

Kids Are People

...Only Smaller

Kennedy and Brentz

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(Women's News Co-op) As women step out of their passive housewife role and become more active outside of the home they are discovering the need for child care centers. Many women are interested in starting their own, collectively run centers, because the present day care centers are run as money making ventures and glorified baby sitting services.

The centers, as they are presently structured, force conformity on children and make a severe distinction between the male and female roles in society. The State makes absurd requirements for qualification for licensing centers and these centers become nothing more than regular schools which are not in operation for the benefit of the children.

Present centers are set up for parental convenience, a service offered to the parents rather than a center for children to experience their first collective situation in which they can begin to grow as human beings. Children in these centers are bored, unhappy and are not benefiting in the way they should. Here children learn how to deny their own feelings and needs in order to win approval from adults. They become routinized and enslaved to a daily schedule.

Children in these centers must eat, sleep and play at regularly scheduled times. Everyone must do the same thing at the same time. Conformity is pounded into their heads, imagination is suppressed, and creativity is put on a time table. The children are being emotionally brutalized and repressed into a one-person, highly structured classroom situation. Centers are usually staffed solely by women.

Men have held the popular, but erroneous belief that this is women's work and falsely believe they are not sensitive to a child's needs nor patient enough to work with children. This American idea of the division in roles of the sexes is unhealthy for children who realize that an all female staff cares for them. This division is also strongly stressed in play situations. Girls are encouraged to be mommy, the housekeeper and boys are encouraged to be daddy, the workin' man. Each has certain toys suited to their sex and are taught not to step out of the limitations placed on these roles: very much like straight society.

Children in these centers are organized and disciplined by salaried, college educated employees, who have been organized and disciplined by other such institutions. According to the State, parents who are not college trained are not qualified to teach and guide their children. Such qualifications imposed by the State turn these centers into training grounds to dehumanize our children and prepare them for school, the factory, and the kitchen. State control of these centers must be taken away and placed into the hands of the community. Centers must be collectively run and service to the children must become the first priority.

There are various radical improvements open to day care centers relating to the social and emotional development of children. A child perceives and develops a social role through observing and imitating adult activities. In a child-care environment it is important that they receive stimulation from both men and women working together at the centers. Also, girls should be free to play with trucks and trains while boys could freely explore the "kitchen area." Both sexes can exchange dressing up as firemen, construction workers and doctors. Through this kind of

freedom children will build a healthy attitude toward the roles of male and female, as opposed to the traditionally stereotyped ones.

In daily activity it is only natural for kids to get dirty and the popular myth of orderliness and cleanliness handicaps their freedom. Not only paper should be available for drawing and painting, but also the walls and the children's own bodies. In any form of play activity, children must be allowed to move as widely as possible to develop individual creativity and self-confidence. Uptight parents will eventually pass along their hang-ups to their children.

Because children do not decide simultaneously to act together, a routinized, eat-sleep-play schedule should be avoided. Herding children into conformity only distorts their own self-image and individuality.

With the majority of day care centers state-regulated and run as profit-making enterprises, the demise of such institutions is needed, and their replacement with radically differently structured ones. This can only happen through total community control of the centers. Curricula, salaries, programs, and improvements can be established through collective decisions with equal participation from each member of the center. In order to initiate such centers, support from the community is needed in the form of monetary donations, staff, building space and maintenance of the center.

Radical, child oriented day care centers are urgently needed. The struggle for social transformation has to concern itself with the healthy and meaningful development of our children. This is not to be categorized in the realm of Women's Liberation but of People's Liberation, supported by both men and women. Kids are people, only smaller.

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