

HARRISBURG MEMO . . .

To: *The People of Pennsylvania*
 From: *Milton J. Shapp, Governor*



HARRISBURG --- At the Conference on the Rights of Children conducted here recently, I had an opportunity to talk to parents and professionals about our Commonwealth's most precious resource -- our children. As governor, I believe it is our responsibility to take all steps possible to help children develop their talents to the maximum of their abilities. In Pennsylvania my administration has made a start.

But we are a long way from being successful in this endeavor. In fact, the pendulum has been swinging the wrong way in recent years. For more than a thousand Pennsylvania youngsters, hope was dashed last year in the devastation of child abuse. The 1972 Child Abuse Report of the Department of Public Welfare indicates "beatings, abrasions and burns were the most common types of abuse, in that order."

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Nationally, it is estimated that as many as 25,000 youngsters are seriously abused by their parents or families. Think about the horror of that statistic. In a modern, progressive society thousands of cases were reported to the authorities regarding child beatings, abrasions and burns, deliberately inflicted. Worse, the indications are that the reported cases represent only the tip of the bloody statistics of child abuse. We are not talking about some primitive emerging nation, or about Hitler and his ruthless designs, but about Americans, and, yes, our own neighbors in Pennsylvania.

Still worse, there are many things going on in this nation that are not openly as brutal but nonetheless just as cruel or indeed crueler to youngsters in every sense of the word. Children continue to be deprived and hungry. The poor languish, denied opportunities to live fruitful lives, yet the federal government leads a nationwide, general assault on human service programs.

Human values are being downgraded today as federal programs to help people are scuttled with ruthless precision. It has become politically fashionable to denigrate human service programs funded with public money. The concern with human rights and dignity so genuinely expressed by Presidents Franklin Roosevelt

and John Kennedy and carried on by Lyndon Johnson in the 1960's is viewed now through cynical eyes and blasted by federal officials as a scheme designed to benefit a few social workers and bureaucrats.

This negative view is having impact. The high cost of living coupled with high rates of taxation, has driven a substantial majority of Americans into a skeptical and somewhat adverse attitude toward government-financed social service programs.

In the name of economy, genuine human needs are being neglected throughout the nation. Actually, there is no economy in this approach. This is so because the costs of crime, unemployment and economic stagnation will far offset any proclaimed savings by government in eliminating the programs that benefit people and help them live healthier, happier and more productive lives.

The cruelest hoax of all now being perpetrated is that even the beneficiaries of such programs are disillusioned with them.

The deprived children of Pennsylvania must not become pawns in this negatively directed, specious reasoning over government economies. Neither must neglected children be allowed to be passed around willy-nilly because there is insufficient funding for adequate program development.

It is my contention - a thought expressed in my book, "New Growth, New Jobs for Pennsylvania" published in 1962, that making the proper investment in developing children's lives - in enabling children to have the proper start in life, actually saves taxpayers' money.

The House of Representatives here is playing the same hold-the-line attitude that President Nixon has adopted. It is a penny wise and dollar foolish attitude since it forces all levels of government - state, local and federal to pay out more millions of dollars created

by a failure to properly develop children.

There are bills languishing in Washington dealing with child abuse, runaway children, adoption information and juvenile delinquency - and no money to implement these programs if they do pass.

Here in Harrisburg the state House of Representatives has cut \$4 million from our request for juveniles. The House also cut my request for day care and special education funds along with a

refusal to act to restore \$13.7 million for mental health and mental retardation services.

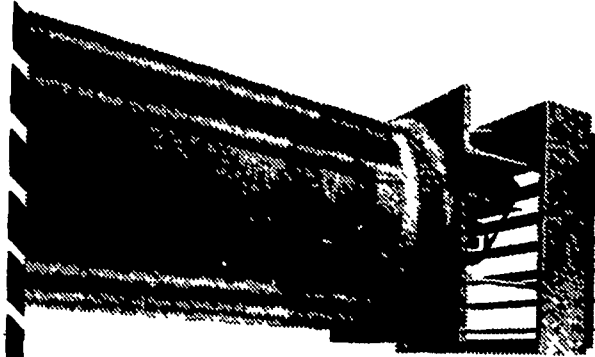
I ask, is it economical to allow a retarded child to languish in an institution for want of the funds to begin an adequate community program? I say no.

As governor, I have asked my administration to work for this positive goal: to make certain that life in Pennsylvania is such that every child has a chance.

By Gov. Milton J. Shapp

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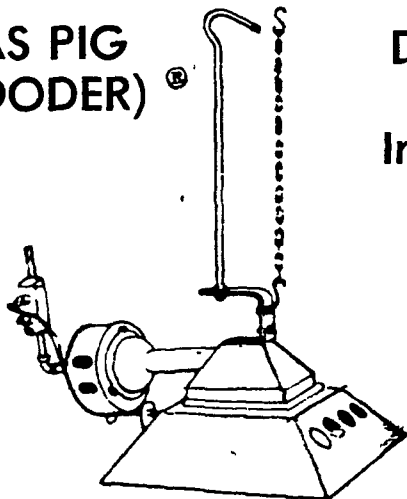
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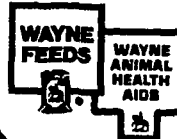
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