

EMERGENCY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN

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A BRIEF CASE AGAINST S. 3617

(Comprehensive Headstart, Child Development, and Family Services Act of 1972)

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The most recent bill of this variety passed the Senate 49-12, Sept. 9, 1971, and the House of Representatives 186-183, Sept. 30, 1971. It was vetoed by the President Dec. 9, 1971, on the grounds, among others, that the bill "would commit the vast moral authority of the national government to the side of communal approaches to child rearing over against the family-centered approach." On June 20, 1972 S. 3617 passed the Senate by a vote of 73-12.

SOME SALIENT POINTS

Does the program not consist merely of day-care centers for children of working mothers below or above the poverty level?

No. The bill envisions a great deal more than this, providing as it does for the funding of "special activities designed to identify and ameliorate identified physical, mental and emotional handicaps and special learning disabilities," and many other such things. A coalition of groups promoting the bill speaks openly of their goal as child development for "all children."

Has the bill not been altered to strengthen rather than weaken the family as the fundamental unit of society?

Some of the language has been changed to give this impression, but its essence is the same. We believe that the family must remain as the fundamental unit of society: that, whatever its failings, a child raised in a family environment is almost always better off than a child raised in an impersonal, institutionalized setting. William V. Shannon, editorial writer for the New York Times, has agreed with this assessment in a major article in the Times Magazine of April 30, 1972.

(organizations listed for identification purposes only)

* * * * * Have not such day-care centers been quite successful in other countries?

In most instances they have not. Mr. Dale Meers, in testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Youth, on March 27, 1972, emphasized the severe damage which has been inflicted upon small children under institutional conditions. He reported that in Hungary, where day-care has been an economic necessity, officials were astonished that the U.S. should voluntarily be adopting a program of a sort they were trying to eliminate.

THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT BILL DESERVES YOUR STRONG OPPOSITION