



EMPATHIC PARENTING

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

Volume 20

Issue 4

Autumn 1997



CONSUMERISM

“We must be willing to face the hard reality that preventing child abuse and neglect is possible only when we are ready to attack its sources in the fabric of our society and culture, rather than merely provide social and medical services to its victims.”

David Gill

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Consumerism and Cruelty to Children

Quite apart from the fact that the consumption based lifestyle of 20 percent of the worlds' population is dangerously contaminating everyone's earth, water and air, I find it very upsetting when I see a helpless infant being permanently maimed emotionally because its parents place so high a priority on consumer values that they fail to provide the empathic, affectionate care their infant needs during the relatively few years such care is a necessity.

Let us at least call a spade a spade. "We need two salaries just to keep up" means "We value the whetting of our Consumer and Material appetites for these few years more highly than our infant's future emotional health". "I need to work in order to feel fulfilled and content, and it's not fair to my infant for me to look after her when I'm unhappy" means "I believe I can find happiness and fulfilment through Consumerism and Materialism (and status and careerism based on these), and what I want for these few years takes priority over my infant's future emotional health."

Considering the extent to which it is possible to choose if and when parents will have children, it seems cruel in the extreme to risk a child's permanent emotional health for a few years of ... what? Doing so should be seen for what it is: Selling a child's birthright for a mess of pottage.

Let us also not delude ourselves by thinking that the way of life for which infants are so frequently sacrificed these days is either the only way or a necessary way. Let us hope that the Consumerism and Materialism that are currently so fashionable will soon be seen for what they are and are not, and will give way to values which are more compatible with emotional health -- both infant and adult.

E.T.B.

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 Volume 20 Issue 4 Autumn 1997

**EMPATHIC PARENTING**

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

Empathic Parenting: http://cnet.unb.ca/orgs/prevention_cruelty/

Crime Prevention: http://www.bconnex.net/~cspcc/crime_prevention/

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/>

Consumerism

Consumerism is the chronic purchasing of new goods and services, with little attention to their true need, durability, product origin or the environmental consequences of manufacture and disposal.

Imagine yourself in the following world:

You live in a safe pleasant and unpolluted community where you actually know your neighbors and interact with them, be it a small town, a suburb or a city neighbourhood. You can easily walk, bicycle or take decent mass transit to your nearby job, giving you time to think or read as you get there.

The work that you do improves our future, benefits your community and means something to you and those with whom you interact.

Your work schedule leaves you sufficient time to enjoy your friends, family and outside interests. Money isn't a controlling influence in your life because your needs are easily met. Your possessions are few, yet of high quality, thus allowing your home to be smaller and less expensive to own or rent.

You're connected to your surroundings, rather than just dwelling in them, your backyard, for example, provides most of the produce you might need plus a surplus that you can trade with neighbors. You have a stake in your community and participate in local decision making. You buy what is necessary in nearby establishments whose owners are

known to you.

Occasionally you need to travel to a large store on the edge of town. You do this on a free shuttle bus or perhaps in a simple, older vehicle, the use and costs of which you might share with others or a car that you rent only when you need it, thus preserving for yourself the weeks or months that it takes to earn the thousands of after-tax dollars that owning a new car would take away from you each year. Your interests, the things that you really like to do with your mind and your hands, all the possibilities of your life, are there to be explored because you have the time.

"But this is America, you say, all this IS possible."

Not any more it's not.

There are forces making this way of life almost impossible to attain or maintain. If you are among the lucky few who still have the kind of life outlined above, these same forces threaten you. If you live in a big city and prefer your anonymity as well as the multiplicity of things available to you, these same forces threaten your security and ability to make choices for yourself.

Do you think what's outlined above can only occur in some mythic

Excerpted from the Website <http://www.hooked.net/users/verdant/society.htm>

long-past small town? Before the hegemony of consumerism and bottom line economics, you could do all of these things anywhere, including our cities. There is no reason that we can not do them again if sufficient people work to identify and disempower the forces that promote and profit from limiting our social and economic horizons.

These forces are manifested as consumerism: At first a growing number of pleasant conveniences for housewives in the 1950s, then a car for everyone

with the gradual erosion of transit, then the ubiquitousness of things and chemical products technologically unimaginable a few decades earlier, then growing availability of consumer credit and debt, the over-dependence on labor-saving devices, total dependence on the car and absolute necessity of full time work, the two income household to pay for more and more, then the importation of cheaper and cheaper goods and the disappearance of manufacturing jobs and now the decline of service work....where will it end? ☹

Simply stated, there's a lot of money being made and a lot of power being gathered by the people that promote consumerism. You pay for it in gradually limited economic mobility, pollution, threats to your health and a declining standard of living, as measured by the things that really matter.

In a Nutshell

Selected Quotes

I.

In the leading developed countries, no matter how much one has, one should want more. More is always better.

II.

All societies are rapidly becoming consumer societies in which the production and acquisition of consumer goods and services is viewed as the ultimate sign of human progress.

III.

Consumerism undoubtedly brings greater physical comfort, convenience and variety to those who can afford it, which in this country is, by and large, the majority. And whilst our advertising-soaked culture makes it difficult for anyone to reject consumerism, it's foolish to claim that it has been forced on people. If anything, people seem to love consumerism. They actively choose to embrace it.

IV.

What is it that makes human beings behave in an acquisitive manner? Human nature? Or is it mass marketing and advertising?

V.

The dominant message found in all the corporate ads is BUY, BUY, BUY. The collective impact of this message has had its effects over the past fifty years of intimately linking our most basic needs to consumer items and channelling all our energies into the marketplace.

VI.

The corporate consumer system has imposed its own domination of reality and its own definition of the "good life" on all of us. The mass media have imposed on us a conception of reality which defines for us what happiness is, what the "good life" is, what the human being is potentially capable of achieving, in fact, all that we hear, say, and think. Simple observation shows they have been extremely successful. But in the process they have left us believing that happiness can be achieved only by continually buying new products and services.

VII.

The purpose is to make the customer discontented with his clothes, kitchen appliances, bathroom, or car, because it is old fashioned, out of date. The technical term for this idea is obsolescence. We no longer wait for things to wear out.

"From a marketing point of view, disposability is the golden goose..."

"Disposability and waste have become the spine of the system."

VIII.

Consumer capitalism hopes to attract consumers to things that make them feel good.

The dark side of the system is that the search for profits leads corporations to market things that look good but aren't good ... and to resist discarding them as long as somebody is making a buck from them.

IX.

Consumer spending is the engine that drives the economy. It can create life for our workers, communities and our nation or it can create death for the environment, our society and the future.

X.

With few exceptions, corporations and mobile capital have abandoned long-term commitments to the worker. They have methodically and proudly eliminated jobs in communities as part of their "productivity increases" and the raising of the value of their stock.

XI.

It is time to review the assumptions that devalue everything but profit making. Everything but perpetual economic expansion.

**If the persuasive voice of advertising fell silent...
what would people want?**

Marketing Madness

Laurie Ann Mazur

Relentless advertising messages are fueling an out-of-control "Culture of Consumerism," and kids are often the target. What's a person to do?

A few years ago, a company called Space Marketing, Inc. (SMI) came up with a plan to send a mile-long billboard into space. Coated with reflective plastic, the billboard would beam down a corporate logo that appeared as large as the moon, and as it orbited the Earth, would be visible to every single person on the planet.

To marketers, it was a dream come true: a truly inescapable form of advertising. It couldn't be tossed out with the junk mail, hung up on, or zapped with a remote control. To the rest of us who'd heard about it, it seemed more like a nightmare. Amid howls of protest, SMI withdrew the plan, but not before several companies had inquired about launching their logos into space.

Space may be the final frontier for advertisers—because the Earth is already taken. In the last 20 years, advertising has become far more pervasive than ever before. Advertising budgets in the United States have doubled since 1976, and they've grown by more than 50 percent in just the last 10 years. Companies now spend about \$162 billion each year to bombard us with print and broadcast

ads. That works out to about \$623 for every man, woman and child in the United States. It's important to remember that we're the ones picking up the tab for ad costs, in the form of higher prices for the products the ads promote. We also pay higher taxes, because advertising costs are deductible from the bottom line of corporate taxable profits, which would otherwise be higher.

Skyrocketing ad budgets are both a cause and a consequence of a phenomenon marketers call "clutter," resulting from airwaves so clogged with ads already that it gets harder and harder to attract our attention. So, to prevail in this ad-cluttered world, marketers have become more intrusive than ever before.

Stealth Advertising

They've also gotten more sneaky. In recent years, advertisers have pioneered many forms of "stealth" advertising—ads disguised as something else, or placed where we least expect to encounter them. One form of stealth advertising is "product placement"—paying to get brand-name products featured in movies.

Laurie Ann Mazur is co-author, with Michael Jacobson, of the book **Marketing Madness: A Survival Guide for Consumer Society**. Foreword by Ralph Nader. Michael F. Jacobson is founder of the Center for the Study of Commercialism and executive director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest. Laurie Ann Mazur is a writer and consultant to non-profit organizations who has written widely on environment and population issues. For order and other information, write to: WESTVIEW PRESS, 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, CO 80301-2866

For a large cash payment, an advertiser can actually get the script rewritten to showcase their product.

For example, a few years ago 17 million Americans watched a "news" story about the 50th anniversary of Cheerios cereal. It was a light-hearted bit of human-interest fluff, featuring a tour of the Cheerios factory and some footage of a giant Cheerio made specially for the occasion.

But few viewers realized that the story was conceived, dramatized, filmed and distributed by Cheerios manufacturer General Mills itself.

Dictating Content

Yes, it's annoying and absurd—but advertising's takeover of our cultural airwaves is more than an aesthetic affront. It also affords corporations significant control over the content of the media that shape our world view. The news and entertainment media are wholly dependent on ad revenues, and advertisers wield considerable influence. In a 1992 study, virtually all of the 150 newspaper editors surveyed said that advertisers tried to dictate editorial content, and 37 percent said they succeeded.

Appalling examples abound. In 1993, Mercedes Benz wrote to 30 magazines, requiring them to pull all Mercedes ads from any issue containing articles critical of the

company, German products, or Germany itself. RJR Nabisco, the giant food-and-tobacco conglomerate, canceled an \$80 million contract with a New York advertising agency that produced ads for Northwest Airlines' no-smoking policy. And the cosmetic firm Revlon pulled its ads from Ms. magazine after Ms. ran a cover story about Soviet women exiled for publishing underground feminist books. The reason? The Soviet women on the

magazine's cover were not wearing makeup.

Often, censorship is self-inflicted by media decisionmakers fearful of losing their corporate sponsors. This has produced a curious double standard in journalism, in which the news media go easier on corporations than on the government. As Bill Lazarus, a reporter for the *Hammond (Indiana) Times*, explains:

"When you write about government, the attitude of [editors] tends to be "no holds barred." When you write about business, the attitude tends to be one of caution. And for businesses [that] happen to be advertisers, the caution turns frequently to timidity."

Is Nothing Sacred?

Advertisers have also invaded other important cultural institutions: public schools. In recent years, advertisers have become more of a presence in

Companies now spend about \$162 billion each year to bombard us with print and broadcast ads; that works out to about \$623 for every man, woman and child in the United States.

schools than ever before: Ads are now plastered in hallways, piped in over public address systems and painted on the sides of school buses. And students are big target recipients of free product samples.

Some eight million kids are required to watch Channel One, an ad-punctuated news show, in school every day. Channel One hooks its Board of Education customers by giving video equipment to schools that agree to broadcast its daily program. But its *raison d'être* is to provide a vehicle for advertising: Channel One takes in about \$800,000 a day in ad revenues. And the "free" video equipment turns out to be a Faustian bargain for schools, because it can be taken away if the school fails to deliver its captive audience for advertisers. Moreover, the satellite dish that the company provides is permanently tuned to Channel One, which limits its usefulness for educational purposes.

Channel One has received a lot of negative publicity, but it is not even the most egregious example of advertising in the schools. Corporations are now actually writing lesson plans that are used to teach kids in school. These corporate curricula, which are often slick and expensively produced, prove irresistible to cash-starved school districts and overworked teachers.

To marketers, these "stealth" materials are vehicles for reaching a captive young audience. One company that produces lesson plans for corporations effuses about the benefits of advertising to kids in school: "Let Lifetime Learning Systems bring your message to the classroom, where young people are forming attitudes that will last a lifetime ... Coming from school, all these materials carry an extra measure of credibility that gives your message

added weight." Hundreds of companies and associations have hired Lifetime to peddle their wares (or ideologies) in schools, including the American Nuclear Society, Coca-Cola Company, the National Frozen Pizza Institute, even the government of Saudi Arabia.

Some corporate lesson plans have educational value, but they are mostly used to encourage consumption of companies' products and support their interests. For example, a lesson plan designed by Georgia Pacific puts the best face on forestry and defends the company's practice of clearcutting forests. A classroom science video produced by Exxon praises the company for its cleanup of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. And a lesson plan by Mobil Oil encouraged students to adopt the company's favorable views on the North American Free Trade Agreement. A recent study by Consumers' Union found that fully 68 percent of corporate teaching materials contained biased information.

Advertising and the Consumer Culture

Advertising, then, sells more than products. It also promotes the interests and ideology of its corporate sponsors. And it promotes a way of life; indeed, it might be considered the Ministry of Propaganda of the consumer culture.

That's where advertising came in. Nineteenth century sales techniques, which emphasized the quality of the products being sold, were not equal to the job of creating limitless demand for consumer goods. So advertisers came up with ads that had less to do with products than with their audience. Their ads sought to make viewers feel self-conscious, inadequate, unlovable—and then offered a commodified remedy. As one marketer

Advertising sells more than products. It also promotes the interests and ideology of its corporate sponsors.

wrote in the trade journal *Printers' Ink*, "advertising helps to keep the masses dissatisfied with their mode of life, discontented with ugly things around them. Satisfied customers are not as profitable as discontented ones."

Over the course of this century, ads have drifted further away from describing the product, appealing instead to our deepest, unarticulated desires. An ad for Quaker Oats tells us to eat its cereal not because it tastes good, but because "It's the right thing to do"—speaking to our need, for moral compass in a confusing world. In a market glutted with nearly indistinguishable commodities, advertising must rely on selling less tangible goods, such as mutually supportive relationships. But it is a cruel bait-and switch; commodities bought to gratify non-material needs inevitably disappoint.

The modern advertising industry has succeeded beyond the wildest dreams of its early proponents. In the ad-saturated world of late 20th-century America, we buy more and save less than any society before us. Advertising has won an important psychological victory as well: To some degree, most of us have swallowed the dominant message of advertising—that life's problems can be solved by buying things.

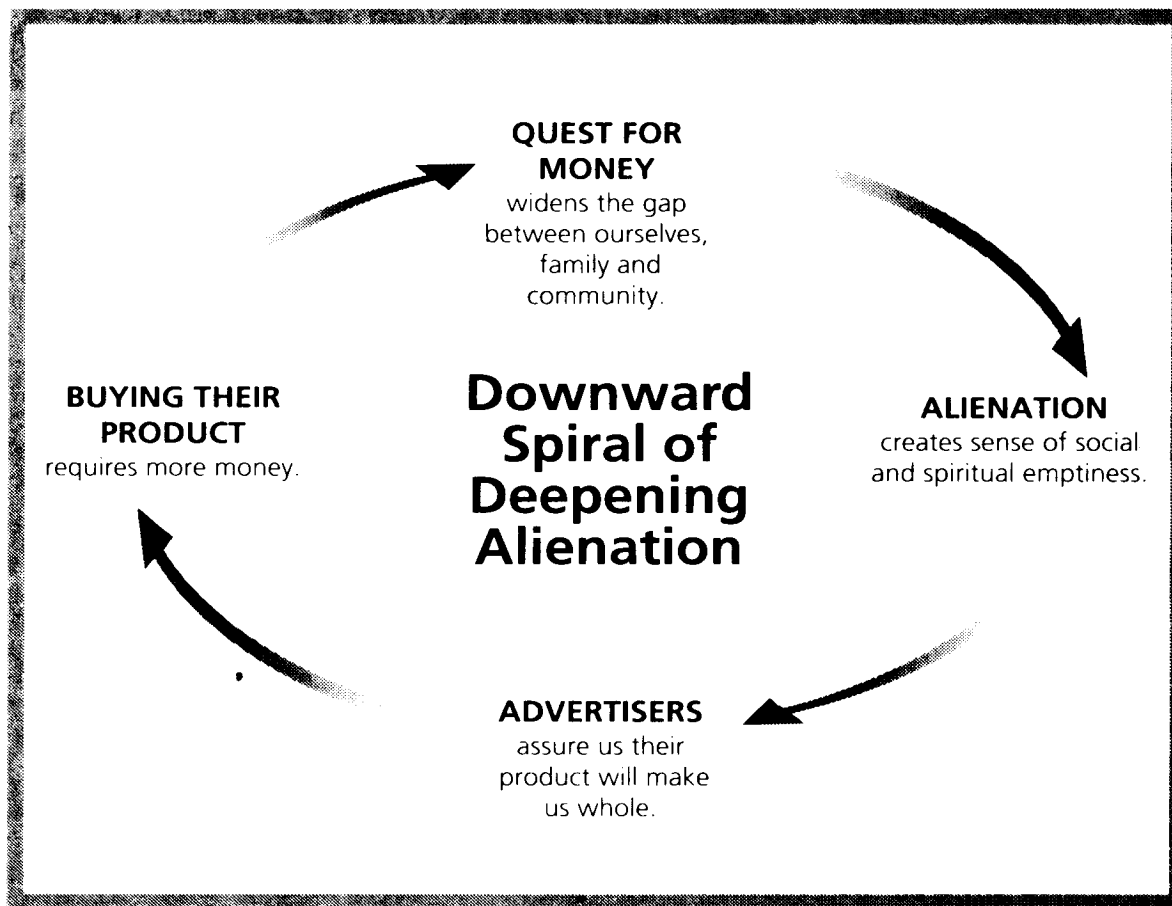
There are costs—personal and social—to believing that life's problems can be solved with a credit card. On a personal level, we have become a nation of debtors. The average American now

owes \$2,500 in credit card debt, and pays about \$450 in interest every year. Personal bankruptcy rates are soaring, too: almost 900,000 people went bankrupt in 1992, almost three times as many as in 1985.

On a social level, the costs of the consumer society include poisoned air and water, the breathtaking destruction of wilderness areas, and landfills clogged with products designed to be discarded. Advertising, and the industries it serves, has fostered a culture of waste in which rapidly changing styles render products obsolete long before their useful life is extinguished. Earnest Elmo Calkins, a pioneer of "planned obsolescence," once declared: "We no longer wait for things to wear out. We displace them with others that are not more effective but more attractive."...

Finally, the ascendance of advertising has cost us the public space that is essential to democratic discourse. Advertising has infiltrated parts of our culture—such as public schools and public broadcasting—that once held themselves separate from commercial values and messages. That means that there are fewer places of refuge from the values of the marketplace. Without that refuge, we lack the distance and perspective we need to distinguish between the capitalist bottom line and the larger public interest. ☹

And it promotes a way of life; indeed, it might be considered the Ministry of Propaganda of the consumer culture.



Reprinted from **When Corporations Rule the World** by Donald C. Korton
(Kumarian Press/Berrett-Kohler, 1993)

Newspapers, magazines, books, radio and television are money-making operations that must constantly protect and support their advertisers and corporate sponsors. They must not antagonize, or disturb their viewers or readers or stockholders by making them frightened, guilty, or angry. These priorities are more important than the truth. This is why, for example, research indicating the reduced incidence of breast cancer in relation to breast feeding, and the benefits of human breast milk, as compared to formula, are largely ignored by the media.

Dr. James Kimmel

Author of: **Whatever Happened to Mother?**

Sweet & Simple Publishing

2229 East Hendrick Drive, Tucson, Arizona 85719

How Consumerism Affects Society

Consumerism interferes with the workings of society by replacing the normal desire for an adequate supply of life's necessities, community life, a stable family and healthy relationships with the artificial ongoing and insatiable quest for things and the money to buy them.

Happiness can't be purchased in the market, no matter how much advertising tries to convince you of it. Market driven forces have usurped the role once assumed by family, home and community. We have been programmed to believe that we should pursue more money to spend on more things offered in the market, to be living mannequins for the material adornments of the day, our worth determined by what we have, not what we are or what we do.

Time, the precious shrinking commodity of our lives, is exchanged for money to buy things that there usually is little time to enjoy. What's left often is devoured by television, basically a series of ever-more mediocre filler programs between ever-more-spectacular commercials whose purpose is to stoke further desire for more things.

The constant cycle of work and consumption is destructive enough, but when extra hours must be worked to maintain the same level of consumption, or when insufficient work, or no work at all is available, and a family goes into debt to accumulate more things, consumerism is slow societal suicide.

People become used to the intrusion of advertising into their homes and consciousness and so they fail to protect them-

selves, or worse, their children from being seduced by it. Convinced that their self worth is based on \$100 inflatable illuminated sneakers or designer clothing, children are already on the road...

There are fortunately a growing number of people who are aware that consumerism is one of the main obstacles to them living in a pleasant safe community, seeing their children well educated and living long healthy productive lives, without squander and waste. ☺

People become used to the intrusion of advertising into their homes and consciousness and so they fail to protect themselves, or worse, their children from being seduced by it.

More excerpts from the Website <http://www.hooked.net/users/verdant/society.htm>

Mimicking Media Happiness

The Western World ... has almost wholly accepted the illusion of material progress as a guarantor of happiness. The common denominator of materialism is an uncritical acceptance of the glittering competitive and success-oriented consumer life as the only reality.

When Vance Packard's book *The Hidden Persuaders* was published in 1957, he raised very disturbing questions about the kind of society we were creating through the ability to contact millions of people through the mass media. He questioned the morality of playing upon hidden weaknesses and frailties such as anxieties, aggressive feelings, dread of non-conformity, and infantile hang-ups to sell products. And he questioned the morality of manipulating small children even before they reached the age when they were legally responsible for their actions. Packard also severely criticized social scientists: He claimed that having found the study of irrationality very lucrative, they were flying out of ivory towers hoping to land big booty with the new marketeers.

Packard's greatest attack, though he did not phrase it this way, was on the illusion of consumer sovereignty: the idea that the consumer himself told the producer what he needed and the producer complied. The reverse was happening, but because of the great stress on individualism in America, Packard's thesis was a very difficult one for people to fully accept. The reaction for the most part was very similar to that of the Midwestern farmer who comes to New York City,

looks at the Empire State Building, shakes his head, and says, "I see it but I don't believe it".

The doctrine of consumer sovereignty was given its greatest criticism by John Kenneth Galbraith. Writing in *The New Industrial State*, Galbraith explained that since the turn of the century corporations were increasingly concerned with managing demands of consumers. "The one man in ten" was carefully planned on the drawing board. Galbraith referred to the control or management of consumer demand as a growing industry in itself, made up of communication networks, merchandising specialists, advertising agencies, research, and other related services. The early Gospel had been transformed into a Great Machine whose primary function was to sell goods. Consumer sovereignty was again seen to be illusion, and only those afraid to face new realities could cling precariously to the idea of the free consumer.

According to sociologist C. Wright Mills, people in the 1950's, were increasingly told by carefully designed mass media formulas who they were, what they should be, and how they could succeed. These formulas were not geared to the development of a sensitive human being.

Excerpted from the book *Open Reality: The Way Out of Mimicking Happiness* by Richard Altschuler and Nicholas Regush, published by G.P. Putnam's & Sons, New York. Copyright © 1974 Richard Altschuler and Nicholas Regush. Reprint permission granted courtesy The Putnam Publishing Group.

People in the 1950's, were increasingly told by carefully designed mass media formulas who they were, what they should be, and how they could succeed.

People were becoming increasingly lonely and simultaneously mimicking media happiness. In Brecht's play *In the Jungle of Cities*, one person says, "if you crammed a ship full of bodies 'til it burst the loneliness inside it would be so great, they would turn to ice..." The modern consumer-citizen was becoming increasingly alienated, and theorists like Erich Fromm commented that alienation was becoming total, that it pervaded the relationship of Man to Man, Man to his work and Man to the things he consumed...

The image of the modern, whole, married woman pushed by many women's magazines is the prototype of the independent woman who presents no challenge to the existing reality of the good life. She is a Corporation's dream. Flipping through these magazines, one finds page after page of glossy ads comprising about 70 percent of the magazine, a smattering of anxiety-producing stories dealing with marriages in trouble and new morality, and a smattering of articles such as "How to Redecorate Your Home", the last mentioned being merely another version of corporate advertising. The total impact is a not-too-subtle definition of what the young, normal, married woman should do to affirm her identity and self-image. In the process she is made a nervous wreck with a constant barrage of questions such as "Are you sure your Tampon keeps you odour-free?" While pondering this important question, the rest of the appearance

industry does its work of creating anxiety and offering "solutions". And here it is important to look at, in some detail, another major source of strain on married couples in our society, the fear of growing old and losing sex appeal. As with singles, the husband-wife relationship is highly affected by the physical appearance industry, which has convinced us that it is shameful to grow old, be anything less than thin, smell human, or dress in outdated apparel...

Can we really be so naive to believe that we can turn the clock back, erase the developing patterns of postindustrial society, and building a new way of living, thinking, and feeling without a profound behavioural change, a basic restructuring of our values about the total viability of our consumer society and the manner in which happiness has been defined? Can we really believe that we all will come to our senses because of an energy shortage [or a clean water shortage or a clean air shortage, or an uncontaminated food shortage or...] and that the corporate world will not continue its tactical warfare on our consciousness in newer and more sophisticated ways?

The Western World ... has almost wholly accepted the illusion of material progress as a guarantor of happiness. The common denominator of materialism is an uncritical acceptance of the glittering competitive and success-oriented consumer life as the only reality... ●

These formulas were not geared to the development of a sensitive human being.

Is This a Culture We Can Afford to be Complacent About?

Lawrence S. Kubie

Is this a culture that breeds health?

...Finally, we must consider our economy, increasingly gambling its success or failure on consumption by the instalment plan. Has anyone since Veblen asked what would happen to such an economy if the masked neurotic ingredients in human nature were by sudden magic to be eliminated?

Take the endless whetting of consumer craving, the exploitation of the "gimmies" of childhood by transmuted them into the "gimmies" of adult life. Consider the ministering to neurotic needs through size and power: the knight of old replaced by Casper Milquetoast in General Motors armour, complete with chromium, unneeded size, unused seating capacity, and a pointless illegal, and unusable capacity for speed. Or, consider the search for happiness anywhere else than where one is, whether it is an adolescent with his hot-rod, or the travel industry selling vacations on the instalment plan.

To repeat, what would happen to our economy if we were to get well? Is this a culture that breeds health? Is this a culture that we can afford to be complacent about? Or have we allowed the enormous creative potential of private enterprise to be enslaved to neurotic processes?

Lest we think that I am singling out our culture, our economy for attack, I repeat that I do not believe that human ingenuity has yet devised any political or economic system that does not exploit, intensify, and reward much that is neurotic (potentially even psychotic) in human nature. If the profit-driven economies exploit subtle manifestations of neurotic self-indulgence and short-term needs, so do totalitarian systems, whether Fascist or Communist, exploit power needs and power fantasies in an even more primitive fashion, rewarding the sadistic lusts and the paranoid components of human nature...



Excerpted with permission from an article entitled "The Eagle and The Ostrich" by Lawrence S. Kubie, M.D. which appeared in the Archives of General Psychiatry, Vol. 5, No. 2, August 1961. At the time of writing, Dr. Kubie was on the faculty of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry (Emeritus), Yale.

Average increase in consumer spending when credit cards are used instead of cash: 23%.

Erich Fromm's thesis is that two modes of existence are struggling for the spirit of humankind:

THE *HAVING* MODE,

which concentrates on material possession, acquisitiveness, power, and aggression and is the basis of such universal evils as greed, envy, and violence; and:

THE *BEING* MODE,

which is based on love, in the pleasure of sharing, and in meaningful and productive rather than wasteful activity.

Dr. Fromm sees the *having* mode bringing the world to the brink of psychological and ecological disaster.

...Without making distinctions between those who have money and those who do not, we can say of most Americans at the present time that they suffer from a hunger of the soul, which they try to satisfy by eating too much, smoking and drinking too much, buying too much, looking at too much TV, and rushing around more and faster than necessary. Their unfulfilled hunger drives them to self-destroying life-habits and the growing gap between what they need from life and what they succeed in getting opens them to anguish and despair that they try to suppress by sedatives, stimulants, and mind-changing drugs in enormous amounts, at enormous cost...

BUT WHAT ABOUT JOBS...?

BUT WHAT ABOUT JOBS...? is the first question many people ask. If we're consuming less won't there be even fewer jobs than there are now? Well, yes, possibly, but stepping back a minute makes you realise just how crazy the whole employment system is anyway.

For a start, lots of work is done which doesn't need doing. Do we really need electric toothbrushes? 14 different brands of them? Gadgets to slice the top off boiled eggs, or massage our toes (yes, they do exist...) Or perhaps more seriously, cars (a new one every two years, please)?

On the other hand, lots of work isn't being done that does need doing. Just in the area of environmental protection, Friends of the Earth recently estimated that hundreds of thousands of extra jobs could be created -- in areas like pollution control, public transport, energy efficiency systems, recycling and repairing goods, wind and solar power. And then there's health service, community care, education.

During a lull in the 1981 Toxteth riots, a leftist militant climbed onto a box and addressed the crowd of the coming socialist utopia. Her promise that there would be jobs for all was met by derisory laughter from a group of young rioters who began a mocking chant of, "Bigger cages, longer chains! Bigger cages, longer chains!"

And the way work is distributed is

just as crazy. Some people get ill with the stress of working all hours, whilst others get ill from the stress of not being able to get work at all and being on society's scrap-heap.

Of course, many people, even in Britain, have little choice -- they have to stay in their (low-paid) jobs literally just to make ends meet. But many others, surrounded by the advertisers' images, and the society-defined requirement to keep up with the Joneses and to be seen to be a hard worker, keep slogging their guts out making the things to earn the money to buy the things they make. Work harder, earn more money, buy more things, keep going. Round and round and round, without ever questioning whether all this is really leading to a better quality of life. And then are surprised when they realise that their children are strangers, they have no friends to turn to when a crisis hits, they never play the piano/read a book, see a film, and they can't quite see the point of it all, anyway.

It's important to say here that we're not arguing against technological advance, against comfort or against pleasure ... what we're objecting to is the message, drummed into us over and over again, that more is always better. That your car is what you are. That upgrading your stereo will solve all your problems. Put like that, few would disagree, but how many people act day-to-day as though these nonsenses were true?

But the point is, our crazy way of doing things may well be based on a false premise. Our culture may have gone down a blind alley. ☹

Excerpted from Enough, Anticonsumerism Campaign <http://www.envirolinl.org/issues/enough/enough05.htm>

Substituting Conserver Values for Consumer Values

Marilyn Berlin Snell

Almost imperceptibly, we have altered the family structure to accommodate the imperatives of our work schedule and our consumerist definition of the "good life".

These days, even a modest standard of living comes to us at the price of an 80-hour work week. When both parents work full time away from the home, and when children are entrusted to day care operators, the idea of "family" is dramatically transformed. Almost imperceptibly, we have altered the family structure to accommodate the imperatives of our work schedule and our consumerist definition of the "good life".

For the majority of Americans that managed to stay afloat with dual incomes, despite falling real wages, the economic boom of the eighties brought with it an escalation of consumer expectation. For most, the limits of the "indispensable" expanded from the mortgage and the car to such late-modern necessities of life as VCR's, another car, microwaves, CD's and Nikes. But this frenzied, "shop-til-you-drop" syndrome has had its price: In order to purchase the pleasures that insulate us from the world, we must work til we drop and contract out the care of our children to others.

A society in which parents can't afford to raise their children is not sustainable. Yet, the answer does not lie in a return to conservative values; it lies in the substitution of consumer values with conserving values.

Conserving values assume a commitment to the future: we must take care of our children so they can grow into healthy, responsible adults; and we must preserve our environment so that it can sustain future generations.

Somewhere between materialism and utopia lies a new set of possibilities rooted in conserving values: A mode of living based on intergenerational responsibility between parent and child with respect to the environment; shared responsibility between parents for work and child rearing; and a notion of productive endeavor that rejects the kind of social and economic hierarchy that reveres the work of stockbrokers and celebrities while it devalues the work of pregnancy, child birth and the nurturance of our children. ●

Marilyn Berlin Snell is Managing Editor of *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Los Angeles, California. Excerpted and reprinted with permission from Volume 7, Number 1, Winter 1990, pages 2-3

American parents spent 40% less time with their children in 1991 than they did in 1965.

Psychopathy and Consumerism: *Two illnesses that need and feed each other*

Consumerism is the most powerful cultural force making us create childcare arrangements which risk making partial psychopaths -- unsatisfactory arrangements where children's emotional needs in their earliest years are unmet and who consequently grow into adults with impaired capacities for trust, empathy and affection.

Their emotional needs in the earliest years are unmet because both parents have been manipulated into near terminally ill consumer addicts convinced that they both must abandon their young children during the few years that matter most, in order to work in the paid labour force.

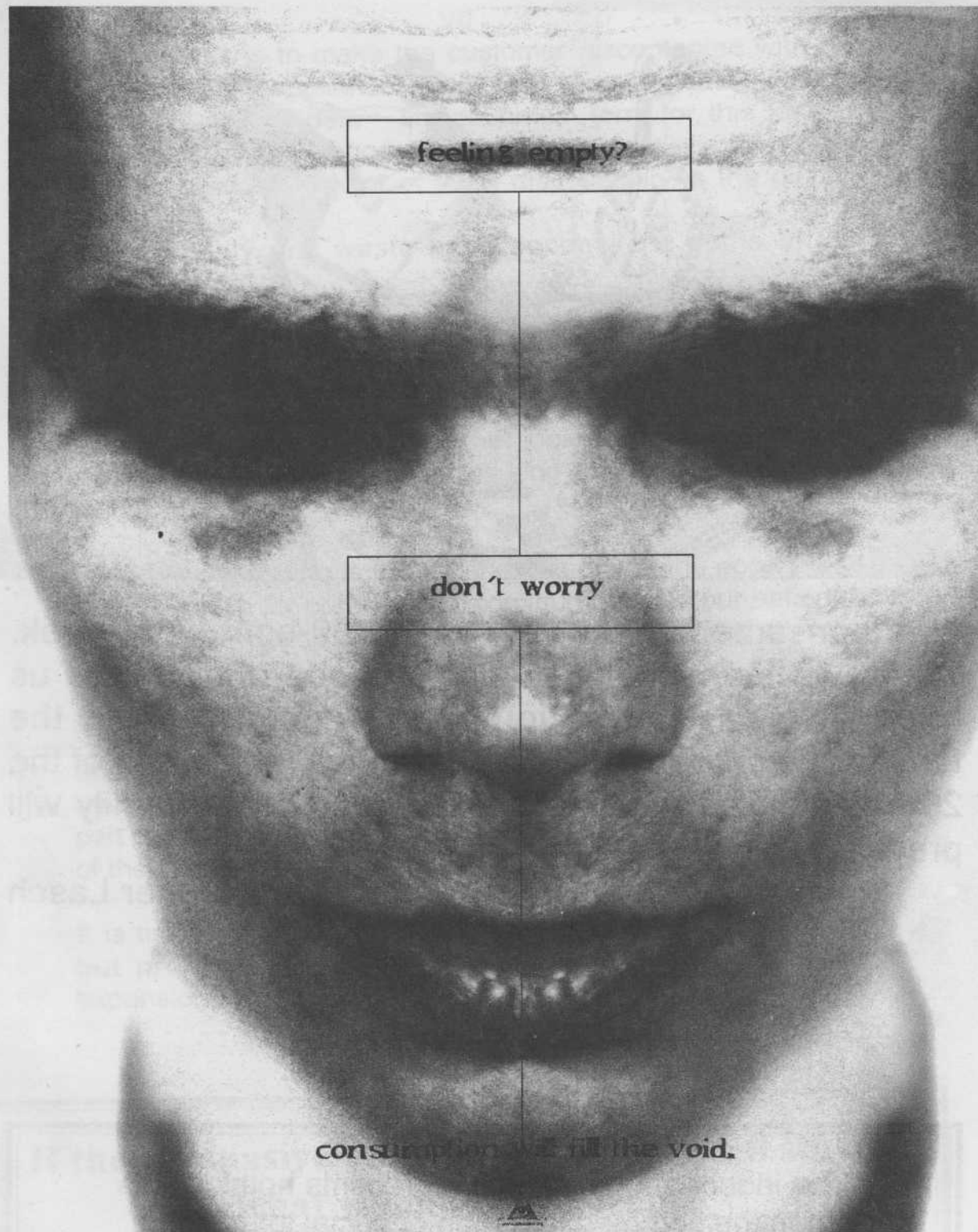
Consumerism and psychopathy are linked in this way. A psychopath or partial psychopath has an impaired capacity to form intimate, trusting mutually satisfying relationships with other human beings. Unable to find pleasure and satisfaction from others, the psychopath or partial psychopath must turn to things - goods and services, toys and travel to fill the emptiness within.

The emptiness must be filled, and consumerism has learned how.

So those two illnesses dovetail. It has been said that a culture creates the kind of people it needs. Maybe we're into bottle-feeding, frequent separations and changing, shared paid caregivers in the most formative years of the lives of our children so they will grow up with an insatiable need to shop 'til they drop.

If you're unable to obtain satisfaction from BEING, which is based on love and the pleasure of sharing then the HAVING MODE, as Eric Fromm put it, is your only choice. "The HAVING MODE concentrates on material possession, acquisitiveness, power, and aggression and is the basis of such universal evils as greed, envy, and violence..."

Psychopathy and Consumerism: two illnesses that need and feed each other.

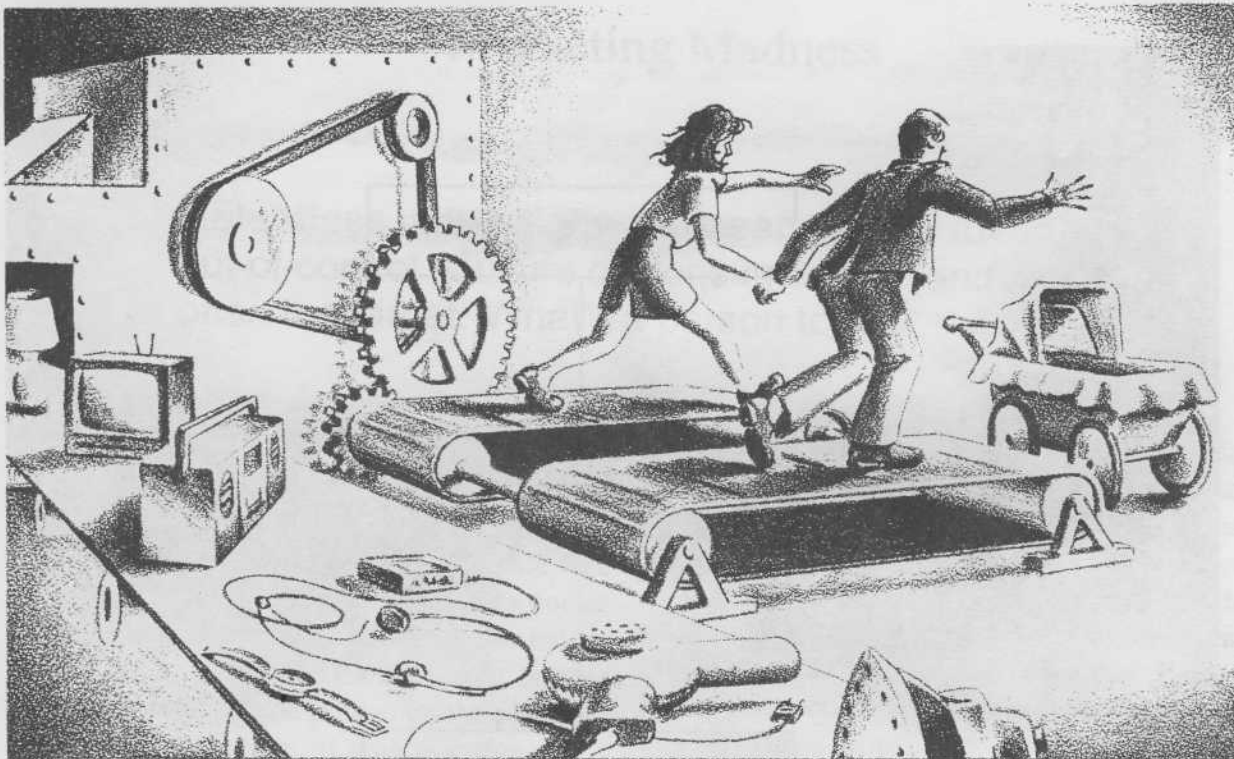


feeling empty?

don't worry

consumption will fill the void.

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Thomas Murphy

“It is consumerism that drives the 80-hour work week. When we learn that consumer goods don’t make us happy, we can get serious about reconstructing the family. The critical question in America, at the end of the 20th century, is whether consumption or the family will prevail.”

Christopher Lasch

The indoor shopping mall represents nothing less than the commercialization of social interaction.

Some Sources and Resources

Centre for a New American Dream
156 College St., 2nd Fl.,
Burlington, Vermont 05401
Tel: (802)-862-6762 Fax: (802)-860-1735
<http://www.newdream.org/>

How Consumerism Affects Society,
the Economy and the Environment.
[http://www.hooked.net/users/verdant/
society.htm](http://www.hooked.net/users/verdant/society.htm)

The Media Foundation
1243 West 7th Ave.
Vancouver, B.C. V6H 1B7
Tel: (604) 736-9401 Fax: (604) 736-6021
<http://www.adbusters.org/adbusters/>
Publishes the Adbusters Quarterly
Magazine and in Canada sponsors
NATIONAL BUY NOTHING DAY,
November 28th

Enough Anticonsumerism Campaign
One World Centre, 6 Mount St.,
Manchester M2 5 NS
Tel: 0161-237-1630 Fax: 0161-228-2347
[http://www.envirolinl.org/issues/enough/
enough05.htm](http://www.envirolinl.org/issues/enough/enough05.htm)
email: ethicon@mcr1.poptel.org.uk

The Communitarian Network
2130 H St. NW Suite 714
Washington DC 20052
Tel: 202-994-7997
email: comnet@unix1.circ.gwu.edu

Nearly 100 state, provincial and national
Green parties worldwide.
In Canada <http://www.green.ca>

**Community Currencies: A New Tool
for the Twenty-first Century**, Bernard
Lietaer, Center for Sustainable Re-
sources, University of California at
Berkley
[http://www.transaction.net/money/gc/
gc01.html](http://www.transaction.net/money/gc/gc01.html)

Foundation for Global Community
222 High Street,
Palo Alto, CA 94301-1097.
Tel: (415) 328-7756
<http://www.globalcommunity.org>

Sustainability Project
P.O. Box 374,
Merrickville, Ontario K0G 1N0
Tel: (613) 269-3500
<http://www.cyberus.ca/choose.sustain>

Center for the Study of Commercialism
1875 Connecticut Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20009-5728
Tel: (202) 332-9110

The New Road Map Foundation
P.O. Box 15981
Seattle, WA 98115
Tel: (206) 527-0437

Worldwatch Institute
1776 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036-1904
Tel: (202) 452-1999

Affluenza, KCTS Television,
401 Mercer St. Seattle, WA 98109
Tel: (206) 443-4817 Fax: (206) 443-6691
<http://www.pbs.org/affluenza>

What I Would Say...

Tamra Orr

**Our entire culture is destroying its future
-- one child at a time.**

Recently I was asked what I would say if I had the entire world's attention a mere 10 minutes. The following is what I chose to be the message I would send out:

Our entire culture is destroying its future -- one child at a time. We deny our children the very things that innumerable years have genetically designed them to need, all for the sake of convenience -- for sticking with the mainstream lines of thought -- for money and greed and the endless pursuit of material goods.

Our children's needs are simple. They have been molded and created endless generations ago and it is only us, as parents, who have altered from the natural course. Our children's needs are the same as they were at the beginning of mankind.

A child needs a normal, natural, peaceful birth surrounded by only those who care deeply about him. He does not need sterile instruments, nurses, nurses assistants, doctors, surgeons, drugs, forceps, monitors, stirrups or any other of the hundred hospital interventions that only create stress for baby and mother while driving up the cesarean section rate and making lots more money for the doctors.

A child needs to be nursed. Not bottlefed or a combination. He needs the milk that was intended and designed to build a human being, not a cow or a soybean. He needs the milk that already has all of the amino acids and other unique ingredients that make a healthy, intelligent

baby, not some packaged crap that will never have everything needed. And isn't it just too bad when they find out years down the road that they missed something and oops! Hundreds of babies are damaged.

A child needs to wean when he is ready. Who knows better than he when he doesn't need it any longer? How can we, as parents, presume to know what nursing means to him and decide whether or not to keep doing it? Would we want someone making a decision like that for us? Weaning is a natural process, a part of maturation and the child is the expert, the guide to follow.

A child needs to sleep with his parents. How can we expect him to sleep soundly and securely when he is far away from the comfort of our presence, our scent, our sound? Do we leave him alone all day? Of course not, yet we leave him alone at night and if he has the audacity to cry and complain that he is frightened and lonely, we are told to let him cry, ignore him and eventually he will learn. This is true, of course. He will learn that crying, that his calls for help and security, are worthless. He will learn that his parents do not care that he is distressed, that in the dark hours of the night, they are not there and will not come. A baby who sleeps with his parents will nurse when needed, cuddle when needed, sleep when needed and most of all, be right where nature intended him to be. He will

Tamra is a longtime member of the CSPCC and eloquently expresses all that we stand for. She is a homeschooling mother of four and a freelance writer living in Warsaw Indiana.

see the nighttime as warm and peaceful not cold and lonely.

A child needs to stay with his mother, not be shuttled away like a package on lay-a-way at a department store. He needs to be near her, to bond, to love, to learn about his world. What does he learn when his mother, the entire universe to him, suddenly hands him to someone else and walks away? Does he rationalize that she will be back at 5:00? No, only that she is gone and he is abandoned, bereft of love. He cannot nurse, he loses what is most familiar and can often go into a total infant depression.

But don't we have to push these children away from us lest they become clingy and dependent? Shouldn't they be in day care, preschool, off to a babysitters in the first months of life?

No -- a child will naturally grow into independence. It is part of the entire maturation process and if not interfered with, will develop beautifully. Unfortunately, in our haste to make sure he becomes independent years before he is ready, we only succeed at complete failure. As we push him to be separate from us before he is ready, we only end up creating an insecure child who will want to cling to us, physically or emotionally, long after he would have if we had simply met his needs of togetherness when he needed them.

Our children need us, not toys, vacations, clothes or anything else that the checkbook can buy. They need our time and attention and they need us to listen to them and do what they need. Instead, we ignore their every cry and listen instead to our culture which demands that we earn a paycheck to be of worth; that we drive two cars and have a large house to really be someone. We listen to the voices that tell us our income and our possessions take priority over our children; we listen to the voices that will create a future that none of us wants. By depriving our children of everything that they truly need and replacing it with things they certainly do not need, we are making countless generations of depressed, frustrated, lonely, violent and confused adults who will, in turn, raise their children to be

We must stop listening to culture's siren song and listen instead to the hearts and souls of our children.

more of the same.

Today, this very minute, we must turn the tables and start humanity going in another direction. We must stop listening to culture's siren song and listen instead to the hearts and souls of our children. We must capture the lost instincts of parenthood that dwell inside all of us and open our eyes and our minds enough to understand that we are committing child abuse in the most profound sense of the word by accepting what our culture tells us and rejecting what our children deserve. ●

The Good News

Percentage of workers willing to forego raises and promotions to devote more time to their families: 34% [Julia Lawlor, "Workers Want to Get a Life" *USA Today*, September 3, 1993.]

In a Harris Poll of 1,255 adults in November 1990: 47% were spending less time shopping than five years before the poll. [Shoppers Are a Dwindling Species, *Business Week*, November 26, 1990.]

One of the top ten trends of 1994, according to the Trends Research Institute: voluntary simplicity [Carol Smith, *More Seek Meaning in a Simpler Life*, *Seattle Post-intelligencer*, February 25, 1994.]

Percentage of American workers ages 25 - 49 who would like to see a return to a simpler society with less emphasis on material wealth: 75% [Ramon C. McLeod, *Baby Boomers Seek 'Meaning'*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 13, 1989.]

The good news is that there is a growing trend towards "fiscal fitness." Tired of debt stress and clutter, people now want more time for family, friends, fun and community service. They are discovering that a high quality of life does not depend on an ever higher material standard of living. Consuming less is becoming a path to personal freedom and social revitalization.

A book, **Your Money or Your Life** (New York: Viking Penguin, 1992), by Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin offers a tested path out of excess and back to balance. The book describes a nine-step program that has helped many individuals shift to "low-consumption, high-fulfillment" lifestyles. By following the nine steps, people naturally spend less, enjoy more of what they have, eliminate debt, develop savings and reclaim their time. **Your Money or Your Life** is available at all bookstores and libraries.

This unique book will grow and grow on you. Madison Avenue will not like what authors Dominguez and Robin show can be the road toward achieving the enjoyable freedom of frugality.

-- Ralph Nader, consumer advocate

A powerful frugality movement to make less and consume less is growing in North America. **Your Money or Your Life** tells us how it can be done and what the benefits are.

-- Dr. David Suzuki, Professor of Zoology. University of British Columbia

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 principal caregivers



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.