



# EMPATHIC PARENTING

Journal of the Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

Volume 22

Issue 2

Spring 1999

## Infancy cannot be re-run later.

**Peter Cook**

Author of **Early  
Childcare: Infants  
& Nations at Risk**  
(see page 2)

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## Consumerism, Patriarchy, Feminism and Child Care

For quite some time now, women have been trying to escape the worst aspects of patriarchy, the arbitrary male dominance still depressingly prevalent in governing bodies and households.

Unfortunately for men, women and children, feminist leaders have been the unseeing victims of our carnivorous, predatory, people eating consumer culture. Following a male script, latter-day feminists have succeeded only in creating, as Madonna Kolbenshlag\* has so aptly said, "a new set of half-persons who happen to be female".

Making "motherhood" a dirty word, a selfish choice that is not "real work", and insisting that part-time orphanages are the only solution for the care of very young children, have been understandable but unfortunate tactics for, again, men, women and children.

What is needed, as Peter Cook spells out (page 2), is a "rethink" of the way of advancing the interests of women.

Men and women must do better for tomorrow's children or there won't be many more tomorrows.

ETB

\*Madonna Kolbenshlag, *Kiss Sleeping Beauty Good-Bye*. Bantam Books. ISBN 0-553-14912-1

### WHAT IS EMPATHIC PARENTING?

Being willing and able to put yourself in your child's shoes in order to correctly identify his/her feelings, and

Being willing and able to behave toward your child in ways which take those feelings into account.

Empathic Parenting takes an enormous amount of time and energy and fully involves both parents in a co-operative, sharing way.

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**EMPATHIC PARENTING**

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## In this issue...

- Home Truths Absent in Early  
Childcare Debate pp 2-3
- The Problem Is Day Care pp 3-4
- Early Child Rearing: The Fabric of  
Society pp 6-8
- Baby Cribs Breed Social Ills p 10
- Work, Spend, Work, Spend: Is This Any  
Way to Live? pp 11-15
- The Paradox p 16

Many articles from past issues of Empathic Parenting are now available on the Internet and may be freely downloaded by anyone. Our four sites are now accessible from one address:

<http://www.empathicparenting.org>

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**Daycare is for Parents Not Infants and Toddlers:** <http://www.bconnex.net/~cspcc/daycare/>

**Psychopathy and Consumerism: Two Illnesses that Need and Feed Each Other:** <http://www.bconnex.net/~cspcc/psychopathy/>

# Home Truths Absent in Early Childcare Debate

Peter Cook

## If we are to pay for the care of children, why not pay mothers to do it?

More subsidized, universally available, affordable, high quality, professional childcare is often advocated as a way of advancing the interests of women.

Yet early long daycare is not in the best interests of very young children and their families. Evidence increasingly suggests that this childcare agenda is misconceived, because it:

- \* is unrealistic, as it is often unaffordable and unachievable;

- \* overlooks accumulating evidence of risks of undesirable outcomes;

- \* is contrary to much expert opinion about what is likely to be best for very young children and is contrary to the desire of many working mothers to care for their own young children if they could afford to;

- \* relies partly on the now-discredited ideology of cultural determinism, which denied the relevance of biology to human behaviour, arguing that mothers can be largely replaced by trained carers;

- \* makes adequate breastfeeding difficult or impossible.

A rethink is needed.

We each have a pedigree of maternal ancestors who, overall, were selected, over thousands of generations, for their success in all aspects of healthy mothering: pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, attachment, and the protecting and rearing of baby girls who grew up to do likewise, not in splendid isolation, but in social groups with others having an enduring interest in the child.

The question should not be "how can everybody have affordable, quality childcare?" It should be: "Taking into account the biologically-determined nature and needs of young human beings and their mothers how, in our de-tribalized societies, can we best help and support parents who wish to do a mutually satisfying job of mothering and fathering their infants and young children without jeopardising their own futures?"

If some of the effort devoted to seeking high-quality childcare were used creatively to support high quality parenting, we would be nearer to our real goal of enhancing the well-being of mothers, young children and society.

We could recognise that mothers with infants and young children are an essential, vulnerable group, unique in society, having special needs for a few short years. Infancy cannot be re-run later.

Governments can encourage commu-

Reprinted from *The Australian*, Wednesday March 24th, 1999. Dr Peter S. Cook is a retired consultant child psychiatrist. This article is partly based on his paper **Rethinking the early childcare agenda**, published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, Vol 170:1, 29-31, Jan 4th, 1999, and in the author's book **"Early Child Care - Infant and Nations at Risk"**, 1997, available from the CSPCC for \$10.00

nity appreciation of home-caring parents for their parenting and other contributions to society. In the gross domestic product, we could show the multi-billion-dollar value of mothers' work and mothering at home.

Parents should be free to make informed decisions, but economic justice for the family is a pre-condition for real choice. The next advance in women's rights could be affirmative action in favour of mothers of young children, to give freedom of choice.

If we are to pay for the care of children, why not pay mothers to do it?

We need family incomes policies offering equal opportunity for home-caring parents, especially mothers of children under three. Economic policies have been unfavorable to these families, compared with two-income families using subsidized childcare.

Governments could be neutral, offering the available money fairly to all parents, to care for their very young children as they choose, especially while children are under five. Mothers also need provision for superannuation, if the economic sacrifices of early childrearing are not to become a lifelong handicap.

Mothers' needs for relief, help and company must be addressed. Programs of voluntary visiting of new mothers can offer many benefits.

Some childcare centres could become like Swedish "open pre-schools", open to

parents, and providing companionship, educational opportunities and facilities for children and their parents.

High quality parenting of very young children does not preclude return to part-time work later, even in pre-school years, but parents may need help to re-enter the work-force.

We need parenting-friendly policy options put before governments and decision-makers, by the bureaucracy, the Opposition, academe, and the Institute of Family Studies.

Until recently, one ideologically-based view held a monopoly of counsel. It is an unsustainable way of helping women, because it deprives the next generation of women of mothering while they are infants, and also deprives the little boys who will be their partners, and the fathers of their children. Preparation for marriage begins

Until recently, one ideologically-based view held a monopoly of counsel. It is an unsustainable way of helping women, because it deprives the next generation of women of mothering while they are infants...

at birth.

This is not "returning to the 1950s". Many problems were inherent in the social isolation and child-rearing ideas of those days. Today we can help young people understand how to achieve more satisfying parent-child relationships than were common in the past.

Preferably, the approach to these issues should be bipartisan, rather than having parties compete in spending on childcare, while neglecting the importance of healthy mothering, and the developmental needs of infants and their families. ☺

# The Problem Is Day Care

Thomas P. Millar

## **The child from birth to three years of age needs a high proportion of one-to-one parenting.**

Do you agree that day care is as good a way to rear preschool children as parenting by a stay-at-home mother? You don't, but you're afraid to say so? Chin up! It's gotten easier.

In Great Britain, the first detailed study of children in day care was recently reported. The finding is that countless children younger than three years of age are arriving at eight in the morning and being picked up at six in the evening. During those 10 hours they are being cared for by a few young, poorly paid and minimally trained workers. Interactional studies reveal that 75% of staff encounters with children are unfocused, brief efforts to push or guide the child into the routine of the school.

These young women, forced to interact with 15 or more children every day, develop little intimacy with individual children. Affectionate interchanges are minimal. The best that can be said is the children are warm and safe, but in no sense are they being parented. They are being warehoused.

Children pay the price for such absent parenting. Unfulfilled, they become discontented. Untrained, their adaptive growth fails. In time many parents begin to sense this. But they don't believe the problem is day care, but *bad* day care. No, the problem is day care.

The child from birth to three years of age needs a high proportion of one-to-one

parenting, not only to meet his affectional needs, but also to forward his adaptive growth. The neurological development basic to perception, body image, attachment, language development and the myriad other accomplishments of preschool maturation requires one-to-one interaction between a caring mother and a growing child.

This means mothers staying home for the first three years of the child's life. Why don't they? You'll get a lot of answers to that question.

Many young women today do not want to spend their time rearing their child. They see themselves as bright, creative, happily spontaneous persons who would waste themselves by so doing. I say to such women, if you're so determined to become all that is in you to become, do it. We need intelligent, creative women to help run this world, so go do your thing as hard and impressively as you're able. Just don't try to have kids too.

The truth is child rearing is not a job. It is an obligation. Some mother put herself second for your first three years of life, now it's your turn to put yourself second for somebody else. If you choose to become a mother, then forget the career for a few years and just do it.

But, say some women, I have to work to make ends meet. From this, two questions arise: Do you really? And if the true answer to the first is yes, then why is that the case?

Reprinted from **THE MEDICAL POST** June 30, 1998. Thomas Millar is a psychiatrist in Vancouver.

**We need intelligent, creative women to help run this world, so go do your thing as hard and impressively as you're able. Just don't try to have kids too.**

Let's deal with "do you really?" first. Many women say they work to make ends meet, but I note many families have two televisions, two cars, a dishwasher and are buying their home. They aren't working to make ends meet. They are working to up-grade their lifestyle. Nothing wrong with wanting some luxuries you say? If it means your child gets second-rate rearing for his first three years of life, there's something very wrong with it.

But there are women who really do have to work to make ends meet. If their children have to pay the price for this, surely they are not to blame?

They are not. This is a social problem and needs to be understood and dealt with in those terms. Canada is a wealthy country. Properly run, she should easily be able to provide a home for every family, put plenty of food on every table and

pay men the kind of salary that would make it possible for wives to stay home and look after the kids until they're in grade school. Somehow Canada can't manage this. Why?

The problem comes down to fiscal mismanagement. The money we spend to service our debt would surely be sufficient, if it were properly channeled, to allow all mothers of preschool children to stay at home.

The persons responsible for short-changing our three-year-olds are the men who run this rich country with so little insight and such incompetence. They need to hear this in no uncertain terms. Write and let them know. Tell them, never mind funding universal day care. Spend the money making it possible for mothers with children less than three years of age to stay home and rear them properly. ☺

**The truth is child rearing is not a job. It is an obligation.  
If you choose to become a mother, then forget the career for a few years and just do it.**



A Symposium celebrating 400 years of Advancing the Highest Standards of  
Medical and Surgical Care

***Early Child Rearing: The Fabric of Society***  
***March 26, 1999***

0920-0930 Opening Address - *Professor David Baum, President of the Royal  
College of Paediatrics & Child Health*

0930-0955 The Anatomy of a Child's Mind - *Prof F Cockburn, Glasgow*

0955-1020 Mother's Role in the Acquisition of Early infant Communication and  
Language - *Prof G Trevarthen, Edinburgh*

1020-1045 Discussion

1110-1135 Nature, Nurture and Behaviour - *Prof M Hoghughi Newcastle upon  
Tyne*

1135-1200 Child Poverty and Child Health - *Sir Donald Acheson, London*

1200-1225 Adverse Social Environment, Children and Crime  
*Prof R Holman, Glasgow*

1225-1300 Discussion

1400-1425 A Teenage View of Self, Health and Society - *Dr H Sweeting, Glasgow*

1425-1450 Attachment Theory and Public Policy - *Dr S. Kramer, London*

1450-1515 The Importance of Emotional Wellbeing in Childhood and its impact on  
Future Health. Do we know enough to intervene?  
*Dr S Stewart-Brown, Oxford*

1515-1540 Discussion

1600

**THE HALLIDAY LECTURE**

**Early Child Rearing and the Future of Society**

*Dr Elliott Barker - President of the Canadian Society for the  
Prevention of Cruelty to Children*



# Early Child Rearing: The Fabric of Society

*David Baum*

This Symposium is historically placed as part of the 400th Anniversary Celebration of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow and in the final months before the dawn of the Millennium. The Symposium addresses a subject of pivotal importance for mankind and as we hear the papers and evidence today, we must consider our professional responsibilities accordingly.

In no time in human history, through the combined forces of national prosperity and applied bio-science, has the perinatal mortality rate and infant mortality rate been so low and the longevity and quality of physical life of advanced adulthood been so high. Self-confident in our intellectual triumphalism, we are willing to predict a plague of new psycho-social maladies for the 21st Century, yet seem unable to draw obvious and simple conclusions about the aetiological contributions of disordered early child rearing.

Some 50 years ago, Bowlby defined the cycles of deprivation - today's emotionally deprived children becoming tomorrow's neglectful parents, who in turn produce another emotionally deprived generation. He believed in those optimistic post-war days that with concentrated social, economic and psychological effort we could break this cycle and, in his words, "enable all boys and girls to grow up to become men and women who, given health and security, are capable of providing a stable and happy life for their children".

Alas we have not broken this cycle: on the contrary the evidence of scholars

like Sir Michael Rutter and Professor David Smith is that, in an era of economic growth and improving indices of physical health, there is an alarming rise in crime, suicide, depression and alcohol and drug abuse in young people, introducing a multiplier into transgenerational deprivation.

Alongside this, how curious it is that the National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital (NAWCH) - now known as Action for Sick Children - based on the works of Bowlby, Winnicott, the Robertsons and others - successfully waged their campaign for children and babies to have their parents with them in hospital - a practice now encoded in government documents and enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Yet while we have been busy implementing the NAWCH Charter with all its effects on hospital building plans and staffing, we have colluded with society and government policy in turning a blind eye on the importance of babies and children having their parents with them at home.

We will hear today something of the evidence that high quality parenting, during the first most formative weeks and months of postnatal life, is the best way of preventing disordered and problematical child development. While we face up to the potential disadvantages of parents seeking work outside the home and abandoning young children to day care, we should be mindful of the inverse care law: namely that those in the poorest economic and social circumstances, themselves very often the victims of neglect in early child-

Opening Address by Professor David Baum, President, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at the The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow Symposium Friday, 26th March, 1999.

**Babies and infants are, like other young mammals, nestlings who should be reared, nourished and nurtured by their mothers.**

hood, have most to lose in this unfair exchange since they are least likely to have access to high quality and consistent care for their babies and children.

We will be considering the possible mechanisms by which consistent and devoted mothering can positively influence brain development. These are matters of great scientific importance yet I would contend that we do not need to understand mechanisms in order to conclude that a particular intervention or manoeuvre is important and works in practice. Consider the "Back to Sleep" Campaign: the simple manoeuvre putting infants to sleep on their backs has decimated the epidemic of Sudden infant Death Syndrome - while we have yet to define the physiological mechanisms by which sleeping position is so vital for infant survival.

Babies and infants are, like other young mammals, nestlings who should be reared, nourished and nurtured by their mothers. Extensive non-parental care in infancy is without precedent in humans or other animals and to continue to ignore this will historically be judged to have been a madness of neglect.

There are those who maintain that there is insufficient evidence to draw such conclusions. Today we stand alongside Bowlby in declaring that infants and children need to be loved consistently and unconditionally. We must turn the tables

and put the burden of proof on those who argue otherwise.

If we must be legalistic, then we can turn, in this the 40th Year of the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child**, to principle 6 which states:

*"The child, for full and harmonious development of his personality, needs love and understanding. He shall, wherever possible, grow up in the care and under the responsibility of his parents - a child of tender years shall not, save in exceptional circumstances, be separated from his mother".*

Universal mothering is the surest start that we can offer our children and I salute those who have brought today's Symposium together in Scotland. Last month we had a new document from the Scottish Office "Towards a Healthier Scotland" in which is a blueprint for action: in Chapter 7 - the health demonstration projects. Number 1 is entitled "Starting Well", in the terms of reference of which are to be found the ingredients of today's agenda.

We have a chance in Glasgow to kindle a beacon and define early child rearing as the key determinant of the very fabric of the society of the millennium generation. With the support of my Council, I can pledge that the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health will follow Scottish lead and bring the importance of early child rearing to the political table. ☺

**Extensive non-parental care in infancy is without precedent in humans or other animals and to continue to ignore this will historically be judged to have been a madness of neglect.**

“Extensive non-parental care in infancy is without long-term precedent in humans or any other mammals. The major environmental changes involved in this massive social experiment should have some kind of “environmental impact assessment”. The burden of proof that such changes in the early environment of infants are safe should be on those who advocate them, just as the purveyors of other environmental changes, like additives to food or water, must provide evidence that they are safe for human consumption. As in medicine, the precautionary principle of *primum non nocere* – “first and foremost do no harm” – should apply. This principle is not being applied in policies which advocate more child care for infants and young children.”

Peter Cook

“Man and woman power devoted to the production of material goods counts a plus in all our economic indices. Man and woman power devoted to the production of happy, healthy, and self-reliant children in their own homes does not count at all. We have created a topsy turvy world. The society we live in is ... in evolutionary terms ... a very peculiar one. There is a great danger that we shall adopt mistaken norms. For, just as a society in which there is a chronic insufficiency of food may take a deplorably inadequate level of nutrition as its norm, so may a society in which parents of young children are left on their own with a chronic insufficiency of help take this state of affairs as its norm.”

John Bowlby

# Baby Cribs Breed Social Ills

*Joseph Hall*

## Leaving infants alone at night linked to anxiety

PHILADELPHIA — A baby crib is the breeding ground for many of the mental health and social ills that befall western societies, a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science has been told.

Leaving babies alone in their cribs at night causes stress in infants that can spark anxiety, narcissism, violence and depression in later life, Harvard Medical School psychiatrist Michael Commons told the conference.

The practice is common only in North America and northern Europe.

Parents from most cultures have their infants sleep with them, and of course you know in northern European and American cultures our infants sleep apart from us," Commons said.

"As an infant, sleeping by yourself is very stressful ... and the stress that goes on in that period causes the brain to secrete (the hormone) cortisol."

Excess cortisol in the subcortical areas of the brain can alter children's neurochemistry and make them more susceptible to stress for the rest of their lives, Commons said.

It's this susceptibility that can lead to non-genetically based mental problems in youth and adulthood.

"Cortisol makes you more prone to the bad effects of future stress, it makes you more prone to mental illness and it makes it harder to recover from stress,"

Commons explained.

Among the ways this biological inability to handle stress can manifest itself later is through a susceptibility to post-traumatic stress disorder, narcissistic tendencies, depression, violence and chronic loneliness.

It also creates a "Marlboro Man" society, in which rugged individualism is admired and the inability to handle stressful situations is cause for shame and withdrawal.

"Support for failure and for emotional responses to stress are not part of our culture. You're supposed to brave it," Commons said.

"And this leaves people very open to developing post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and character disorders and they recover more slowly because they don't have the emotional resources to seek comfort and consoling," he says.

Commons said that babies — especially those younger than 8 months — should be allowed to sleep with their parents.

They should be close to comforting adults throughout the day, he added.

"Infants should be rubbed and hugged and kissed, and they should be kept very close to parents," he said.

"And if we have day care ... this idea of having kids sleep in separate cribs is a bad idea. It's better if they sleep touching each other." ☺

Joseph Hall is the science reporter for the Toronto Star. Reprinted from the Toronto Star February 27, 1998.

# Work, Spend, Work, Spend: Is This Any Way to Live?

Juliet B. Schor

As the country struggles to emerge from an unexpectedly recalcitrant recession, all eyes are on the American consumer. But will we get back off the treadmill of work-and-spend that powered our economic growth in recent decades? And should we?

Americans live in what may be the most consumer-oriented society in history. We spend three to four times as many hours a year shopping as our counterparts in Western Europe. Four billion square feet of our total land area has been converted into shopping centers, or about 16 square feet for every American man, woman and child. Most homes are virtual retail outlets, with cable shopping channels, mail-order catalogues, toll-free numbers and computer hookups. We can shop from the office, from the car, even in airports, where video monitors allow immediate on-screen purchasing.

Some of the country's most popular leisure activities have been turned into shopping expeditions. National parks, music concerts and art museums are now acquisition opportunities. Americans used to visit Europe to see the sights. Now "Born to Shop" guides are replacing Fodor and Baedeker, complete with walking tours from Ferragamo to Fendi. For some, shopping has become an addiction. "Enabled" by plastic, compulsive shoppers spend money they don't have on items they absolutely can't do without and never use.

While modern consumerism dates

from the 1920s, the "shop 'til you drop" syndrome seemed particularly active during the 1980s, a decade popularly represented as one long buying spree. In the five years between 1983 and 1987, Americans purchased 51 million microwaves, 85 million color TVs, 36 million refrigerators and freezers, 48 million VCRs and 23 million cordless telephones – all for an adult population of only 180 million. *The average American* now consumes, in toto, more than twice as much as he or she did 40 years ago.

In 1935, 55 percent of families had a car; today, 88 percent of households do and the average number of vehicles per household is two. Over 90 percent of households have color TVs and 80 percent have VCRs. Americans are also spending 2.6 times as much on services as in 1950, buying things like travel, restaurant meals, medical attention, skin care and tennis lessons.

The consumerism of the postwar era has not been without its effects on the way we use our time. As people became accustomed to the material rewards of prosperity, desires for leisure time were eroded. In both the workplace and the home, progress has repeatedly translated into more goods and services, rather than more free time. Work-and-spend has become a mutually reinforcing and powerful syndrome.

There is no doubt that the growth of consumption has yielded major improve-

Excerpted from *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* by Juliet B. Schor. Copyright ©1991 by Basic Books. Published by arrangement with Basic Books, a division of Harper Collins Publishers, Inc. Juliet Schor is associate professor of economics at Harvard. Special thanks to Michael Trout for drawing this article to the attention of the editor. It was previously reprinted in *The Family Therapy Networker*.

ments in the quality of life. But when we add up all the items we consume and consider the overall impact, the picture gets murkier. In an era when the connections between perpetual growth and environmental deterioration are becoming more apparent, with the quality of public life declining in many areas, shouldn't we at least step back and re-examine our commitment to ever-greater quantities of consumer goods?

We do know that the increasing consumption of the last 40 years has not made us happier. The percentage of the population who reported being "very happy" peaked in 1957, according to two national polls. By the last years these polls were taken (1970 and 1978) the level of "very happy" had not recovered, in spite of the rapid growth in consumption. Similar polls taken since then indicate no revival of happiness.

Materialism has also bred its own form of discontent—even among the affluent. Newspaper and magazine articles chronicle the dissatisfaction. One couple earning \$115,000 tallied up their necessary expenses of \$100,000 a year and complained that "something's gone terribly wrong with being rich." Douglas and Maureen Obey earn \$56,000 a year — an income that exceeds that of roughly 70 percent of the population. Yet they complained to the *Boston Globe* that they are stretched to the breaking point. Douglas

works two jobs "to try to keep it all together... [I'm] in hock up to my eyeballs" The Obeyes own their home, two cars, a second rental property and a backyard pool.

Complaints about life-style have been particularly loud among baby-boomers. In a *Mother Jones* article, writer Katy Butler explained a state of mind shared by many in her generation: she was convinced she would not achieve the comfortable middle class life-style enjoyed by her parents: "I thought bitterly of my downward mobility

... about wanting a new couch, a weekend cottage, a bigger house on a quieter street." Eventually she realized that more money was not the answer. As she acknowledged: "Discontent was cheating me of the life I had."

It is widely believed that our unceasing quest for material goods (and its attendant discontent)

are part of the basic makeup of human beings: But while human beings may have innate desires to strive toward something, there is nothing preordained about material goods. Numerous examples of societies where consumption is relatively unimportant can be found in anthropological and historical literature. Even in 19th- and 20th-century America, many working people showed strong preferences for leisure over money. Consumerism is not an ahistorical trait of human nature, but a specific product of the development of the market system, which allowed consumerism to "spill over" for the first time

Shouldn't we at least step back and re-examine our commitment to ever-greater quantities of consumer goods?

## Numerous examples of societies where consumption is relatively unimportant can be found in anthropological and historical literature.

beyond the charmed circles of the rich.

In the United States, the watershed was the 1920s – the point at which the “psychology of scarcity” gave way to the “psychology of abundance.” The nation grew giddy with its exploding wealth. Consumerism blossomed – both as a social ideology and in terms of a high rate of real spending. Faced with the need to sell to a middle class whose basic needs had already been met, advertisers had to persuade Americans to buy things they didn’t really need. The general director of General Motors’ research labs, Charles Kettering, described the challenge baldly as “the organized creation of dissatisfaction.”

The campaign to create new and unlimited wants did not go unchallenged. Trade unionists, social and religious reformers understood that since the consumption of luxuries necessitated long hours of work, consumerism would keep most Americans imprisoned in capitalism’s “squirrel cage.” And, in fact, since 1920, the bulk of productivity advance has been channeled into the growth of consumption.

The inability of the consumerist lifestyle to create durable satisfaction can be seen in the syndrome of “keeping up with the Joneses.” This competition is based on the fact that it is not the absolute level of consumption that matters but how much one consumes relative to one’s peers.

Over time, keeping up with the Joneses becomes a real trap – because the Joneses also keep up with you. If everyone’s income goes up by 10 percent, then

relative positions don’t change at all. No satisfaction is gained. But in the choice between income and leisure, the quest for relative standing, based on visible commodities, has biased us toward income. If Mrs. Jones works long hours, she can buy the second home, the designer dress or the fancier car. If her neighbor Mrs. Smith opts for more free time instead, her two-car garage and walk-in closet will be half empty.

A second vicious cycle arises from the fact that the satisfactions gained from consumption are often short-lived. Like drug addicts who develop a tolerance, consumers need additional hits to maintain a given level of satisfaction. The switch from black-and-white to color TV, for example, was a real improvement, but soon viewers became habituated to color. Going back to black-and-white would have reduced well-being, although having color may not have yielded a permanently higher level of satisfaction.

The irony in all the consuming Americans do is that, when asked, they reject materialist values. The Gallup Poll recently asked respondents to choose what was most important to them – family life, betterment of society, physical health and so on. Among a list of nine, the materialist option – “having a nice home, car and other belongings” – ranked last. More than two thirds of the population also says it would “welcome less emphasis on money.” Yet millions of working parents see their children or spouses far less than they should or would like to. “Working” mothers complain they have no time for

themselves. My explanation for this paradoxical behavior is that people are trapped by the cycle of work-and-spend.

Work-and-spend is driven by productivity growth. Whether the annual increment is 3 percent, as it was for much of the postwar period, or less, as in recent years, it provides the chance either to raise income or to reduce working hours. But a company does not usually offer this choice to its employees, instead deciding unilaterally to maintain existing hours and give a pay increase.

But if workers really wanted to work less – rather than consume more – couldn't they choose to do so? Neoclassical economics say yes, but the evidence says no. Every study I have seen has found that most workers lack free choice of hours. True, moonlighting and retirement are options, and workers can quit their jobs to find alternate schedules. But as economist Paul Samuelson noted years ago, "In contrast with freedom in the spending of the money we earn, the modern industrial regime denies us a similar freedom in choosing the work routine by which we earn those dollars."

Part of the power of the work-and-spend cycle is its social pervasiveness. To see the difficulties individuals have in deviating from the status quo, consider what would happen to an ordinary couple who have grown tired of the rat race. John and Jane Doe, like nearly half of all Americans, want more time to spend with their children and each other. What will happen if they both decide to reduce their hours

by half and are willing to live on half their usual earnings?

The transition will be most abrupt for John. Few men, except teens, students and some seniors, work part-time. Unless John has truly unusual talent, his employer will probably refuse to sanction a job change to part-time work. Chances are he'll have to find a new job.

Given the paucity of part-time jobs for men, it will be almost impossible for John to secure a position in a managerial, professional, or administrative capacity. When he does land a job, his pay will fall far short of what he earned in full-time work – on average about \$80 a week compared to average weekly earnings of \$450 for a full-time male. He will also lose many fringe benefits – only 15 percent of part-time workers are given health insurance.

Jane's switch to part-time will be less traumatic, because more women work part-time. Her earnings loss will be less, because women are already discriminated against in full-time work. But still Jane will most likely be relegated to the bottom part of the female labor market – service, sales and clerical jobs.

These are the obstacles on the labor market side – low wages, few benefits and severe limitations on choice of occupation. The dominance of full-time jobs also has effects on the consumption side. With their reduced income, even with careful budgeting, a couple like the Does may have trouble procuring the basics (housing, food and clothing), because the U.S. standard of living is geared to at least one full-time

**The general director of General Motors' research labs, Charles Kettering, described the challenge baldly as "the organized creation of dissatisfaction."**



income and, increasingly, to two. A whole range of cheap products is not even available. For those who are skeptical about this point, consider markets in poor countries. In India, one can find low-quality clothing at a fraction of the price of the least expensive items here. Semi-automatic washers and stripped-down cars are the norm.

The strength of social norms does not mean that the nature of work cannot be changed. The meaning of "consumption" itself has already gone through one major transformation, from its original negative meaning of "eat up, devour, waste, destroy." Today, a second transformation would entail new ways of watching, buying, owning, using and discarding. Instead of craving novelty in consumer goods, we could cultivate attachment to possessions that were high quality and long-lasting, from

clothes to automobiles to gadgets. We would use things until they wore out, not until they went out of fashion or we just grew tired of them. Maybe the Joneses and the Smiths could even cooperate rather than compete, sharing expensive household items that are used only intermittently.

Forswearing a bankrupting consumerist path, the new consumer of the 21st century will be in a far better position to address issues of global inequality and move us off our current collision course with nature. But to do these things, we must be open to major changes in how we run our businesses, households and the connections between them. And we must organize ourselves to make those changes happen – in spite of all-too-certain opposition from those who benefit from the status quo. ☺

...Most of the luxuries, and many of the so called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hinderances to the elevation of mankind. With respect to luxuries and comforts, the wisest have ever lived a more simple and meagre life than the poor. The ancient philosophers, Chinese, Hindoo, Persian, and Greek, were a class than which none has been poorer in outward riches, none so rich in inward. We know not much about them. It is remarkable that we know so much of them as we do. The same is true of the more modern reformers and benefactors of their race. None can be an impartial or wise observer of human life but from the vantage ground of what we should call voluntary poverty...

Henry David Thoreau

Walden, 1854

# THE PARADOX

*Anonymous – from the Internet*

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints; we spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry too quickly, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too seldom, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often; We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; We've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor. We've conquered outer space, but not inner space; We've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul; We've split the atom, but not our prejudice; We write more, but learn less; We plan more, but accomplish less.

We've learned to rush, but not to wait; We have higher incomes, but lower morals; We have more food, but less appeasement; We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever, but have less communication; We've become long on quantity, but short on quality.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion; tall men, and short character; steep profits, and shallow relationships.

These are the times of world peace, but domestic warfare; more leisure, but less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition.

These are days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes.

These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throw away morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer to quiet, to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom; a time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to make a difference, or to just hit delete....

## **The Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children**

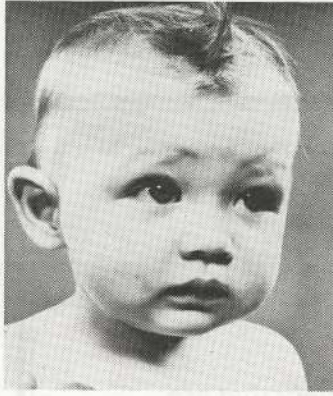
The CSPCC is working to change those things in Canadian society that are making it difficult for parents to give their children the care they need to grow into healthy, confident, non-violent, loving adults.

### **In general we are working for:**

- ◆ a shift from arbitrary male dominance to no-one's arbitrary dominance
- ◆ a shift from the essential beliefs of our society's consumer religion -- envy, selfishness and greed -- to trust, empathy and affection in a community-centred, sustainable society
- ◆ a shift from violence and sexism as the warp and woof of entertainment
- ◆ a shift from treating children as sinful or stupid to empathizing with them and fulfilling their expanding and particular needs

### **In particular we are working to:**

- ◆ raise the status of parenting
- ◆ implement universal parenting education from kindergarten to grade eight
- ◆ encourage parents to make their children's emotional needs their highest priority during the critical first three years
- ◆ facilitate a positive birthing experience for every father, mother and baby
- ◆ promote extended breastfeeding with child-led weaning
- ◆ make it easier for parents to meet the emotional needs of each child by encouraging a minimum three year spacing between siblings
- ◆ increase awareness of the potential long term hazards of separations between children under three and their mothers



Recognizing that the capacity to give and receive trust, affection and empathy is fundamental to being human.

Knowing that all of us suffer the consequences when children are raised in a way that makes them affectionless and violent, and;

Realizing that for the first time in History we have definite knowledge that these qualities are determined by the way a child is cared for in the very early years.

# CREDO



## WE BELIEVE THAT:

- The necessity that every new human being develop the capacity for trust, affection and empathy dictates that potential parents re-order their priorities with this in mind.
- Most parents are willing and able to provide their children with the necessary loving empathic care, given support from others, appropriate understanding of the task and the conviction of its absolute importance.
- It is unutterably cruel to permanently maim a human being by failing to provide this quality of care during the first three years of life.

## THERE IS AN URGENCY THEREFORE TO:

- Re-evaluate all our institutions, traditions and beliefs from this perspective.
- Oppose and weaken all forces which undermine the desire or ability of parents to successfully carry out a task which ultimately affects us all.
- Support and strengthen all aspects of family and community life which assist parents to meet their obligation to each new member of the human race.