

The motion excludes about 240,000 documents now under review by a special master who will decide whether they must be turned over to the state. The defendants have claimed attorney-client privilege for those papers.

In addition, documents that contain trade secrets wouldn't be made available.

Joining in the motion were **Philip Morris Inc.**; **R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.**; **Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp.**, and **Lorillard Tobacco Co.**, along with two trade groups, The Council for Tobacco Research U.S.A. Inc. and The Tobacco Institute Inc.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1998

Water wars ebb away in the west

Washington's interior secretary has helped to turn the tide, writes **Christopher Parkes**

The water wars of the US west, which for most of this century have pitted town dwellers against farmers, cities against cities, and made rich men of successive generations of lawyers, are drawing to a close.

Under pressure from Washington, the keystones of an enduring and equitable peace are being crafted by California, long the biggest and greediest consumer, and its neighbours in the Lower Colorado Basin, Arizona and Nevada.

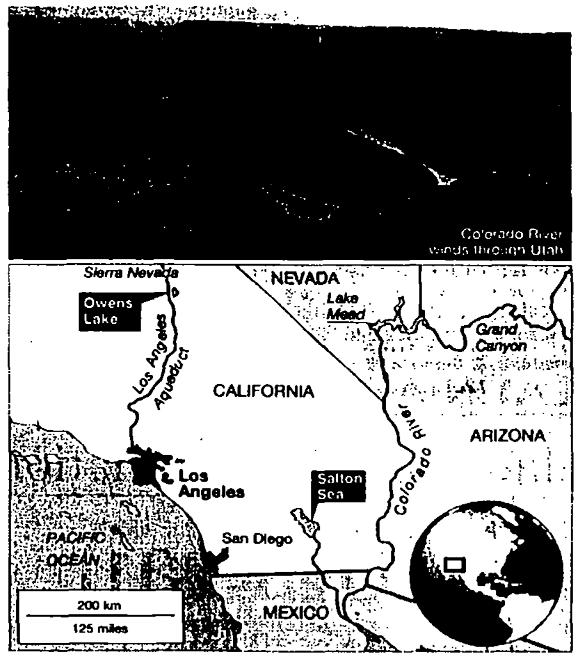
Imaginative plans for storage, sharing, a regional free market in water – and the repair of some of the worst environmental damage – have replaced the old profligacy, obduracy and neglect.

Milestones from the past few weeks alone include an agreement for parched San Diego to buy water from farmers in the Imperial Valley, the release of initial funding for a $2bn project to restore the bay and delta wetlands near San Francisco, and federal permission for interstate trade in Colorado River water.

December's acknowledgment by Los Angeles, after decades of denial, that it is responsible for and will pay to repair the environmental decay which started in 1913 when it appropriated the Owens River – 200 miles distant – exemplifies the conciliatory mood.

Although the details are not yet settled, the fact that LA after decades of litigation has admitted guilt and pledged to return water to the dried-up Owens Lake, which has become a health-threatening dust bowl, was hailed in the Los Angeles Times as an end to "feudal" arrogance.

Bruce Babbitt on a raft trip down the Colorado River AP



Economic expansion, the cause of the conflicts in the first place, has now become the main argument for peace in the region, which is confronted by population growth 50 per cent and more above national levels.

Arizona has started storing water underground in aquifers, for use or sale, and California has heeded warnings that the state will be chronically short of water within 20 years without new policies, and is following suit.

A sense of common cause – nurtured by the belated recognition that water supplies are finite – is displacing petty jealousies.

Much of the momentum behind these shifts has come from Washington's liberal use of stick-and-carrot policies to enforce the federal authorities' determination to engineer the transfer of water from farm to urban use, and save the environment from further depredations.

Californian agriculture, a $20bn-a-year industry, uses 80 per cent of the water consumed in the state annually. As the founders of the economy, farmers have long enjoyed huge entitlements at heavily subsidised prices. A San Diego household, for example, pays 100 times the agricultural rate for its supplies.

The offer of federal funds for work on the San Francisco bay and delta – where dozens of species had disappeared and others such as the chinook salmon, steelhead trout and delta sprat are still threatened – was conditional on a water-sharing agreement between agriculture and urban users.

The reclamation work is one result of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act of 1992, which legalised the sale of water from the project's resources – in effect allowing cities to buy farm water for the first time – and set in train the process gathering pace today in the south of the state.

Recent advances in the south followed a warning a year ago from Bruce Babbitt, federal interior secretary, that he would impose limits if California did not abandon its long-term practice of drawing 20 per cent more than its allocation from the Colorado River.

Many expected further attacks on the state when he visited the region late last month, but by then his disapproval had moderated.

He was encouraged by progress, he said, as he unveiled a scheme for interstate water sales within the Lower Colorado River region. "If we work this well," he said, there would be water enough for all.

And he knows where much of it is to be found. Suspending his broad-based attack on Californian policies, he focused his fire on the farmers of Imperial Valley, the largest irrigation district in the world, which yearly consumes almost three-quarters of California's annual allocation from the Colorado River.

Together with two smaller irrigation areas nearby, the valley is entitled under rules introduced when the state was sparsely populated to 3.85m of the 4.4m acre-feet the entire state is allowed to take each year. An acre-foot is enough to supply two average families for a year.

Claiming for himself the title "Master of the River," Mr Babbitt said the time had come "for me to take a more active role".

Waving his familiar stick, he said that unless the area limited its use, he would block its plan to sell water to San Diego for 75 years, and deprive it of annual revenues of up to $50m.

Although he avoided any explicit accusations, his threat was founded on suspicions that rather than conserving the volumes earmarked for sale, the valley – notoriously profligate with water even though it has no rain at all in some years – would simply draw more water from the Colorado.

Waving the customary carrot, he said it was time for the federal government to help save the heavily polluted Salton Sea.

Situated on the valley's edge, the largest lake in California is slowly dying, taking its water-sport resort towns and local tourism services with it.

With 30 per cent unemployment, the local authorities have no economic assets to waste. Now they have every incentive to toe the line and fix their leaky water management practices.

■ US ECONOMY

Surge in new home sales

Sales of new homes surged in the US in November to their highest rate in more than 11 years while the supply of unsold homes fell to its lowest level in more than 26 years, the Commerce Department said yesterday.

New single-family home sales jumped 5.1 per cent – the biggest increase in a year – to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 830,000 units, the strongest pace since April 1986. The surge exceeded expectations of Wall Street analysts, who said the housing market was benefiting from consumer confidence and declining mortgage rates.

The department said the supply of unsold homes fell to 4.2 months' worth, the smallest inventory of new homes since July 1971. *Reuters, Washington*

■ HIGHER NICOTINE

Biotech group in tobacco case

A California biotechnology company agreed yesterday to plead guilty to conspiring with the Brown and Williamson tobacco company to grow tobacco with a higher nicotine content in Brazil and other countries.

The criminal information filed in Washington against DNA Plant Technology of Oakland was the first charge filed in the Justice Department's broad investigation of the tobacco industry. The company agreed to co-operate with the investigation.

The government cited the tobacco company as an unindicted co-conspirator and refused to name it. But individuals familiar with the probe said it was Brown and Williamson, the third largest US cigarette company.

Late last year, 18 Brazilian farmers acknowledged they were growing high-nicotine leaf and many said they had been growing it for more than five years.

The tobacco company and the biotech firm devised a scheme secretly to improve the high-nicotine tobacco in Brazil and other countries as commercial growing of such tobacco is banned in the US, the government said.

The tobacco company's goal was to develop a reliable source of high-nicotine tobacco that it could use to control and manipulate the nicotine levels of its cigarettes, the government said. Higher levels of nicotine are thought to help "hook" smokers on cigarettes. *AP, Washington*

■ US TELECOMS

Justice Department steps in

The US Justice Department yesterday moved to block implementation of a judge's ruling that legal restrictions on regional phone monopolies which prevent them from offering long-distance phone services were unconstitutional.

The department, supported by the Federal Communications Commission, said the judgment would "radically reshape" the 1996 Telecommunications Act and should be stayed until an appeal had been heard. It also said it would request an accelerated appeal process because of the importance of the case to government efforts to deregulate the local telecoms market.

It is common practice for judges to grant such stays on constitutional judgments. But even if the court refuses, the Justice Department can still apply to the Court of Appeals or even the Supreme Court to delay implementation of the decision. *Mark Suzman, Washington*

CHILDCARE SUPPORT FOR POORER FAMILIES

Clinton offers $21.7bn package

By Nicholas Timmins in Washington

President Bill Clinton yesterday proposed a $21.7bn package of grants and tax breaks to extend childcare facilities to working families as part of a drive to improve support for low-paid families.

The proposal is a knock-on from the welfare reform programme requiring extra spending on childcare, transport and health costs to get former welfare recipients into work. It would boost block grants to states for childcare by $7.5bn over five years and add $5.2bn to expand the income tax credit working parents can claim for childcare expenses.

The move is part of a string of measures initiated by the president in recent months and aimed at tackling insecurity among workers. It is directed at solidifying the Democrats' traditional electoral base by targeting key groups of voters whose support will be needed in the upcoming mid-term elections and in the presidential race in 2000.

Following the failure of sweeping healthcare reforms in his first term, President Clinton in last year's balanced budget bill achieved spending of an extra $24bn to provide health insurance to some 5m children with little cover.

This week, he proposed allowing people aged 62-64, including early retirees, to buy into Medicare, the state-financed health insurance scheme for the elderly, for a fixed monthly premium. The Medicare reforms would enable those aged 55 and over, made redundant or displaced, to do the same.

Yesterday's proposals also target groups who traditionally have been Democrat voters. They would bring an extra 1m children into childcare help by 2003, while expanding its cover into lower income families rather than those being transferred off welfare into work.

Approval from the Republican-dominated Congress will be needed for both the Medicare and childcare plans. The plans will present Republicans with the choice of blocking potentially popular proposals the president argues can be achieved within the balanced budget.

About one third of the childcare cash should come from the planned tobacco settlement, which the White House appears to be intending to use as an alternative source of funds, in much the same way that the UK's Labour government is using national lottery proceeds to fund programmes it believes are socially useful.

The package was "the single largest commitment to child care in the history of the US," President Clinton said, but still "a fiscally responsible plan".

Announcing it at the White House to a room containing Republican as well as Democrat supporters in Congress of improved childcare, he said the aim of providing high quality, affordable and safe child care was "above politics and partisan interests."

One of the reasons welfare reform was working, he said, was increased investment in child care. "Now we have to help lower-income families who have never been on welfare in the first place but still struggle to pay for childcare." The expansion of the childcare tax credit would help more than 3m working families to the point where a family of four making $35,000 and facing high childcare costs would not pay a penny in federal income tax.

An extension of post-school programmes providing care for 500,000 children between the end of school and the time their parents come home would also cut crime, he said. "We do not need to keep building jail after jail after jail to house children who wouldn't be there in the first place if we took care of them while they're out free."

William Roth, chairman of the Senate finance committee, said welfare reform had already resulted in the federal bill for childcare rising to $30bn. The president's proposals would help only 30 per cent of pre-school children, with relatives caring for the other 70 per cent.

Family lines up to benefit

One family in Georgia seems to have cracked the US benefit system – to the tune of more than $1m, Nicholas Timmins writes from Washington.

An audit of disability benefits has disclosed that 180 members of the extended family of 300 have been claiming supplemental income benefits which go to the disabled.

More than 80 members of the family, who were chiefly claiming for learning disabilities, have been cut off the programme since investigators began reviewing the case in 1995 – but not before more than $1m had been claimed in benefits.

The social security administration's inspector general said a local doctor, who along with the family is not being named, may have been approving fake claims, while the family appears to have gone to extraordinary lengths to claim speech and hearing deficiencies among the children.

US budget in balance for 'next ten years'

By Gerard Baker in Washington

The US federal government's budget is likely to be more or less in balance for the next 10 years, according to the latest forecast by the politically independent Congressional Budget Office, published yesterday.

The CBO confirmed the fervent hopes of most US politicians by suggesting that the fiscal deficit, which has towered over US economic policymaking for the past two decades, will gradually turn into an expanding surplus in the next few years, if current tax and spending plans remain in place.

But the prospect of surpluses is likely to ensure those plans do not in fact remain in place as politicians from both main parties seek to use the opportunity to push for tax cuts or spending increases.

The deficit, around $22bn in the last fiscal year, will decline to a few billion dollars this year, and become a surplus of $69bn in 2002, according to the CBO.

The forecast represents the latest revision by the CBO to its persistently over-pessimistic projections of the government's finances over the next decade.

CBO forecasts growth at 2.7%, down from 3.7% in 1997

Only a year ago, the CBO was forecasting a deficit of $188bn by 2002.

Last year's balanced budget agreement between the president and the Congress explains only a small part of the improved outlook.

The bulk of the change stems from significantly better economic performance by the US than the CBO and most private-sector economists had previously forecast.

It now estimates that the economy grew by 3.7 per cent last year, and will grow by 2.7 per cent this year. Last September it forecast 1997 growth of 3.4 per cent and 1998 growth of 2.1 per cent.

In the longer term, however, the CBO does not believe the US trend rate of economic growth of about 2.3 per cent has increased and it forecasts a return to more normal rate of growth beyond that.

But the long-term outlook for inflation has changed, the CBO argues. Four months ago, it forecast consumer prices would rise by 2.7 per cent this year; it now expects inflation to be just 2.2 per cent in 1998, and to be somewhat below what it had previously forecast, in the next 10 years or so.

Interest rates are also projected to be lower than previously forecast in the next few years, but the CBO says they will thereafter remain more above what had been expected in September.

Jo Becker

Too Young To Make War

The United States was notably absent from the 125 nations that recently gathered to sign the international treaty banning land mines. The United States (joined only by Somalia) has failed to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely and rapidly adopted human rights treaty in history. And now the United States is attempting single-handedly to block efforts to reduce the use of child soldiers.

As many as 250,000 children, some as young as 8 years old, are serving in government armies or armed rebel groups. In more than 30 countries around the world, these young combatants are both the tools and the casualties of adult hatreds. More than 2 million children have been killed in armed conflicts in the past decade. Six million have been seriously injured or permanently disabled. Many more bear psychological scars from being forced to both commit and witness horrific atrocities.

For example, thousands of children have been abducted into the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), an armed rebel group fighting the Ugandan government. Interviewed after escaping from captivity, a 16-year-old girl shared her experience: "One boy tried to escape [from the rebels], but he was caught. ... His hands were tied, and then they made us, the other new captives, kill him with a stick. I felt sick. I knew this boy from before. We were from the same village. I refused to kill him, and they told me they would shoot me. They pointed a gun at me, so I had to do it. The boy was asking me, 'Why are you doing this?' I said I had no choice. After we killed him, they made us smear his blood on our arms. ... They said we had to do this so we would not fear death and so we would not try to escape. ... I still dream about the boy from my village who I killed. I see him in my dreams, and he is talking to me and saying I killed him for nothing, and I am crying."

A 14-year-old boy described being forced into combat in Sudan: "I remember the first time I was in the front line. The other side started fighting, and the commander ordered us to run toward the bullets. I panicked. I saw others falling down dead around me. The commanders were beating us for not running, for trying to crouch down. They said if we fell down, we would be shot and killed by soldiers."

Unfortunately, the use of child soldiers is a growing phenomenon. In Afghanistan, the proportion of soldiers who are children is believed to have risen in recent years from 30 percent to 45 percent. In other countries, such as Burundi, children are being recruited at increasingly younger ages.

To address this appalling practice, the United Nations has been working to draft an amendment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to raise the minimum age for recruitment and participation in armed conflict from 15 to 18 years of age. The agreement is optional, and no state is required to join. Negotiations fell apart early last year, however, when the United States became the only country unwilling to accept 18 as a new minimum standard for participation in armed conflict. Negotiations are set to resume next month, but unless the United States changes its position, any further progress may be impossible.

Washington bases its objection to the agreement on current U.S. recruitment practices, which allow 17-year-olds to enlist with parental permission. In fact, less than one-half of one percent of U.S. troops are below the age of 18. After completing basic and technical training, nearly all of these soldiers have reached 18 before being assigned to combat positions.

Recently, 38 former U.S. military officers (including several retired admirals and generals) wrote to President Clinton, saying that "an agreement establishing eighteen as the minimum age for participation in armed conflict reflects the strong desire of the world's nations to set a new international standard for protecting children from the horrors of war."

Washington's refusal to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child makes it ineligible even to join the proposed agreement. In this light, our government's obstruction of an initiative that the rest of the world favors, and that would protect a great number of children from combat, is truly unconscionable.

The writer is advocacy coordinator for the Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Division.

The Washington Post
THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 1998

Robert D. Novak

A Louis Freeh Mystery

While FBI Director Louis Freeh in congressional testimony last month distanced himself from Attorney General Janet Reno, he also raised troubling questions about himself and his relationship with the Justice Department that since have been pursued by House investigators. More answers will be sought from him this week.

Freeh was summoned by the House Government Oversight Committee Dec. 10 to explain why he disagreed with Reno about an independent counsel to investigate President Clinton on 1996 campaign fund-raising. But with Freeh under oath, Chairman Dan Burton asked about veteran FBI agent Jack Wickman taking retirement rather than succumbing to Justice Department demands for the name of a confidential Chinese source.

Freeh at first denied, definitively, any validity to this report. But after hours of testimony, just before he left the witness chair, he said that while testifying he had been given a note from FBI General Counsel Larry Parkinson saying that, indeed, Wickman had been "concerned" that Justice Department lawyers had asked for highly sensitive "asset files." Freeh conveyed the impression that this was all news to him.

Yet, weeks earlier, Freeh was asked privately about Wickman by a senior member of Congress (not Burton), and FBI sources say he was well aware of the situation before that. Freeh is to meet with Burton this week, and he could cast light on what the Justice Department lawyers were doing and perhaps on what Louis Freeh is about.

I reported the Wickman affair Nov. 24 but since then have learned more details. As head of the FBI's intelligence unit on China, Wickman was asked by Ronald G. Roos, acting chief of the criminal division's internal security section in the Justice Department, for the name of a secret source on Chinese affairs. This was no simple request. Roos hounded Wickman for the name. The ends to which the Justice Department lawyer went, if disclosed, might put the source in jeopardy.

This was regarded in the bureau as a gross violation of the practice of keeping FBI sources secret from Justice. Wickman, over-age in the service at 57, at that point retired from the government. But why quit if he was in the right and defending the law enforcement agency's integrity? According to one FBI source, Wickman may have felt he had lost Freeh's confidence. Why?

Freeh was opaque when Burton brought up Wickman's retirement at the Dec. 10 hearing. Praising Wickman, Freeh said, "I presented his 25-year key to him not too long ago," and "he's never ... complained to me." The director said, "I certainly don't know of any basis in fact" for saying Wickman resigned rather than turn over files. "The idea that he was told to turn in his sources is a nonsensical notion," added Freeh.

The excitable Rep. Tom Lantos, acting as the committee's ranking Democratic member, seized on those answers. "Basically, Director Freeh, you are denying the validity of this Bob Novak story?" he asked. "As far as I'm concerned," Freeh replied, "I don't have any basis in fact." So, Lantos triumphantly concluded, "what you are dealing with is another off-the-wall Bob Novak story."

But as the two-day hearing ended, Freeh suddenly contradicted what had so delighted Lantos. Saying that "my general counsel" had passed him a "note," Freeh testified: "I am told by my counsel that Mr. Wickman was concerned with the question of DOJ [Department of Justice] attorneys accessing what we call asset files. An asset file is not the substantive information but lists the name and address of the information, which is the most sensitive files that we have."

"I am told," Freeh went on, "that once the DOJ attorneys understood that the asset files were not substantive, that was the end of the issue." It seems doubtful all this could be contained in a "note" handed to the director. But his statement surely runs counter to reports of Roos's persistence in seeking the Chinese source.

Burton wants to know whether Wickman's successor, Chuck Middleton, has protected the source. But that is not the deepest mystery. Why was the Justice Department task force, laggard in pursuing campaign scandals, fervent in seeking forbidden information about the Chinese connection? And why has Louis Freeh, admired in the FBI and Congress for integrity, been so disingenuous here?

MARY McGRORY

When Family Rights Are Wrong

Cornelious is not quite 2, and still in diapers, but a Maryland judge has drafted him into the wars on child welfare. The child is to carry the message on several dubious propositions espoused by Judge Michael D. Mason—the paramount rights of the family, the superiority of the natural parent, even one who has committed infanticide, and the unwisdom of trans-racial adoption.

In choosing between Cornelious's natural mother and the woman who took care of him for 20 months and wants to adopt him, Judge Mason did not apply Solomon's standard in a similar custody dispute—the child's well-being. His Honor, like another judge before him, viewed the child's mother, Latrena Pixley, as the one to be protected.

Congress tried to amend the Family Reunification Act last year to introduce common sense: It eliminated the requirement of "reasonable efforts" at reunification in the case of parental infanticide. A bill facilitating black-white adoption passed in 1997.

The judge may have been swayed by social workers and lawyers who administer programs which supposedly redeemed Pixley and transformed her into a good mother. That community has an obvious interest in claiming success in changing people's psyches and turning them into good citizens. Neatness is also served by his decision. Nothing is more satisfying than closing a case with the entry "returned to family."

Mason gave Cornelious back to his mother, a loser in life who always wins in court. In 1992, Latrena Pixley murdered her six-week-old daughter. She suffocated her and put her body in a trash bin. A D.C. judge gave Pixley an astounding pat-on-the-wrist sentence—three years of weekends in jail. She has been in and out of court many times since, once for credit-card fraud after she had been "rehabilitated." Brought up in chaos, she has had four children by four different men and has no fixed address. She has a cashier's job, no sustaining relatives and a hope of getting into a subsidized housing project.

By contrast, Laura Blankman is a 27-year-old police academy trainee with a college degree and a comfortable house in Montgomery County, a supportive family and a life that revolved around Cornelious, whom she took home with her 20 months ago at his mother's request. The two women met when Blankman was a Grove City College intern in the District's Public Defender's Office and had the job of chauffeuring Pixley around town.

Pixley said she expected Blankman to give the baby back when she got out of jail. Blankman says she and the baby have bonded through his first tooth, first step and first word, and she decided he would have a better life with her. To take him in the first place, when Pixley was serving her term on weekends, was not a big deal—"I consider myself a Christian." Pixley's lawyer said Blankman planned all along to "steal" the baby.

Going into the courtroom, Laura Blankman seemed to have all the cards. But the judge, according to some observers—the trial record is sealed—seemed to feel the deck was stacked against Pixley, and that a panel of white experts had piled on a poor black woman.

The judge seemed concerned that Laura Blankman did not have a well-rounded personality. He noted that Pixley had had four children by four different fathers, adding, "We don't know a lot about Laura Blankman's dating life." He called her "a social isolate" and "overly dependent on her mother."

"I felt I was on trial the whole time," said Blankman. She filed an appeal against Mason's decision. Her lawyer, Nancy Poster, claims that the judge did not take proper note of the evidence.

Mason noted with approval Pixley's "heroic efforts" to visit the baby while she was in jail. She had to take two buses and the Metro. He said nothing about Blankman's 20-month-long care of Cornelious at her own expense. But like the previous judge, Mason seemed to see Pixley as a victim. The lawyers and social workers assured him that except for the single instance of murder, Pixley had not neglected or abused her children. Blankman understands how "captivating" Pixley can be. "I fell for her. I was sorry for her. She's like a beaten dog. People tell her, 'It's not your fault.' "

The fate of Cornelious has received attention among people who feel that if infanticide is not a reason for ignoring the goal of family reunification, children from bad homes will be in constant peril of being sent back to dangerous parents. The National Council on Adoption is backing Blankman in her appeal and will pay for expert legal help if no pro-bono lawyers turn up.

The Washington Post
THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 1998

ClintonKiddieCare

Bill and Hillary Clinton just can't seem to resist the urge to poke their noses into our private lives. And once again (as in Health Care Reform), with what Mr. Clinton described as "the single largest national commitment to child care in the history of the United States," they're trying to do it in an area they think is guaranteed to shame doubters into going along despite grave misgivings about its necessity or its value. (Who, after all, does not want to be viewed as loving the little children and wanting to take good care of them?)

Mr. Clinton generously proposes to "give people the tools that will enable them to raise and love their children while successfully participating in the American workplace," by spending:

■ $7.5 billion to double the number of children who get federal child-care subsidies, by increasing block grants to states.

■ $3.8 billion to double the number of children in Head Start programs.

■ $5.2 billion to increase child-care tax credits for working families earning less than $60,000.

■ $3 billion to improve child-care safety and learning through age 5.

■ $500 million for tax credits for businesses that provide child care for their employees.

■ $800 million to expand after school programs.

■ $500 million to pay for state regulation of health and safety in child care.

■ $250 million for scholarships to students studying to be child-care workers.

■ $150 million to establish the National Center on Child Care Statistics to study child care.

Now, don't worry, folks. If the tobacco settlement that hasn't yet passed Congress doesn't come through with the funds Mr. Clinton hopes will pay for one-third of his $22 billion plan, he "promises" to get the cash elsewhere. Guess where? Out of the pockets of American taxpayers — which is where the other two-thirds of the money is coming from in any case.

The truth is, most Americans don't think the government can or should give them any child-rearing "tools." They don't want Mr. Clinton involved in their child-care arrangements. They don't want to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on another national research institute dedicated to studying what kind of day-care is most effective. They don't want the feds — or state governments either — stepping in to regulate the relatives and private babysitters most low-income working mothers leave their kids with right out of the business. And they don't want more and more of their hard-earned dollars wasted on programs that just don't work.

What might really do them some good is something that might make it easier for mothers to stay at home to take care of their children themselves — which, high-powered baby-boom career women notwithstanding, is what most mothers would do if they could. How about, for instance, encouraging private business to create flex-time jobs? Or giving employees time off in exchange for overtime worked, instead of hard cash? (An idea Mr. Clinton has rejected because it doesn't sit well with his backers in the labor unions.) Or how about simply letting people actually keep more of their money, rather than paying large percentages of it to the government to pay for Mr. Clinton's programs, so that more women could leave the work force or not need to enter it before their children are grown?

Some of the more lily-livered Republicans in Congress have already buckled to the emotional blackmail and signed on. One can only hope that other congressmen and Senators will recognize that most Americans believe government's involvement in citizens' daily lives needs to be limited rather than expanded and send this grand new social-engineering scheme the way of ClintonCare.

The Washington Times
FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 1998

Clinton critics: Subsidies will hurt day care

By Julia Duin
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Instead of diverting tax money into day care programs, critics say President Clinton's proposed day care package should help parents to stay home with their children through lower taxes, including self-employment taxes, and more flex and comp time.

"If you subsidize child care, it will cost more in taxes, which will force more mothers into the work force," said Anita Blair, counsel for the Independent Women's Forum. If day care is licensed and inspected by the federal government, she adds, "It will drive out providers such as Grandma and Aunt Jane because it's too expensive."

Sen. John H. Chafee, a Rhode Island Republican and a senior member of the Finance Committee, said the president's proposal gives a credit to families who place their children in someone else's care, but none to those who care for their own children. He is working on a child care plan of his own to remove that inequity.

"It is clearly the right time to begin addressing the issue," he said. "For most parents, child care is not an option, but a necessity of everyday life."

Of the 21.5 million American children under 6 years of age, 40 percent — 9 million — are tended exclusively by their parents and the remainder are overseen by relatives, nannies or day care centers, said David Murray, director of research for Statistical Assessment Service and a social anthropologist.

Twice as many poor people — those making less than $10,000 a year — have their children cared for by relatives, he said, than do the rich. The president's plan would substitute day care centers for relatives, he said.

Day care has its own hazards, he added, citing a 1996 study released by the National Foundation on Infectious Diseases that said 7 million children under 5 in day care are three times more likely to be infected than are children not in day care. Sixty percent of all employee absenteeism is to take care of these sick children.

"Parents are pressured to be out of the home so we can hire other people to take care of [children]," Mr. Murray said. "It's the government designing the family."

He portrayed the Clinton plan as "a long range, slow effort for the next 20 years to increase the federal role in child rearing. It'll be offered as incentives and tax breaks and block grants, as a gift to families in America, but it'll be 'back-doored' to them in that they'll have to pay more taxes to afford this. This could become a Rube Goldberg setup.

"Why not let parents stay home to raise their own kids?" Mr. Murray asked. "Let a parent be home at 3 p.m. so kids don't get into trouble. The largest amount of sexual activity, delinquency and drug abuse between kids is between 3 and 6 p.m. when parents aren't home."

Mrs. Blair suggested the president provide more choices for parents to stay home with their children by mandating greater flex-and comp-time arrangements at workplaces, or making it easier for one parent to work out of the home as an independent contractor.

Families "pay 40 percent and upwards of their joint income in taxes," she said. "Lower taxes would mean it's less necessary for that member of the family to be in the work force.

"And let them hire help. It's easier to import a butler under our immigration laws than a nanny. The IRS needs to get real to what the needs of American families are. Being a nanny is good, honest work and it allows them to get a leg up economically in America. They shouldn't be kept out by reams of regulations."

• *Nancy Roman contributed to this story.*

The Washington Times
THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 1998

President Khatami Addresses America

Americans accustomed to Iranian clerics fulminating against the United States may have been pleasantly surprised to encounter Mohammed Khatami on CNN last evening. The new Iranian President spoke admiringly of American civilization, sprinkling his comments with respectful references to the Pilgrims and Abraham Lincoln. He called for cultural and education exchanges between Iran and America. But for all the friendly gestures, the hard edge of Iran's hostility to America was still present. By the end of Mr. Khatami's interview, with Christiane Amanpour, it was clear there would be no quick healing of the rift between Teheran and Washington.

Changing the tone of Iranian rhetoric about the United States is itself an achievement, and Mr. Khatami may have gone as far as he could for now, given the resistance of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to better relations with Washington. Mr. Khatami in the interview was the first Iranian leader since the 1979 revolution to offer even a hint of remorse over the seizure of American hostages then. But he badly miscalculated in thinking that the American people do not share their Government's grave misgivings about Iranian policies and behavior.

Mr. Khatami's attack on the American Government as the cause of poverty and oppression around the world was crude and rigidly ideological. His complaints about American policy toward Iran were simplistic, though not entirely without merit on the question of Washington's blind support for the corrupt regime of Shah Mohammed Riza Pahlevi. His remarks seemed to leave little room for a dialogue with the Clinton Administration about such matters as Iranian support for terrorism, opposition to the Middle East peace effort and Teheran's efforts to develop nuclear weapons. His characterization of the Israeli Government as a "racist, terrorist regime" was offensive.

The years of enmity between Washington and Teheran should end. The hostility no longer serves the interest of either nation. But it cannot be eliminated, or even productively addressed, if Mr. Khatami will not countenance direct discussions with the American Government.

Dangerous Recreations

Death during recreation is nearly always accidental, and an accidental death is, by definition, a preventable death. The recent skiing accidents that killed Michael Kennedy and Sonny Bono would never have happened — or so it is easy to say after the fact — if Mr. Kennedy had not been playing football and Mr. Bono had stayed out of the trees. In the aftermath, the risks seem unacceptable.

But in the moments before both accidents, the risks must have seemed perfectly reasonable to both men. Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Bono did not buy lift tickets in the hopes of toying with death. Few skiers do. Nor did Anatoli Boukreev, the Russian mountaineer who died in an avalanche several weeks ago, begin his ascent of Annapurna intending to flirt with extinction.

But the chance of serious injury and death is always there, especially as the popularity of extreme sports increases. That is why nearly every true sophisticate of an inherently risky sport — anything from surfing to mountaineering — tries to offset risk with preparation. The higher the degree of conditioning, experience and mental discipline an athlete enjoys, the higher the degree of risk he can accept. The point is not usually to pursue risk per se, but to pursue a level of physical and mental challenge that increases even as the risks attending failure increase too. Danger intensifies concentration, but concentration is nearly always a means of diminishing danger. That is the simple equilibrium of every hazardous sport.

Reporters commonly summon the numbers after accidents like the ones that killed Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Bono, and what the numbers show is that most dangerous sports, including skiing, are safer than bicycling or kill fewer Americans annually than showering. It is tempting to count up the recreational deaths that occur each year and to moralize upon their ironic futility — not because they were accidental but because they occurred during recreation.

The historian Stephen Pyne argues that the character of fire has been changed by humans, made an artifact of culture and not wholly of nature. The same can be said for death. Biologically, we still die in all the old ways, but the instruments that deliver us up to biological death are as modern, and as fashionable, as the moment.

The New York Times

THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 1998

The Washington Post

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Nicotine Conspiracy Alleged

U.S. Brings First Charge In Tobacco Firms Probe

By John Schwartz and Ceci Connolly
Washington Post Staff Writers

The Justice Department yesterday alleged that a major U.S. tobacco company conspired with a California biotechnology firm to develop a high-nicotine tobacco plant that would be used to manipulate nicotine levels in the cigarette-maker's products.

The tobacco industry has long denied that it controls nicotine levels. The allegations were made indirectly as part of the first criminal action brought by the department after a three-year investigation. The company, DNA Plant Technology Corp. of Oakland, was charged with conspiracy for sending seeds abroad without a license.

No charges were brought against any tobacco companies and none was named. But senior officials said the unnamed co-conspirator involved was the Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp.

The charge, announced yesterday, was a relatively minor one—a misdemeanor violation of a seed export law that since has been repealed. But one official said, "This is the first step, and no one envisions it as the last." The investigation is continuing, with the cooperation of DNAP.

No action is imminent, Justice officials said, nor is there a fixed strategy as to what kinds of charges might ultimately be brought against the company. Instead, yesterday's action "ought to send a signal to the industry that the criminal inquiry is serious and that it is moving," said a senior official.

It would not be illegal to manipulate nicotine levels in cigarettes, but companies could be prosecuted for perjury or other charges if they made false statements about their activities to federal investigators.

Allegations that a tobacco company

See TOBACCO, A4, Col. 1

Niki Deutchman, foreman of the Terry L. Nichols trial jury, accused the government of "dropping the ball."

Nichols Spared Death Penalty

Jury at Impasse; Judge to Weigh Bombing Conspirator's Sentence

By Lois Romano and Tom Kenworthy
Washington Post Staff Writers

DENVER, Jan. 7—Terry L. Nichols was spared the death penalty today when federal jurors were unable to agree on whether the Oklahoma City bombing conspirator should pay for the crime with his life.

U.S. District Judge Richard P. Matsch dismissed the panel, which deliberated for 13 hours over two days before notifying him of the impasse, and said he will assume responsibility for sentencing Nichols.

Matsch cannot by law sentence Nichols to death for his role in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, in which 168 people were killed. The judge can, however, sentence Nichols to a maximum of life in prison without the possibility of release. He asked for recommendations from the prosecution and defense by Feb. 9 and promised a decision after that.

After the jury left the courtroom, Nichols's lawyers shook his hand, hugged him and patted him on the back. Nichols registered little reaction. Clearly distraught victims of the bombing held hands and wept in court, while a few feet away, the Nichols family smiled and embraced.

Matsch said the jurors, who were empowered to make a binding sentencing recommendation, disagreed on the issue that was a legal threshold for deciding on the death penalty—whether Nichols intended people to die in the blast.

The jury foreman, Niki Deutchman, described a panel tortured by doubts, wracked by dissension and deeply skeptical of the government's case. In a 70-minute news conference in a sun-dappled municipal park near her Denver neighborhood, Deutchman said the seven women and five men were a divided and distraught group, rife with tension and discord, when the decision was taken from them.

See NICHOLS, A12, Col. 1

Clinton Rolls Out Child Care Plan

$22 Billion in Spending, Subsidies Proposed; Some Republicans in Congress Show Support

By John F. Harris
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton proposed yesterday to broadly expand the federal government's role in child care, offering a long menu of spending measures and tax credits designed to offset the financial burden on working parents.

Escorted into the White House East Room by a dozen local children, Clinton said the budget he will present to Congress calls for $21.7 billion in spending and tax subsidies over the next five years—what he called "the single largest national commitment to child care in the history of the United States."

Taken together, the proposals represent the largest item on Clinton's domestic agenda this year. And if all the nine different proposals were to pass, they would add up to among the most expensive social policy initiatives of Clinton's presidency.

Clinton said he wants to spend $7.5 billion over five years to increase block grants to states to subsidize child care for low-income parents. He wants to expand the Child and Dependent Tax Credit program to allow more generous subsidies for families earning less than $60,000. He wants to spend $3.8 billion over five years to increase funding for the Head Start preschool program. And he wants an additional $3 billion and to create an Early Learning Fund, which would pay for local programs designed to improve training and safety at child care centers.

The ideas are sure to play a central role in this year's congressional session as both parties try to align themselves with popular issues to gain advantage in the impending midterm elections. But the precise partisan and ideological lines of the child care debate yesterday were blurry.

Some moderate Republicans, including Rep. Constance A. Morella (Md.), attended Clinton's White House event. And conservative support on at least some provisions seems likely. Administration officials said their proposal for the Early Learning Fund borrows from legislation that Sen. Christopher S. Bond (R-Mo.) cosponsored with Sen. John F. Kerry (D-Mass.).

Polls have showed that the child care issue is a critical one to many female voters, and Rep. Deborah Pryce (R-Ohio), who was asked by House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) to respond to Clinton's proposal for the House GOP leadership, was cautious. Pryce said she was pleased that Clinton had resisted "the urge to have the federal government control child care" and was putting considerable emphasis on tax credits, but she said the plan's "glaring omission" was a lack of help for "stay-at-home moms."

Other voices were more critical. Rep. William F. Goodling (R-Pa.), chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, issued a statement noting that the federal government already sponsors some 50 child care programs and complained that Clinton "is trying to tell us we need even more while ignoring the tremendous child

See PRESIDENT, A14, Col. 1

Federal Budget Now Balanced, CBO Says

- Revised Congressional Budget Office projections yesterday showed that for the first time in 30 years the federal budget is effectively in balance and that the government can expect mounting surpluses in the coming decade.

NATION, Page A13

Iranian Leader Urges Exchanges With U.S.

Khatemi Expresses Regret for 1979 Hostage-Taking, Suggests Negotiations

By Barton Gellman
Washington Post Staff Writer

Iranian President Mohammed Khatemi called last night for wide-ranging unofficial exchanges to break down the "bulky wall of mistrust between us and the U.S. administration," implying for the first time that an informal dialogue could lead to resumption of U.S.-Iranian diplomatic ties.

In an extraordinary televised interview after 18 years of unbroken public hostility, Khatemi declared solidarity with the "essence of the American civilization" and expressed regret for the 1979 hostage-taking that began Iran's Islamic revolution.

While strongly critical of U.S. governments, past and present, he said "there is no hostility between the two nations" and used a cautiously worded formula to suggest that "negotiations . . . based on mutual respect" could "lead to positive results" between the two governments.

Khatemi's 45-minute interview with Cable News Network, in which he spoke confidently and without visible recourse to notes, enlarged substantially on a Dec. 14 news conference in which he expressed his hopes for a "thoughtful dialogue" with "the great people of the United States." In the interview, taped Tuesday in his Tehran office, Khatemi called for an immediate "exchange of professors, writers, scholars, artists, journalists and tourists." He twice averred that Iran has "no need for political ties with the United States," but appeared to describe a road map that might lead to those ties over time. New relations among intellectuals, he said, could "prepare for a change and create an opportunity to study a new situation."

A response drafted rapidly last night by national security adviser Samuel R. "Sandy" Berger and Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright included an unambiguous call for the first face-to-face diplo-

See KHATEMI, A28, Col. 1

- *Past terrorist actions hang like a cloud over improved relations.* Page A28

Iranian President Mohammed Khatemi gave interview to CNN.

Judge Tells Kaczynski He Can't Fire Lawyers

Opening Statements Set for Today

By William Booth
Washington Post Staff Writer

SACRAMENTO, Jan. 7—A federal judge told Theodore J. Kaczynski today that it is too late for him to dismiss his attorneys as he requested, clearing the way for opening statements in the Unabomber trial to start Thursday morning.

Kaczynski stated in open court for the first time that he does not want his lawyers to "pursue a mental health defense," apparently the basis for his request for a new defense team. But U.S. District Judge Garland Burrell Jr. told Kaczynski several times that his attorneys are "in control" of his case and ruled that they will be allowed to introduce testimony from non-professionals about the alleged Unabomber's mental state.

This Kaczynski clearly does not want—although his attorneys think it may save his life if he is ultimately convicted. The dispute over this theme for the defense apparently underlies Kaczynski's outburst Monday morning—just as the proceedings were about to get underway—that led Burrell to halt the trial for two days of consultations with the defendant, his lawyers and several outside attorneys.

Kaczynski, a brilliant but troubled mathematician, has been charged in a 10-count indictment with sending bombs in the mail that killed two people and maimed two others. The government contends these actions were part of an 18-year campaign that the Unabomber said he was waging against the evils of an overly technological modern society.

During this afternoon's proceedings, Kaczynski was alternately scribbling on his legal pads, showing notes at his attorneys or whispering animatedly at them. His brother, David, and mother, Wanda, attended the session. But Kaczynski did not look at them.

David, his younger brother, was the one who first

See KACZYNSKI, A7, Col. 1

Indian Affairs Minister Jane Stewart hands "Statement of Reconciliation" to Indian leader Phil Fontaine.

Canada Apologizes for Abuse of Native Peoples

Government Establishes 'Healing Fund' as Partial Recompense

By Howard Schneider
Washington Post Foreign Service

TORONTO, Jan. 7—The Canadian government apologized today to the country's Indian, Inuit and other aboriginal peoples for decades of mistreatment, offering an emotional atonement for policies that sought to stamp out native culture and confined Indian children in often abusive government-run schools.

Following an Indian drum and dance performance, and clutching a ceremonial feather, Jane Stewart, Canada's minister of Indian affairs and northern development, read an official "Statement of Reconciliation" that acknowledged the damage done to native populations beginning with the arrival of Europeans in the 15th century and running through modern efforts to suppress native religion and language.

The statement dealt in broad terms with an array of offenses, including the hanging of Louis Riel, a leader of the French-Indian Metis people, who was convicted of treason and executed in 1885 for his role in a Saskatchewan uprising.

Stewart said she hopes the statement will inaugurate a new relationship between Canada and its original residents, and she pledged $250 million for a "healing fund" to help those who suffered physical and mental abuse at the government-run schools. The schools were not closed until the 1970s and left a legacy of emotional scars among generations

See CANADA, A26, Col. 4

INSIDE

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Miami Mayor's Antics Are Talk of the Town

Angry Telephone Message Left at Newspaper Is Latest Action to Inflame Critics

By Donald P. Baker
Washington Post Staff Writer

MIAMI, Jan. 7—Even if the voice on the answering machine at the Miami Herald had not been a familiar one, the caller left no doubt. "This is the mayor of Miami," said Xavier L. Suarez.

rather than heed his demand to fire a popular police chief—warned the newspaper to "be nicer to me, my people, my citizens and my city" or face the loss of $200,000 a year in city ads.

"I note that we are subsidizing you and your newspaper with ads related[illegible]ing company," the mayor threatened to "figure out every possible way of advertising in any possible newspaper except yours" if he didn't get better treatment.

The newspaper, which has shadowed Suarez closely since he took office Nov. 14, the day after he was

that seeks not only to give working parents the peace of mind they need and deserve, but also to give more of our children the kind of care they have to have.

LIASSON: President Clinton said his goal is to make child care safer, cheaper, and more accessible by using a combination of grants, tax credits, and direct federal spending.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: To make child care more affordable and available to all Americans, with increased block grants to states, we will double the number of children receiving child care subsidies to more than 2 million.

One of the reasons welfare reform has worked as well as it has is because of the increased investment in child care. Now, we have to help the lower income families, who've never been on welfare in the first place, but still struggle to pay for child care.

LIASSON: The biggest portion of the president's initiative is the $7.5 billion in block grants to states for child care subsidies. But the government would also commit $5.2 billion in tax credits to families for child care expenses.

The credit is available to families earning under $60,000. If the president's plan passes, it would eliminate all income tax liability for a family of four with high child care expenses and with an income of $35,000 or less.

There are tax credits for businesses that establish on-site child care centers, money to set up after school programs, and money to expand Head Start. White House officials say they expect bipartisan support for the proposal. And judging from the initial Republican reaction, they may get it.

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE DEBORAH PRYCE (R-OH): I don't think that we can be obstructionist to something that is as important to most American families as child care initiatives.

LIASSON: Ohio Congresswoman Deborah Pryce has been assigned by Speaker Newt Gingrich to put together the Republican position on child care. Republicans are discussing a number of child care related tax cuts, but so far there is no single Republican response. That has allowed the president to set the agenda on this family friendly issue.

Congresswoman Pryce's reaction to the president's proposal is mostly positive.

PRYCE: I'm pleased to see that he seems to be fighting the urge to have the federal government control child care, because he's providing that much of his new spending go to the states in the form of grants. But nonetheless, it is new spending. And we always have to be concerned when we're talking about increasing the role of federal government. One glaring omission I think is -- in his initiative -- is assistance for stay-at-home moms.

LIASSON: Congresswoman Pryce favors more tax relief for mothers who stay at home with their children.

The president's child care proposal, however, is hard for Republicans to attack, because he has steered clear of the most controversial approaches. At one point, the White House considered proposing federal standards but dropped the idea for fear it would be attacked as government-run child care.

The vast majority of the president's child care initiative is in the form of tax credits and block grants -- Republicans' favorite ways to use taxpayer's money. Direct federal spending is at a minimum.

Some Republicans have criticized the plan as more big government, but the White House is convinced, as long as the budget stays balanced, voters will be happy to spend money on child care and other problems families face every day.

Mara Liasson, NPR News, the White House.

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BYLINE: Mara Liasson, Washington, DC; Jacki Lyden, Washington, DC

HIGHLIGHT:
President Clinton is proposing a $21 billion plan to hel working families bear the cost of child care. A key part of the package would subsidize care for 2 million children over five years, through a block grant to states. Mr Clinton also would expand eligibility from "welfare-to-work" families to lower-income workers as well. NPR's Mara Liasson reports.

BODY:

JACKI LYDEN, HOST: Today, President Clinton unveiled what the White House is calling the nation's largest investment in child care. The president asked Congress to approve a $21.7 billion package of tax credits and subsidies.

The plan is the latest in a series of family friendly initiatives the president has been previewing before he presents them formally to Congress later this month in his state of the union address.

NPR's Mara Liasson reports.

MARA LIASSON, NPR REPORTER: The White House has made child care one of its priority issues for 1998. The president and first lady held a day-long conference on child care last fall. Today, the president fulfilled some of the commitments he made at that conference when he offered federal money to help families pay for child care.

The president, the vice president, Mrs. Gore and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton all took part in the ceremony today, to unveil what the White House is confident will be an extremely popular initiative.

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, FIRST LADY OF THE UNITED STATES: For too long, America's parents have struggled with too little information, too few choices, and too many worries. Today, the president announces an historic child care proposal

Children of Welfare Parents Feel Reform's Help, Hurt

Last in a series of occasional articles

A1

By Judith Havemann and Barbara Vobejda
Washington Post Staff Writers

LAWRENCE, Mass.—The atmosphere is sizzling in Room 310 at the Henry K. Oliver School, where the ancient boiler is overheating and the eighth-grade social studies class is fired up. The topic is welfare reform.

"Why should some parents go to work while others sit home not working?" asked 13-year-old Maribel Lopez. "Some of them could get a job, but they don't. They just wait for the check."

The students thrust their hands in the air wildly, competing for attention. "I don't agree, in a kinda way," said Ivette Santana, also 13. "In my house, there are six children." Her family's food stamps have been cut from $500 every month to about $100 as a result of reform efforts. "It's Christmas: My sister is not giving my mother money. Some people are just sitting down . . . but for others . . . a lot of people have diseases, they're sick. They can't work."

"I agree with Ivette," said Malvin Ayala, chiming in from the back of the room. "Some people don't speak English and don't have the opportunity to study and can't find jobs."

The children in this depressed mill town in northern Massachusetts know a lot about welfare. Half of them live in families on public assistance, either food stamps or cash welfare. And with unprecedented changes taking place in the law, they represent a generation that could be altered forever by the success or failure of that effort.

These children and others like them

See WELFARE, A8, Col. 2

WELFARE, From A1

across the country were at the core of the debate a year ago, when federal lawmakers threw out the nation's 60-year-old welfare system. They replaced it with a law that, for the first time, requires beneficiaries to work and limits the time any family can receive aid.

The law was passed in the name of children. Its authors were driven by a determination to break the cycle of poverty so that a new generation would grow up with a strong work ethic and aware that they could not rely solely on the government. Opponents were equally adamant about protecting the young, defending the old system because it maintained a safety net for children no matter how their parents behaved.

Already in Massachusetts, where The Washington Post has been chronicling welfare changes that began a year before the federal reforms, the effect on children has been tangible and personal.

Taken together, the experiences of hundreds of children here add up to this: New welfare rules have exacerbated the problems of families whose lives were already chaotic. And they have magnified the strengths of those who were strongly motivated and able to take advantage of new programs. For this group with the psychological stamina to push themselves, the new system has provided job training, child care and other resources.

Welfare caseloads in Lawrence are down 19.6 percent since 1995 and 1,200 recipients in the city have found jobs.

At the Oliver school, attendance is up from an average of 88 percent to 93 percent since welfare reform went into effect, an improvement administrators link to a new regulation that docks a parent's welfare benefits if children are frequently absent.

School officials also say discipline problems have eased because so many welfare parents are volunteering in the buildings to fulfill state requirements that they either find jobs or do community service. And while half of the school's children moved away each year in the past, that has dropped to one-fifth, administrators say, because families either are avoiding the state's welfare requirements or are now tied to jobs here.

"In two years, I'll have a good job," said 19-year-old Shannon Montalvo, who has taken advantage of one of welfare reform's innovations, a teen living program that provides a stable home, high school education and training.

Montalvo, who has two daughters under the age of 2, dropped out of the eighth grade and lived in a string of homes before moving into the spacious two-bedroom apartment she now shares with another teenage mother and her three children.

"I was real rebellious," she said. "But I don't have regrets because here I am, bettering myself."

But the same regulations that are pushing some families toward self-sufficiency are causing other more troubled families to unravel.

Officials at a domestic violence program in Lawrence say they received 416 calls for help in a three-month period this year, more than double the 1996 figure. They said they believe women are returning with their children to battering husbands and boyfriends because welfare reform is making new demands on them and the relatives they might have turned to in the past.

Child protection officials in Lawrence say families on the verge of losing their children because of abuse and neglect are worse off, in part because their already dysfunctional lives must now absorb the new shock of working their way off welfare. And confirmed reports of child abuse and neglect in the city rose from 795 in 1995 to 968 last year.

Putting people to work is a challenge in Lawrence, where the unemployment rate, at 8.3 percent, is more than twice the statewide figure. Some welfare recipients have found jobs in a local textile mill. The bulk have gone to work for low wages, as nurse's aides, in restaurants, supermarkets and light manufacturing.

Three-quarters of the welfare population here is Hispanic, many from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, and more than 60 percent do not have high school diplomas. They have come here most often to be near relatives and live jammed into peeling wooden buildings converted into irregular apartments on postage-stamp lots.

The teenagers at the Oliver school know only the rough outlines of the complex new law. But they are quite certain of its effect on those around them.

"I know somebody, but I'm not gonna say the name," said Teresita Suarez, a petite teenager whose jet-black hair is pinned carefully in place. "My parents, they work," she adds quickly, anxious to convey to her classmates that her family is motivated. The person she is thinking of also works, but still received food stamps worth $300 a month.

"Her rent was $150. She was never home, she would always go shopping," Teresita said. But she lost her food stamps, a common experience in this community where many adults are subject to the food stamp cutoff for legal but unnaturalized immigrants. "Now, she have to work two jobs. She only sleeps three hours. Now she has no phone, no cable."

Maribel knows a lady who had to return to Puerto Rico because she didn't have enough money for rent and food when her benefits were cut.

And what about the kids? Malvin Ayala asks confidently. "If the parents aren't home" because they're forced to work, he said, "the children can't talk to them. They go to the streets. They get in trouble on the streets . . . starting fires. . . . It's not their fault."

'Helping My Mother'

Suddenly, after 17 years of raising babies and taking care of a home, Yesenia Perez's mother has been catapulted into the public world of work. As Yesenia picks her way through the litter on her way to school every morning, welfare reform is sending her mother off in another direction—for job training. In all her 12 years, Yesenia has never seen her mother go to school before, rarely heard her work on her English, and not once known her to practice office skills. Yesenia's mother has not yet landed a job, which means for now there is no more money coming in than there ever was. But Yesenia glows with happiness. She stands up awkwardly from homework she has propped on the couch cushions that serve as her desk in this barren apartment. She brushes off her blue and white school uniform, front and sides. Welfare reform, she says after a moment of proud hesitation, "is helping my mother."

The Washington Post
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1997

1/3

For Yesenia's mother, Elizabeth Perez, the new welfare rules have ignited her latent abilities and fierce commitment to building a better life for her children. When she arrived in Lawrence from Puerto Rico in 1995, fleeing an abusive husband, she turned to welfare for help. But soon Massachusetts caseworkers called her in and told her that her benefits would run out in two years and she should prepare to go to work. They offered her special courses to obtain a high school diploma, job training programs and free day care. Elizabeth Perez took advantage of it all.

Yesenia, poised on the edge of adolescence, once had little reason for pride in her family's bleak circumstances. Now she sees her mother as smart and competent, somebody successful. Once battered and poorly educated, Elizabeth Perez has recently obtained her high school equivalency diploma. She now speaks fluent English, and will graduate in February from a state program designed to train welfare recipients in office skills.

Yesenia looks up from her social studies unit on Mexico. The other day, at school, she volunteers shyly, she was talking with a friend about Christmas. Her friend was bragging a little about what her mother was going to give her for Christmas and about her father's job.

Yesenia told her friend that she too would be getting presents this year.

"It made me feel good" to have something to say back, Yesenia said later. "I told her that my mother is going to get a job just like her dad." Because of welfare reform, she said, "my mother is going to be a secretary."

Day Care at Night

For some children, the new law has registered in very concrete ways.

Ten-year-old Evelyn Santiago and her brother, Elvin, 9, have been dropped into a realm of childhood reality they hadn't known existed: nighttime day care.

Although it was rare before welfare reform, such care is now available through a handful of centers and from women who take children into their homes round the clock. For families moving off welfare, it is paid for by government funds, drawing dozens of children who eat their dinners and fall asleep away from home, while their parents work or, like Evelyn and Elvin's mother, take classes.

From the minute Evelyn comes home from school and wiggles out of her backpack, she begins pleading with her mother.

"I don't want to go to day care," she whimpers in a tiny mumble.

"I wish I could stay home," says Elvin. He wants to play with his Batman toys, be home with his mother. But she goes to school in the evening, thanks to welfare reform, and Elvin and his sister are off to day care, from 4 to 9 each weeknight.

"They bother me when I'm doing my homework," Elvin mutters about the other children, many of them much younger. "And I never went to day care before."

While they're at the center, their mother, Ana Estrella, is taking courses at the local community college to prepare to be a day care worker herself. Her welfare checks run out a year from now, and Ana is diligently trudging through the steps she's been told she must take: getting a job, trying to learn English, preparing for the day when her check stops coming.

And so as the sun is setting, she takes her children to day care, when other families are preparing dinner or settling in for the evening.

Talking About Jobs

From the suffocating classrooms on its third floor to a frigid basement storage room where parents on public assistance are learning computer skills, the Henry K. Oliver School is a laboratory of welfare reform.

Dozens of parents fulfilling requirements that they either work or volunteer have come through these halls to offer their free services. They scrape garbage off lunch plates in the cafeteria, help students learn to read and guard the playground at recess. When they're off duty, they head to the basement to learn English, become familiar with computers and trade tips on where to find a job.

"For the first time in a long time people are talking about jobs and parents are having jobs," said principal Rick Parthum. "Now a kid will say, 'My mom works. My father works.'"

Carl Derubeis, the school counselor, said that last year three children in one family had missed dozens of days of school before Christmas. He called the parents repeatedly, but "they wouldn't come in, they wouldn't come in, they wouldn't come in."

Eventually, when he warned their welfare benefits could be cut, the parents got the children to school. They missed just two days over the second half of the year.

Teachers Michele Wolders and Cristen Karamourtopoulos have felt the ripples of welfare reform even at the tiny desks in their first- and second-grade classrooms. The children talk about how little money their moms receive each month, the teachers said, and they know their parents are nervous that checks will end next year.

"None of them believe in Santa," Wolders said. "They know they aren't going to get Christmas presents."

One little boy has arrived late to school every day this year because his mother is now in a training program to get off welfare and she can't take him to school anymore.

"She's overwhelmed," said Karamourtopoulos. "He's tired of being late. He's crying in the hall because he knows he's going to get a detention."

Failure to Comply

Less than two miles south of the school, five children wait patiently for their mother in a bleak apartment with a smashed-in door and belongings piled in plastic bags around the room.

This is one of Lawrence's most troubled families. It was troubled before welfare reform, and it is more troubled now. Selene Diaz is facing drug charges by the police and child neglect allegations before the Department of Social Services, and recently her welfare check fell from $832 to zero when she failed to comply with the law's new requirements.

Though she had two short-lived jobs, Diaz hadn't sent in the required proof that she was working and how much. When she complied after nearly two months without funds, her benefits were fully reinstated.

The Diaz family is the kind of family the critics of welfare reform are most worried about. Although Selene Diaz, 23, has kept her family together so far, she has a sporadic work history and a large family to care for in the face of impending homelessness. Conceivably, the new law could push her to find permanent employment and to do what it takes to convince the child welfare authorities that she is caring properly for her children. Or, as welfare authorities have already done once, it could threaten her only steady income, further endangering her children, and possibly push them into foster care.

See WELFARE, A9, Col. 1

2/3

The Washington Post
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1997

WELFARE, From A8

Diaz's children—Jose, 8, Rene, 7, Roberto, 6, Tanya, 6, and Maria Mejia, 3—do not utter a syllable of complaint as they wait for their mother in the growing darkness on this afternoon of their latest family calamity. They don't ask when their mother will return. They don't ask for toys. They don't demand attention. They don't even beg to watch television.

They entertain each other quietly by tumbling together on the floor as their mother ferries their belongings to a relative's apartment for storage. She finally exhausted the patience of her landlord when the police raided her apartment for drugs a second time. She says she has done nothing wrong. Even so, she is being evicted and she is preparing to camp out with her sister or her mother temporarily until she can find someplace else to live.

After breakfast and lunch at school, it is unclear whether the children have had dinner. They said they ate hamburgers at school, and now they are snacking on sweetened chocolate powder from a can. They lick their fingers and dip them into the can, over and over. At about 7:30 p.m., they find a glass jar of pickles and pound on the lid to try to open it. Their babysitter, a friend of their mother's who is busy cleaning the kitchen floor, helps the children pry it open and hands each a pickle.

At the same time Diaz lost her welfare check, she said, she lost her food stamps. Although both were reinstated, she said she struggled to feed her children and keep them clean.

Racist neighbors, she charges, reported her to the Department of Social Services for child neglect. The anonymous letter accused her of failing to clean her house, allowing her children to go unfed and sending them to school dirty.

She has now received family counseling in how to discipline her children without hitting them. She has learned about "time out" and how to talk through problems without physical violence. "My kids used to be scared that I would hit them for little reason," she said. "I had these blackouts and I used to hit them hard."

She dropped out of school in the seventh grade and seems almost passive in the face of breathtaking problems. "I get stressed out with all these kids," she said.

Jose, the oldest, looks worried too. He rubs a pillow against his cheek as he sucks his thumb surreptitiously. He is the only one who has asked his mother for anything expensive this year, a pair of Nike shoes like other children have.

"That is more money than we can pay," she said. "He was sad, but he understood."

The children talk glowingly of the nearby Hennessey public school, where they get meals and presents, attention and help with reading. Tanya likes happy books. Roberto likes ghost books. Rene likes books about money, and Jose likes Charles Dickens.

His favorite story, as he thinks ahead to a Christmas spent moving from relative to relative without money or toys, is "A Christmas Carol."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To read Post articles about the impact of welfare reform, click on the above symbol on the front page of The Post's Web site at www.washingtonpost.com

The Washington Post
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1997

3/3

Flawed Day-Care Plans

The Clinton Administration is drawing up plans to increase day-care subsidies for working parents as a central element of next year's domestic agenda. The goal is worthy, but only if the subsidies are directed where needed — to low-income families.

The Administration no doubt agrees, but it is trapped by a Republican leadership that has no intention of going along. So the White House is thinking of including a tax cut for working parents. The cut would direct very little relief to the truly needy, but the Administration hopes that it will help sell more worthwhile parts of the package. This is a risky strategy because it invites the G.O.P. to pile on tax cuts of its own, forcing Congress to trim other domestic spending programs.

Day-care subsidies help low-wage workers keep more of what they earn and help parents place children in the best environment. Many low-wage parents ask relatives to care for children, often with unsatisfactory results. Targeted subsidies would allow them to purchase better day care.

The Administration is also considering increased grants to states, more money for after-school programs, model day-care centers and training for day-care workers. These are useful ideas. The tax cuts are not. One would cut taxes for corporations that create day-care centers — despite the fact that many corporations are already creating centers, without any nudge from Washington, as a recruiting device in a tight labor market.

The other would expand a provision in the current tax code that provides up to $1,400 in tax credits for day-care expenses for a family with two or more children. But few families collect anywhere near the maximum benefit because most of them are too poor to owe much tax in the first place. The expanded tax credit would mainly help families earning $30,000 or more a year.

The bigger danger is that the White House will inadvertently create a launching pad for more tax cuts. The cuts could conceivably be paid for by temporary surplus revenues that flow from a hot economy. But when the economy slows, Congress is far more likely to cut already strained discretionary programs that are essential to poor families than it is to eliminate the new tax breaks.

The New York Times

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1997

Day Care Improves With Staff Training

Fewer Children Per Teacher Also Beneficial in Study of Fla. Centers

5/7/98

By Barbara Vobejda
Washington Post Staff Writer

A four-year study of day-care centers has concluded that children learn more and behave better when teachers have more training and fewer youngsters to care for.

The study, released yesterday by the Families and Work Institute, a New York-based research organization, studied 150 licensed child-care centers in Florida from 1992 to 1996 after the state enacted laws requiring centers to improve teacher training and reduce the number of children each staff member must oversee.

Researchers found that the new requirements led to several improvements: Children in smaller classrooms were more securely attached to their teachers. They were more proficient with language and engaged in more "cognitively complex" play, an indication of greater intellectual development. And they were less likely to show aggression, anxiety and hyperactivity.

The researchers, who graded teacher and student behavior based on classroom observations, also found that teachers were more sensitive and responsive to children.

The study is likely to be cited as Congress debates several child-care proposals in the coming months, including a $21.7 billion, five-year plan offered by President Clinton. The White House initiative would help parents pay for child care and provide funds that states could use to improve the quality of care, as well as scholarships to train teachers.

When Florida engaged in a similar debate in 1991 over whether to upgrade requirements for day-care centers, there was skepticism about whether the tougher requirements would actually improve quality or affect children's development, said Ellen Galinsky, president of the Families and Work Institute. The laws required centers to provide one teacher for every four infants and every six toddlers. Previously, the ratios were one teacher to six infants and one to eight toddlers.

But after the law was imposed, said Galinsky, "we found that things in Florida got better. . . . You can make changes in a way that affects quality."

Child-care advocates believe improving quality is critical, given research showing that most care is mediocre at best. A 1995 study by the Families and Work Institute, for example, found that 40 percent of infant and toddler care was potentially harmful to the children's intellectual and emotional development.

One of the biggest challenges is reducing turnover, an issue the Florida laws did not address. Just 2 percent of the teachers who had been at the centers in 1992 were still there when researchers returned in 1996.

And while many centers did not adhere to the teacher training requirements, the level of education nevertheless improved. The study found that, in 1992, 47 percent of teachers had only a high school diploma, but that had fallen to 39 percent in 1996.

Despite concerns that Florida's stricter standards would impose unreasonable financial burdens on providers, the study found that, while centers did raise their fees, the increase was no higher than those at home-based day-care facilities— which were not covered by the new regulations— in the same period.

Day-Care Center That Stranded Toddler Had License Denied

By Wendy Melillo and Peter Finn
Washington Post Staff Writers

A Fairfax City day-care center [w]here a 14-month-old girl was acci[d]entally left locked inside one night [la]st week lost its license in June [b]ecause of several lapses in supervi[si]on, but it was allowed to operate [w]hile it appealed, state regulators [sa]id yesterday.

The ABC Children's Learning Center was previously cited for allowing a 4-year-old to get into an unlocked car, shift into neutral and roll down a hill; failing to call 911 after a child had a seizure; and permitting young children to play the video game Mortal Kombat, which has violent content and is intended for older teenagers.

Jane Brown, operations director for the Virginia Department of Social Services, which regulates day-care centers, said yesterday that because of the most recent incident, the state is considering going to court to shut down the facility.

"Our concern is the safety of the children at the center," Brown said.

Jyotsna "Judy" Goda, co-owner of the center, at 3711 Jermantown Rd., said there were explanations for all of the alleged violations. She said she had listed her reasons in her appeal but had not heard back from the state.

"Our parents have been with us so long, they know mistakes happen. But they are happy with the service," Goda said.

The center, which opened in 1991, applied for a new license after its previous one expired June 16, and the state denied the application July 3, said Martin Brown, a spokesman for the social services department.

The tale of the toddler left alone touches a nerve with many working parents in the Washington area, where there is a higher proportion of couples with two careers than

See DAY CARE, A7, Col. 1

■ *In the evening dash from work to pick up the kids, a red light can signal trouble for a mom on the run.* Page C1

7/14/98

Child-Care Initiative Triggers 'Mommy Wars'

To the Surprise of Advocates, Republicans Focus Instead on Stay-at-Home Parents

By Barbara Vobejda
Washington Post Staff Writer

It would be among the most expensive social initiatives of his presidency and the centerpiece of his domestic program this year, but the debate over President Clinton's $21.7 billion child-care proposal is not shaping up as a battle over spending. Instead, it's becoming Washington's version of the "mommy wars."

Critics have charged that the administration initiative unveiled earlier this month would effectively help working mothers at the expense of those who stay home to care for their children. And, they say, the proposed incentives would encourage parents to put their children in harmful "commercial day care."

The plan, announced well before Tuesday's State of the Union address to ensure that it received ample attention, includes an ambitious set of programs to expand and improve the quality of child care, help parents pay for it and encourage businesses to provide day care for their employees. It would double the number of children whose parents receive child-care subsidies, increase tax credits to help cover the cost, and expand Head Start and after-school care.

The announcement prompted immediate praise from child-care advocates, who have long complained that quality care is hard to find, and even mediocre care is too expensive for many working families.

But to the advocates' surprise, the ensuing debate has focused very little on the particulars of the administration plan. Instead, a flurry of voices has raised a more emotional subject: whether so many mothers should work.

"Some fundamental questions need to be asked about the importance of the mother-child attachment, particularly in the very early months and years," said Sen. Dan Coats (R-Ind.). "Do we want to encourage the kind of child care the president is encouraging?"

This line of argument by a range of columnists and groups has delighted many Republican leaders on Capitol Hill. They had scrambled to formulate a response to Clinton's proposal, fearing opposition to it could widen the gender gap and further establish the image of Democrats as the party most concerned about families and children.

Now Republicans have embraced the theme that any child-care proposal must provide help to families with a stay-at-home parent.

Child-care advocates are dismayed by the twist in the debate.

"We're in a period of diversion right now," said Faith Wohl, president of the Child Care Action Campaign, a New York-based group. "The president was talking about real issues . . . the cost [of child care] for parents and the quality for children." But opponents, she said, "are blowing a smoke screen. Should women be working and is child care good for children? These are very visceral, ideological, class-based issues."

Even with more than 70 percent of mothers in the work force, child care remains a subject of enormous ambivalence in American society. The current debate resonates powerfully among a range of families, including single parents, dual-earners and mothers who have given up lucrative careers to raise their children.

Like many other political debates in Washington, it gains intensity both because it touches so many lives—10 million children under age 5 have mothers that work—and because it touches a nerve. Families that have given up income to allow one parent to stay home, for example, have long felt ignored by policymakers and the child-care advocacy groups.

"Members of Congress on both sides are scared of the feminists. Child-care ideologues are very organized, and they control this issue," said Heidi Brennan, public policy director for Mothers at Home, a national organization based in Vienna, Va. "What they don't realize is that grass-roots Americans don't see it the same way." She argues that Congress ...ld help parents find ways to ...ore time with their children, either with tax breaks or more flexible work-force policies.

But the issue also touches a nerve among those who have sought ways to improve child care and help low-income parents pay for it.

"Child care has always been a bipartisan issue," said Helen Blank, director of child care at the Children's Defense Fund. "It is a significant issue for millions of families, and they struggle with it daily." She does not object to helping stay-at-home parents, she said. "I don't think they're competing issues."

But Blank points to the "pressing need": 5 million children are home alone after school; families earning less than $14,000 annually pay one-quarter of their incomes for child care; and more than one-third of child care providers leave their jobs each year, primarily because of low wages.

Advocates are also quick to remind members of Congress that they recently enacted a welfare reform law requiring millions of poor, single mothers to find work and leave their children in the care of others. "Haven't we already decided we don't want to pay women to stay home with children by repealing the old welfare law?" asked Wohl.

In fact, child care in this country is much broader than the standard image of a day-care center.

Of children under age 5 whose mothers work, 43 percent are cared for by fathers, grandparents or other relatives, 29 percent are in organized child-care centers and 21 percent are cared for in a babysitter's home or by nannies in the child's home, according to the Census Bureau.

"Because these subsidies [in the president's plan] are available only to parents who use commercial child care, they in effect punish parents who want to spend more time with their own children," said David Blankenhorn, president of the Institute for American Values, a conservative research organization in New York.

Still, Republicans in Congress are ambivalent. Many remain fearful of alienating working mothers, and others are genuinely committed to trying to help make child care better and more affordable.

"What we have to do is recognize as a party that there's a problem out there," said Rep. Marge Roukema (R-N.J.). "Contrary to the opinion of many, most women are not working simply out of personal or professional ambition. Many are single mothers. But even with two workers, it is an economic necessity to work. They are not running away from their children."

Roukema plans to introduce a bill that would provide federal money to local communities to help establish child-care facilities.

Sen. John H. Chafee (R-R.I.) plans to announce today that he will sponsor a bill with fellow GOP Sens Orrin G. Hatch (Utah) and Pat Roberts (Kan.) that would increase federal funds so more low-income families could receive child-care subsidies. But it would also help stay-at-home parents by extending to them the dependent care tax credit now available only to families that pay for child care.

Republican leaders in the Senate are organizing support for their own legislation, which would also include relief for non-working parents. Sen. Larry E. Craig (R-Idaho), chairman of the Senate Republican Policy Committee, has suggested an "income splitting" plan to allow stay-at-home parents to claim half of the income of their spouses, putting both parents into a lower tax bracket.

"The president had a lot to say about mothers who work outside the home," Craig said in a recent radio address. "Let's get it straight, Mr. President. All moms work. No one should be left out."