

Stopping arms race can occur at home

While European and North American bigwigs haggle over military reductions abroad, a Portland-based group has initiated a way for parents to pretend they're George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev, and start some arms reductions at home.

The concept is the War Toy Trade-In, and we think it's a neat way to stop the sickening spread of unhealthy — even dangerous — toys that inspire aggression and violence in growing children. Under the trade-in, parents may bring a modern war toy to one of 18 stores in the state today and receive a new, non-violent toy for 85 percent of its price.

Two of the toy shops are here in Eugene: Creative Kids, 873 Willamette St., and The Elephant's Trunk, 296 E. Fifth Avenue. The event's sponsor, Support Non-aggressive Play (SNAP), has put together a commendably state-wide effort. The other 16 participating stores are located in every corner of Oregon, with businesses in Portland, Seaside, Corvallis, Bend, Baker, Ashland, Gresham and Cannon Beach.

SNAP hopes the trade-in will make parents more aware of the types of toys children play with and offer alternatives.

Certainly, parents *should* know that there are other things to entertain children with besides miniature G.I. Joe commandoes and their little arsenal of high-tech weaponry packing enough pretend firepower to blow Cobra and his minions back to whatever fictional evil empire they hail from. The toys children will enjoy do not have to come with some sort of commercial tie-in, like the Ghostbuster Proton Pack that vaporizes the same ethereal creatures you'll be seeing a lot of in the media blitz accompanying the release of *Ghostbusters II*.

The formative years of a young child's life have long been known to be crucial in the personality development of that child. Instead of continuing the same glorification of violence that is found in so much of our society through the purchase of these toys, parents should be encouraging playthings that inspire creativity and imagination.

The idea that parents can do something now, at home, to stop the arms race is not so far-fetched. These same parents can teach their kids that aggression as entertainment is wrong, and that noble human pursuits do not involve killing or destruction. The parent can be a world leader as much as Bush or Gorbachev.



Letters

Not flashy

In response to the editorial evaluating this year's ASUO (ODE, May 25), you have got to be kidding. To say the Gaffney/Hoyt administration was uneventful was the most out-of-touch statement I could imagine.

In terms of events, I can list several monumental ones. Karen Gaffney represented every student in the United States at an international student conference in the USSR. Steve Hoyt and Tim Goss successfully introduced and lobbied for the passage of SB 830, which affects students' control over their fees.

Indeed, the ASUO lobbyists were in the Legislature fighting for students more than any other student government in the State System of Higher Educa-

tion.

Additionally, the Women's Center was established through the work of the ASUO and is now a functioning and integral part of this campus. Anti-CIA and anti-racism symposiums raised awareness and stressed the importance of devoted activism on this campus. I could go on for pages.

Perhaps the Emerald should go through its own papers of the past year and see the number of front pages involving ASUO activism. Or maybe it should go and ask Eugene's TV and radio stations about how much the ASUO did, as they reported on its accomplishments on almost a weekly basis.

Yet more important than press coverage, the ASUO was there for students on a daily basis. Maybe that isn't flashy, but

consistent, honest and devoted representation is essential to the quality of students' lives. Perhaps this is something the Emerald should realize.

Kristin Teigen
Former ASUO
Programs Coordinator

Feed squirrels

In response to Earl Gosnell's letter (ODE, May 24):

In view of your stance on abortion, shouldn't you have said, "You can't make an omelette without breaking unhatched chickens"?

Excuse me, now. I'm going to feed the squirrels a few unsprouted oak trees.

Scott Jamieson
General science

Forum

Federal government should help parents with child care

By Gerald McEntee

The time is past — long since past — for the federal government to start helping working parents with the twin responsi-

Commentary

bilities of rearing children and holding down jobs.

Over the past 20 years, the influx of tens of millions of women into the workforce has resulted in a society where the Ozzie-and-Harriet mold of "Dad works, Mom stays at home all day" fits only ten percent of America's families. Millions of kids are simply warehoused each day, through no fault of their parents or themselves, but our government has yet to respond.

The stakes are nothing less than the well-being of today's children and future generations in turn.

In the 1988 presidential campaign, Candidate Bush took a big step in the right direction when he proposed a method for helping low-income parents pay for child care.

But now President Bush and the Congress must see the other parts of the equation. Child care is expensive — averaging about \$3,000 a year for center care in most cities and suburbs and ranging up to \$10,000 a year for in-home care in more expensive locales. Certainly, cost is a major consideration, but only one of several.

First there's availability. In a national voter survey conducted in 1987, nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of respondents said there are simply not enough child care services available to keep up with demand. Today, only 3,500 employers out of 6 million in the entire United States offer employees any child care assistance.

We must also recognize that parents are struggling to deal with the issue of quality. Many simply don't have the information or ability to judge whether they are buying quality care when they choose a provider.

Promises of teacher-child ratios are made and not kept. References are fudged. Teachers change almost weekly. It's frightening for many parents

because they really don't know for sure what is happening from the time they drop their children off to when they return to pick them up.

Have we forgotten that Jessica McClure, the little girl who fell down an uncovered well in Midland, Texas, was staying with an aunt who was operating an unregulated day care home? It's clear that if government funds are committed, there must be guidelines for the facilities that get them.

Over time, the benefits of well-funded, high-quality child care are evident. Our union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, negotiated its first on-site child care center over 30 years ago at the Toledo Medical College of Ohio.

The college subsidizes more than 70 percent of the center's operating costs by paying for staff salaries and benefits, supplies, equipment and utilities.

As a result, the fees are low: \$6.50 per day for one child, and \$5 for each additional child. The center's staff are state employees, represented by AFSCME Local 2415, and they

receive good salaries and benefits. Turnover rates are minimal. In fact, the center saw one of its employees retire in 1988 with full benefits.

Contrast this program with the situation in most child care arrangements. The median annual income of full-time child care workers in 1984 was \$9,204 for those employed in educational or social service settings, and \$4,402 for those working in private households. Parking lot attendants do better than that.

More than 2 million workers, overwhelmingly women, are employed in child care. But turnover in many child care centers routinely surpasses 50 percent annually.

Remember, these providers are the people to whom we entrust the care of the next generation in their most formative years. Too often we're robbing our kids of stability, security and meaningful activity.

Fortunately, things are changing. As more and more employers and husbands have found themselves up against the child care crisis, it has grown out of its pigeonhole as

a "women's issue" to become one of the most significant social questions of our time.

There are direct economic consequences too. Employers have found that absenteeism and turnover plummet when quality, affordable child care is made available. Making the logical leap from good child care arrangements to a better corporate bottom line is only a matter of time. But waiting for the private sector to solve the problem will take time we just don't have.

In the 100th Congress, child care was one of several issues that made it to the stretch, but never crossed the finish line. A child care measure in 1989 — one that addresses the issues of cost, availability, and quality — would be a giant step forward for Americans today and tomorrow.

Gerald McEntee is president of the 1.1-million member American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, chairman of the AFL-CIO's Ad Hoc Committee on the Needs of the Working Family and a member of the National Commission on Children.

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