Symposium

A CALL TO CONSCIENCE: CHILDREN IN CRISIS

By Martha Angle

America's children are in crisis, and we can no longer escape the consequences. We have waited too long to build the only lasting security our nation can hope to achieve: generation upon generation of healthy, well-educated, adaptable and caring Americans, able to compete economically in a world of accelerating change while maintaining safe and prosperous communities at home.

Because that goal has been receding, not drawing closer, the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, the LBJ School of Public Affairs and the University of Texas at Austin sponsored a two-day conference Sept. 18-19, 1992. As explained by Harry Middleton, director of the Library, and William S. Livingston, acting president of the University, the conference represented something of a departure for the two institutions. "In past gatherings we have been more or less content to study issues and to comment on them from various perspectives," Livingston said. This time, however, "we think the time has come to mobilize an effort to do something" about the plight of children in America. Therefore, leading educators, health professionals, political leaders, community activists and scholars assembled not just to sound the alarm but to issue "a call to arms."

There is much to take arms against. Consider just a handful of the grim statistics about America's children:

- The United States ranks 22nd in the world in combating infant mortality. And black babies are twice as likely to die as white babies.
- More than one of every five children (21.8 percent in 1991) lives in poverty. Among children under six, one in four is poor. Nearly half of all black children are poor.
- Some 35.4 million Americans had no health insurance at all in 1991, and many of them were children. Millions more had only intermittent or inadequate coverage.
- Between 1986 and 1991, the number of children in foster care leaped from 280,000 nationwide to 430,000.
- Some 400,000 babies born in 1991 were exposed to drugs in the womb. This year, 1 million will be born to mothers who drink and/or smoke, thus greatly increasing the chance their children will be born low weight or with other health-threatening problems.
- The United States is the wealthiest nation in the world, but it ranks behind 12 other industrialized nations in its public spending on education. And much of that spending is going to postsecondary education, not elementary and secondary.
- American students of all ages rank near the bottom in math and science compared with students from all the major industrialized nations.
- There are more American black males ages 18-24 in jail than there are in college. The FBI reported in August 1992 that 1,429 of every 100,000 black youths were arrested for violent crime in 1991, a rate five times that for white youths.

America's children are in crisis not because we as a nation lack the resources to save them but because we have not wanted to invest those resources in our children. "Someone must love all the babies just because they are babies. They test our humanity and our character," declared the Rev. Jesse Jackson. "That so many children are in poverty is not inevitable. We choose to leave them there. We could choose to lift them up."

Clearly, the greatest obstacle to improving the lot of America's children lies in the attitudes of America's adults. "Children are powerless in a harsh and dangerous world. They cannot start their own revolution. They have to depend on other voices," said Richard B. Stolley, editorial director of Time Inc. and president of the Child Care Action Campaign.

There are signs that "other voices" are beginning to be raised, as educators, politicians and business leaders come to understand the high cost of neglect. In community after community, hopeful new initiatives are under way to lift up children and their families.

There are beacons to guide us down a road to a better future for our children. Nearly a quarter century ago, President Lyndon B. Johnson put forward as one of his last legislative proposals a child health initiative informally dubbed "Kiddie Care." It was built around a simple "Child's Bill of Rights" that resonates so clearly across the years that the conference adopted it unanimously as a goal for America today.

That bill of rights is a declaration that we as a nation must:

1. Assure the right of every child to be wanted.

2. Assure the right of every child to be well born.

3. Assure the right of every child to be well nourished.

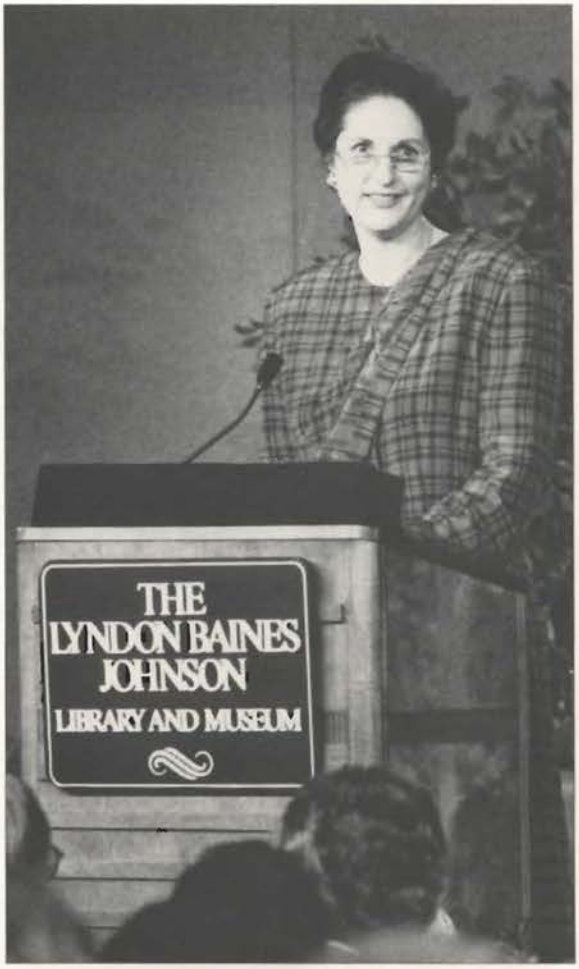
4. Assure the right of every child to be free from preventable diseases and handicaps.

5. Assure the right of every child to be well cared for.

6. Assure the right of every child to have all the education he or she can absorb.

7. Assure the right of every child to have the health care, rehabilitation and social services that he or she needs.

8. Assure the right of every child to develop to his or her full potential.



Lynda Johnson Robb chaired the symposium.

PROGRAM: *OUR CHILDREN IN CRISIS*

September 18-19, 1992

Welcome Lynda Johnson Robb, member, National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality

Keynote Speaker Jonathan Kozol, author
The Silent Crisis: Children in the 1990s

Address Richard B. Stolley, Editorial Director, Time, Inc.
Hearing Voices: Are We Listening

Address Ray Marshall, Director, Center for the Study of Human Resources, University of Texas; former Secretary of Labor

Address David A. Hamburg, President, Carnegie Corporation
What America Must Do To Achieve Healthy Child Development

Address Wayne H. Holtzman, President, Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
Family and Child Development Within the School of the Future

Address Ann Richards, Governor, State of Texas

Evening Address The Rev. Jesse Jackson

Address Joseph A. Califano, Jr., President, Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Columbia University; Former Secretary of Health, Education & Welfare
The Health Crisis

Address Monica Nagel, Ombudsman for Children, Costa Rica
A Voice for our Children

PANEL RESPONSE

Moderator Manuel Justiz, Dean, College of Education, University of Texas

Panelists M. Joycelyn Elders, Director, Arkansas Department of Health
Alice S. Honig, Professor of Child Development, Syracuse University
Brenda A. Leath, Associate Director, National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality
Harold W. Stevenson, Professor of Psychology, University of Michigan
Jeanette Watson, Director of many child development organizations
Edward Zigler, Head of the Psychology Section of the Yale Child Study Center

Address Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson—A Call to Conscience

"In its sweeping innocence," Lady Bird Johnson told the conference, "this declaration of rights recalls all too poignantly those long ago days of the 1960s when so many men and women of good will and generous spirit believed they could roll up their sleeves and remake the world. We hear now that one of the sins of that time was reaching too far for goals that could never be achieved.

"But in the long run, a society's values are determined by its hopes. Those patriots who gathered in Philadelphia more than two centuries ago weren't worried about 'overpromising' when they declared that the purpose of government is to secure the 'unalienable rights' of 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' Surely no more unattainable goals have ever been set for a society than those. Yet they form the basis, through good times and bad, of what we as a people believe in, and strive for and defend . . .

"I do not know if a Child's Bill of Rights will one day become a national goal. But I do not see it as a goal that asks us to reach too far, or dare too much, or dream too big."

BEYOND STATISTICS

Cold statistics do not begin to tell the story of what is happening to America's children, and especially to the poorest of them. But those who spoke to the conference gave names and voices to the statistics.

There is, for example, Chinea, the young mother whom Lynda Johnson Robb encountered during her work at a Washington, D.C., prenatal clinic. Chinea is 16 and pregnant. She has a 2-year-old whose father was killed in a drug shootout. She lives with her mother and an aunt, both addicted to crack. She is raising her 9-year-old brother. She does all this on an AFDC check, as she struggles to finish school.

There is the Chicago 6th grader described by educator and author Jonathan Kozol who went to school last winter on the day before Christmas vacation with a card carefully addressed, "To whoever the teacher may be." The child's class of 57 kids had had 19 teachers in 20 days.

There is another Kozol find: the junior high school student in East St. Louis, Ill., whose school was filled with sewage from an exploding sewer system in a community all but buried in toxic waste and suffocating from polluted air. "My school," she told him, "is full of sewer water, and the doors are locked with chains. Every child in my school is black. Why is it named for Martin Luther King? It's like a terrible joke on history."

And then there are the parents of children like these who struggle unceasingly to earn a living so that their children may escape such soul-shattering circumstances. Here is how Jesse Jackson described them:

"Most poor people are not on welfare. They work every day. You may not see them because they catch the early bus. They raise other people's children, and cannot raise their own. . . . They change beds in hotels. They pick fruit. They work every day. When we're sick, they wipe our bodies down and sometimes contract our fever. They empty our slop jars, our bed pans. No job is beneath them. . . . And yet when they get sick, they cannot afford to lie in the bed they make up every day, because they don't have health insurance. They deserve better. And that's what this struggle is about. They deserve better."

All Children Are Important

It is difficult to convince middle-class and affluent Americans that the plight of poor children is critical to the entire nation. As former Labor Secretary Ray Marshall put it, "It is hard for us to get people unified in

support of something that doesn't affect them immediately. . . . The wealthy really don't believe that they have much of a stake in the system and therefore believe that in some sense it's not their problem."

They are wrong, Marshall said. The cost to society of not developing all of our children is monumental. Human resources—people—are crucial to a nation's economic success, and the United States lags behind every other major industrialized nation in their development. In areas ranging from family leave and child care to secondary education and job training, America trails its competitors.

In the past, the U.S. economy succeeded in building the world's strongest economy on an abundance of natural resources and on the efficiencies of mass production. The country could prosper with no more than a thin layer

Keynoter Jonathan Kozol

Jesse Jackson drew a standing ovation from an overflow audience.

of well-educated, highly skilled professionals atop a broad base of unskilled workers performing fairly simple, repetitive tasks on assembly lines.

But as we approach the 21st century, technology has become the key to increased productivity—which in turn determines our standard of living. Ideas, skills and knowledge are substituting for physical resources. Scale is no longer an asset; small, adaptable businesses are more likely to thrive than giant, cumbersome ones. And to compete in a global economy, we need a flexible, well-educated work force capable of thinking through problems and adapting quickly to changing circumstances.

We are not producing that work force today. Our schools remain "producer-driven," with little responsiveness to the needs of the students and those who will employ them. The skills of U.S. workers are so minimal that German companies no longer sell their most sophisticated equipment to U.S. firms because our workers cannot learn to use them. Our education system is world class only at the very top—the graduate school level. Our college students can barely hold their own against high school graduates from other nations, and our high school graduates cannot begin to compete with their foreign competitors.

Poverty, poor health, inadequate education and low skills are disproportionately concentrated among African-Americans, Hispanics and other minorities. Yet these are precisely the people who will constitute the core of the American work force in the future. In the 1990s, white males will account for only 8.5 percent of the growth in the work force. By about the year 2015, Anglos will be a minority of the Texas population; by sometime after the middle of the 21st century, they will be a minority of the U.S. population.

Brenda Leath

If our nation is to compete successfully in the world, we have only two options: cut costs (and our standard of living) or improve quality and productivity. To achieve the latter, we must develop not merely some but all of our human resources to the fullest. That means far greater attention to family support, child care, elementary and secondary education, health care for all, work training, parenting education and all the other components of human resource development.

The key to improving the lives of America's children is to improve the support we offer families—to give them the financial, emotional and social supports necessary for healthy and successful child-rearing. In cases where the family is so fractured as to be incapable of caring for a child, substitute supports must be provided. All of this, Marshall said, is "expensive in budget terms, but a high-yield investment. It will cost much more if we don't do it. . . . These programs are not just a matter of compassion but of self-interest. We have little choice if we expect to create an

economy that will maintain our current standard of living."

What Do Children Need?

Human beings have the longest period of growth and development of any species. Children must learn and put to use an enormous amount of information and skills before they are ready to make their own way in the world, and that long period of immaturity has always demanded an enduring commitment by their parents. Dr. David A. Hamburg, author of "Today's Children," outlined a set of requirements for healthy development that have applied to all children across the millennia. These include:

1. An intact, cohesive nuclear family.
2. A loving parent-child relationship.
3. Easy access to the extended family.
4. A supportive larger community .
5. Ongoing education for parenthood.
6. Opportunity in the years ahead.
7. An environment that permits preparation for adulthood.

The changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution—which have accelerated sharply since World War II—have disrupted or destroyed many of these crucial supports for healthy development. Just in the 30 years between 1960 and 1990, a blink of the eye in human history, the American family has undergone enormous stresses and dislocations. Rising divorce rates. Soaring out-of-wedlock birth rates. The movement of women into the work force. Increased geographic mobility, leading to separation from the extended family. The erosion of social supports in the larger community. The drug epidemic. Most of these changes affect the entire society, not just the poor, and therein lies the basis for building the political will needed to address these problems.

We cannot erase the changes that have occurred, nor prevent more from taking place. So we must develop ways to strengthen our families and supplement their efforts. Where old supports have collapsed, we need to put new ones in their place. We need to decide when and how to intervene to ensure that all children will have an opportunity to grow up healthy and competent to make their way in the world.

WHERE TO BEGIN

All conference participants agreed on the most crucial areas of intervention, and all were in accord that efforts to help children and their families must be continuing and comprehensive from the months before birth to the child's entry into the work force. The following were identified as critical needs:

Monica Nagel

Ray Marshall

Alice Honig

EDUCATION OF PARENTS

With the breakup of the extended family, many new parents have little idea of how to fulfill their responsibilities. Especially in poor families, where mothers are under enormous economic and other stresses, outside supports may be needed. Home visitors, particularly those drawn from the community itself and given special training, can strengthen a new parent's competence and help build healthy parent-child relationships. Few new mothers know what to expect of their growing babies at various stages of development. Few who have no support to turn to can meet the needs of their children effectively.

Pediatric Care

Early and continuing health care for children is crucial. Preventive care, including all recommended immunizations, should be available to all American children. Already, we can protect children against diseases that once crippled or killed—polio, measles, mumps, diphtheria, tetanus, typhoid, whooping cough and more. Yet America ranks 70th in the world in our rate of immunization of nonwhite preschoolers. The next decade is likely to produce more useful vaccines, thanks to the rapid advances of biotechnology, but unless we take action to give all American children access to immunizations, these vaccines are likely to be used more effectively in countries like Thailand and South Korea than they are in the United States.

Children need more than immunizations. They need hearing and vision screening. They need treatment for common childhood ailments such as strep throat and ear infections. Children who go to school sick cannot learn. Children who have trouble seeing cannot read. Children who have undiagnosed and untreated disabilities cannot flourish.

Although more and more states are trying to provide health care to people who lack insurance coverage, they face an almost impossible task. "This problem can only be solved on a national scale," declared Texas Gov. Ann Richards. "It is hypocrisy to suggest that the states can go it alone."

In the absence of universal health insurance, school-based clinics—which are

Joe Califano

now being established in a number of states, including Arkansas and Texas—provide the only health care many children receive. Whether these clinics offer comprehensive primary care or more limited care with linkages to services elsewhere in the community, they can reach children with no other hope of receiving health care. Because a child's ability to learn depends so heavily on his physical and mental health, it is crucial to promote and develop more of these linkages.

Preschool Education

The years from birth to age 5 are the single most important period in a child's development. "Children know half as much as they will ever know by the time they are 4 years old," said Dr. M. Joycelyn Elders, director of the Arkansas Department of Health. "Yet less than 18 percent of poor children have had early childhood education."

All children should have access to quality day care and pre-school education such as that provided by Head Start at its best. More than half of all mothers of children under age 6 now work outside the home, and the percentage continues to grow. Yet most parents are forced to rely on a patchwork of child-care arrangements that fail to meet the needs of their children. Edward Zigler, architect of Head Start and director of Yale's Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy, told the conference that 70 percent of the settings in which child care is delivered are of such poor quality as to compromise growth and development.

Zigler and other conference participants said the key to successful child-care programs is comprehensive, integrated services—combining education, nutrition and health services—and parental involvement. "That was the genius of Head Start," said Zigler, "and there is broad consensus on those two points."

The major obstacle to achieving such high-quality care is money, plain and simple. Head Start, for all its successes, has "gone downhill since 1965. It is an unfulfilled vision," Zigler said. Funding limitations, coupled with a push to add more eligible children to the Head Start rolls each year, have resulted in cutbacks in staff. Salaries are so low that teacher turnover is constant and program quality suffers. Forty-seven percent of the teachers make less than $10,000 a year. For child-care workers in general, the average pay is $5.35 an hour.

"Not just the poor but all children in America are in very serious difficulty," Zigler warned. Indeed, he said, it is the children of middle-income families who may well receive the poorest-quality care today. Affluent families can afford the best of care, and the poor can qualify for Head Start or other subsidized programs that have some quality standards. The middle group cannot afford to buy top-quality care and cannot qualify for government help.

While it is true that most American families cannot afford to pay for the top-quality individual or group care they would like their children to have, the costs to business or government to subsidize that care are relatively modest, particularly when measured against the expenses incurred by taxpayers later on when children get off to a bad start in life instead of a good one. Dr. Elders noted that it costs $3,000 a year per child to provide a decent preschool education, compared with $15,000 per year for special education and $31,500 to keep a person in prison.

Building Better Schools

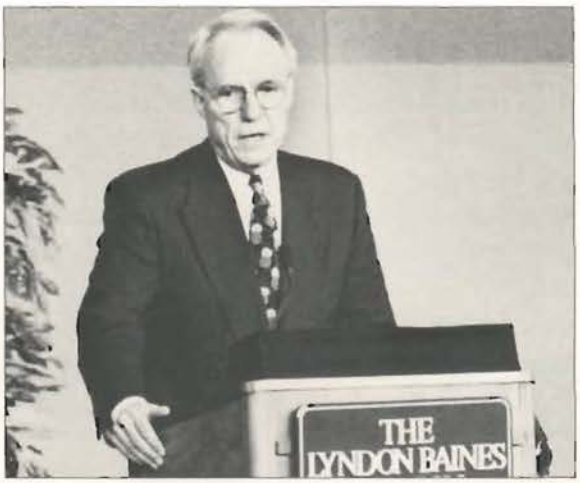
For all of the publicity and hand-wringing of recent years about the poor performance of

American schoolchildren, most Americans remain distressingly complacent about the quality of education their own children receive. Surveys in 1980, 1984 and 1990 found that about 80 percent of parents queried said that the schools were doing a good or excellent job of educating their children, according to Harold W. Stevenson, professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, whose research group has been studying children's academic achievement for 15 years in the United States, Japan, China, Taiwan and Hungary.

"The problem," said Stevenson, "is to convince the general American public that there IS a problem." Despite all the objective evidence that U.S. high school and college graduates are ill-prepared for the demands of a rapidly changing work environment in a competitive global economy, "Americans have always been No. 1, and they find it hard to believe that will not always be true," Stevenson said.

The problems of elementary and secondary education are acute and multifaceted, conference speakers warned. They include huge disparities in resources: Per pupil funding varies from $2,000 per year in the poorest school districts to nearly $20,000 per year in the richest. Teachers often receive inadequate education and training, then are burdened with excessive work loads. At a time of severe

Joycelyn Elders



Richard Stolley

funding constraints, some resources, such as federal Chapter 1 funding for educationally disadvantaged students, are being wasted or at best poorly used.

Wayne H. Holtzman, president of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, pointed out that federal funding for elementary and secondary education actually declined 17 percent during the 1980s, when adjusted for inflation. The funding decrease came at a time when surging immigration, a drug abuse epidemic, job losses, increasing poverty and neighborhood disintegration combined to complicate dramatically the challenge facing the public schools, especially in urban areas.

Holtzman said that a consensus has finally developed that in order to educate the disadvantaged children crowding our metropolitan schools, communities are going to have to integrate a wide array of health and social services with education. "The irony is that at the national level 25 years ago, we first had a Department of Health, Education and Welfare under President Johnson. Now we are coming full circle, and at the local level, at the individual school, we are seeing a need for the integration of health, education and welfare. The old HEW is coming back."

The responding panel took comments from the audience.

Beacons of Hope

Fortunately, innovative programs that integrate education, health and social services have sprung up around the nation over the past few decades. From early examples such as Jim Comer's New Haven project to the brand new Austin Project in Texas, community leaders are showing that such programs can make a difference in the lives of children and their families. Here are some of those described at the Children in Crisis conference:

RESOURCE MOTHERS: Described by Lynda Johnson Robb, this program is an outgrowth of the National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality, which is developing training materials to help communities across the nation start their own programs. Resource Mothers are trained workers from the communities they serve who reach out to pregnant women and young parents and mentor them. The object is to help women have healthy babies and to improve their self-esteem and their competence as mothers.

PARENTS AS TEACHERS: Aimed at new parents, this program features group meetings and home visits by trained parent-educators beginning in the third trimester of pregnancy and lasting until the child is three years old. The object is to help the new parent develop positive child-rearing strategies and take on the role of first teacher of their own children. The program has been so successful at bolstering the intellectual, social and moral development of children that the state of Missouri, which developed the pilot, has set up a national center to train others who want to emulate it. In Texas alone, the program is operating in 36 cities.

THE COMER MODEL: Begun in 1968, this school program features four principal components. First is a management team composed of the school principal, a mental health specialist, two teachers and three parents. It meets weekly and sets all policy guidelines by consensus. Second is a mental health team, composed of the classroom teacher, a special ed teacher, school psychologist and a social worker. It, too, meets weekly in a clinical case conference to deal with children referred by parents or teachers. Third, there is parent participation in group sessions and one-on-one classroom teaching. And fourth is curriculum development involving teachers and a specialist who focus not only on basic skills but also on social skills development. The performance of children, morale of teachers and level of community involvement all have improved dramatically in the New Haven schools where Comer's program was put in place.

HOGG FOUNDATION SCHOOL FOR THE FUTURE: Building on the Comer model and on Ed Zigler's concept of the School of the Twenty-First Century, this program will be tried at four school sites in San Antonio, Austin, Houston and Dallas over a five-year period. It features comprehensive education, health and human services, with the exact mix to be determined locally by the parents, teachers and communities themselves. The foundation provides technical assistance and support for an experienced social worker at all four sites, but the community sets the priorities.

TURNING POINTS: After the preschool years, early adolescence—ages 10 to 15—is probably the most critical period of development for children. It is a time of intense curiosity and exploratory behavior, and a time for the renegotiation of family relationships. Early adolescence is also a high-risk period, during which children experiment with cigarettes, drugs and alcohol, and become sexually active. The Carnegie Corporation's landmark "Turning Points" project has offered valuable guidance on how to provide developmentally sound middle-school education through small "schools within schools" that offer sustained individual attention within the context of a small group. This model, already in place in a number of schools around the country, holds the promise of building self-esteem and competency in students while teaching them community values and cooperation.

CASA: Discussed by Joseph A. Califano Jr., the Center for Alcohol and Substance Abuse is a test program in place in five cities nationally, including Austin, to help troubled early adolescents avoid substance abuse. The target group is fifth-through-eighth graders who have already begun using drugs and getting into trouble. Funded by the Justice Department and several foundations, the program seeks to provide children better education, extracurricular and summer programs and neighborhoods as free of drugs as possible.

CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN: Monica Nagel Berger, vice minister of justice of Costa Rica, described her role of children's ombudsman, a concept not yet tried by any unit of government in the United States. Indeed, Norway—the first to establish such an office—is the only other country in the world to have one. In Costa Rica, the Children's Ombudsman seeks to prevent and combat physical, sexual and psychological violence against children, both within the family and in society at large. Her office handles about 300 cases a month, ranging from child abuse at home to labor exploitation of children. The ombudsman intervenes with other public agencies and can refer cases to criminal prosecutors where warranted.

NATIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION CONSORTIUM: As outlined by Brenda Leath, associate director for Special Population Initiatives of the National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality, the consortium, an initiative of the commission, brought together 50 professional health and education organizations to plan state and local forums, encourage the development of action plans and cooperate in seeking to influence policies addressing the needs of children.

HELP WANTED, MUST HAVE EDUCATION: Jeannette Blocker Watson, of the Texas Head Start Collaboration Project, described an intensive month-long media blitz that was just beginning in the Austin area to explain why education is so vital for the work force of today and tomorrow. With cooperation of all the commercial and public television stations, local radio stations, the School of Education at the University of Texas, and major corporations, the

campaign featured intensive coverage of one topic per day by all of these outlets. It was to culminate with a major town meeting at the Public Broadcast System station, KLRU.

THE AUSTIN PROJECT: Conceived and organized by Walt and Elspeth Rostow, this communitywide initiative is attempting to build an integrated network of programs to deliver coordinated, comprehensive services to promote the healthy development of children from prenatal care through the transition to the work force.

PARENTS ACTION: A new effort, based in Baltimore, Md., to build a lobby organization composed of parents that can do for children what the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has achieved for the elderly.

The Keys To Success

Twenty years ago, advocates for children's programs were operating largely in the dark, promoting solutions that seemed to offer promise, but working without a lot of hard evidence about the likelihood of success. As a consequence, there were some sharp disagreements among specialists about what was needed and how to provide it. Today, that is no longer true. After years of experimentation with various types of interventions, there is a striking consensus on what makes sense in helping children and their families. That consensus was evident from the two days of discussion at this conference.

In a nutshell, that consensus could be summarized as follows: Prevention is cheaper, easier and far more successful than remediation. As Jesse Jackson declared:

"Surely we know that if one gets prenatal care for nine months, it costs less than a thousand dollars; if one gets day care, the mother can work, generate revenue and pay taxes and stabilize that family. If one goes to this university (Texas) for a year, it costs less than $10,000; if one goes to a penitentiary in Texas for a year, it costs more than $30,000. It costs three to four times more to jail our children than to educate them. Somebody, somewhere in high leadership must take the simple premise: It makes more sense. Beside's it's economically feasible. Besides, it's morally right to invest in prenatal care and Head Start and day care on the forefront of life rather than jail care and welfare and despair on the back side."

So what does that mean, in practical terms? The answers that emerged included the following:

1. Every child deserves to be born healthy. This means that all pregnant women, rich or poor, must have early and continuing prenatal care that includes medical, nutritional and educational services.

2. To help children, we must help their parents. Parents have by far the greatest influence on a child's development, for good or ill. For all parents, we need a more family-friendly business environment. For all parents, we need job-protected family leave that gives mothers and fathers the time they need to care for newborns or for sick family members without fear of losing their jobs. For parents who are young, poor, isolated from successful role models or otherwise likely to falter in their new responsibilities, we need to provide support, mentoring and encouragement. That support should be available continuously, from pregnancy through the early years of parenting.

3. All children benefit from high-quality preschool programs that integrate health, education and nutrition services and involve parents in their day-to-day operations. Such programs are especially

critical in helping disadvantaged children stay even with their more privileged peers so that all may start kindergarten ready to learn.

4. If we expect to achieve quality child care for everyone, rich or poor, we must increase the pay and prestige of child-care workers. Adults who earn an average of $5.35 per hour cannot live on such salaries for long. That is why turnover is so high. Parents and non-parents alike must work to raise child-care salaries, improve training and promote subsidies where necessary.

5. Support for children and families must be continuing and comprehensive. One or two years of Head Start or a comparable high-quality preschool program is not enough to guarantee that a child will grow up healthy and well-educated. Follow-up programs in the early elementary school grades and continued strong parental involvement are essential.

6. Education and health care must be integrated. For many children from poor families, school-based clinics offer the only source of primary care. Far more such clinics are needed. At a bare minimum, schools need to provide linkages to free or very low-cost health services nearby if they do not provide such care themselves. Administrative and regulatory barriers that prevent the integration of health and education services must be torn down.

7. Adolescents have special needs that are not being met by most middle and junior high schools in this country. Both the structure of such schools and their curricula should be drastically revised along the lines outlined by the Turning Points project.

8. To ensure that all students are qualified for productive, high-skill, high-wage jobs when they complete their educations, high schools need to set clear and challenging academic standards and to help all students meet those standards. Especially for students who do not plan to go on to college or other postsecondary education, we need to build a smoother school-to-work transition, possibly through apprenticeship programs like those in Germany.

Building The Consensus

The single greatest obstacle to improving the lives of all our children is a lack of political will. And that in turn rests on a lack of consensus that America's children matter—ALL of America's children. "What is needed in order to change the condition of children in America is to change America's consciousness," said Stolley.

As Lynda Johnson Robb noted, that will necessitate a new level of activism by advocates for children. "It is not enough for us to talk to each other," she said. "Don't speak to audiences that agree with you. Challenge yourselves to go outside that choir and talk to those people who totally disagree with you, or at least couldn't care less. Speak to those you perceive as the enemy of children's programs."

Changing the societal consensus is not a hopeless task. The civil rights revolution of the 1960s, the empowerment of the elderly in America and the campaign to save the environment have all had lasting effects on society. "Social revolution succeeds when it becomes a national consensus, and we have seen that happen in this country," Stolley, of Time, Inc., said. "We have also seen it fail, as with the poor." To transform failure into success will require communication and persuasion, aimed not at those who already see the urgency but at those who do not.

The corporate boardroom is both an obstacle and an opening to change. "Right now," said Stolley, "too few companies and corporate leaders recognize the price they are paying for a national failure to care for and educate our children." Only a tiny proportion of employers provide family support services such as child care, flexible hours, or family counseling. Business fought tooth and nail against the family leave bill vetoed twice by President Bush. Most of those who occupy the executive suites (nearly all of whom are men) continue to believe that work and family can and should be kept separate.

Yet the picture is not entirely bleak. Some corporations are waking up to the economic costs of neglect and to their own responsibility for helping families. In early September, 1992, 109 companies announced formation of the American Business Collaboration to improve the availability and quality of child and elder care. Earlier in the year, four powerful CEOs testified before Congress in support of the WIC program, which provides food for poor pregnant women and for young children. And gradually, as women make their way into corporate boardrooms and into the chambers of Congress, a new attitude toward family support may develop.

Harold Stevenson

Edward Zigler

Business must play its part, for its own future rests on the development of a dependable, highly skilled and adaptable work force. Companies have a responsibility to create a hospitable working environment for employees who have family responsibilities; to assist workers in finding affordable, good quality child care; to invest in the care of children outside the company's own work force; and to use their influence to demand public policies that are supportive of children and their families.

"We cannot expect business leaders to be social revolutionaries," said Stolley, "but—and this is one of the profound lessons I learned in the Deep South [during the civil rights revolution]—we cannot succeed in any massive social effort in the United States without the help, or at least the permission, of business."

It is not merely business that must be mobilized. It is middle-class America as well. "I would make the point that most of us at this conference . . . make a serious mistake," Zigler said. "We think that poor mothers and fathers are going to change the national agenda. They are not. We have to go away from this conference with the view that not just poor children in America, but all children, are in very serious difficulty. . . .

"We must argue to serve all of America's children and to serve them well, and then do something special for the poor because of their special needs. The Califanos and Ray Marshalls of this world know how change comes about, and it's not brought about by welfare mothers. It's brought about by average American families saying, 'We can't stand this anymore.' "

There is no time to waste. As Jonathan Kozol said, "It does no good to tell a five-year-old black or Hispanic child that we're going to change things ten years from now, or twenty years from now. It does no good. Ten years from now, these children won't be children. Twenty years from now, many of them will be dead. Loss of childhood is irreversible; you never get a second run through on the hour of your infancy. This is it; you have it once, and then it's gone. Time is a formidable enemy. . . . After these few years are taken from us, they can never be returned."

Governor Ann Richards

Photography: Frank Wolfe