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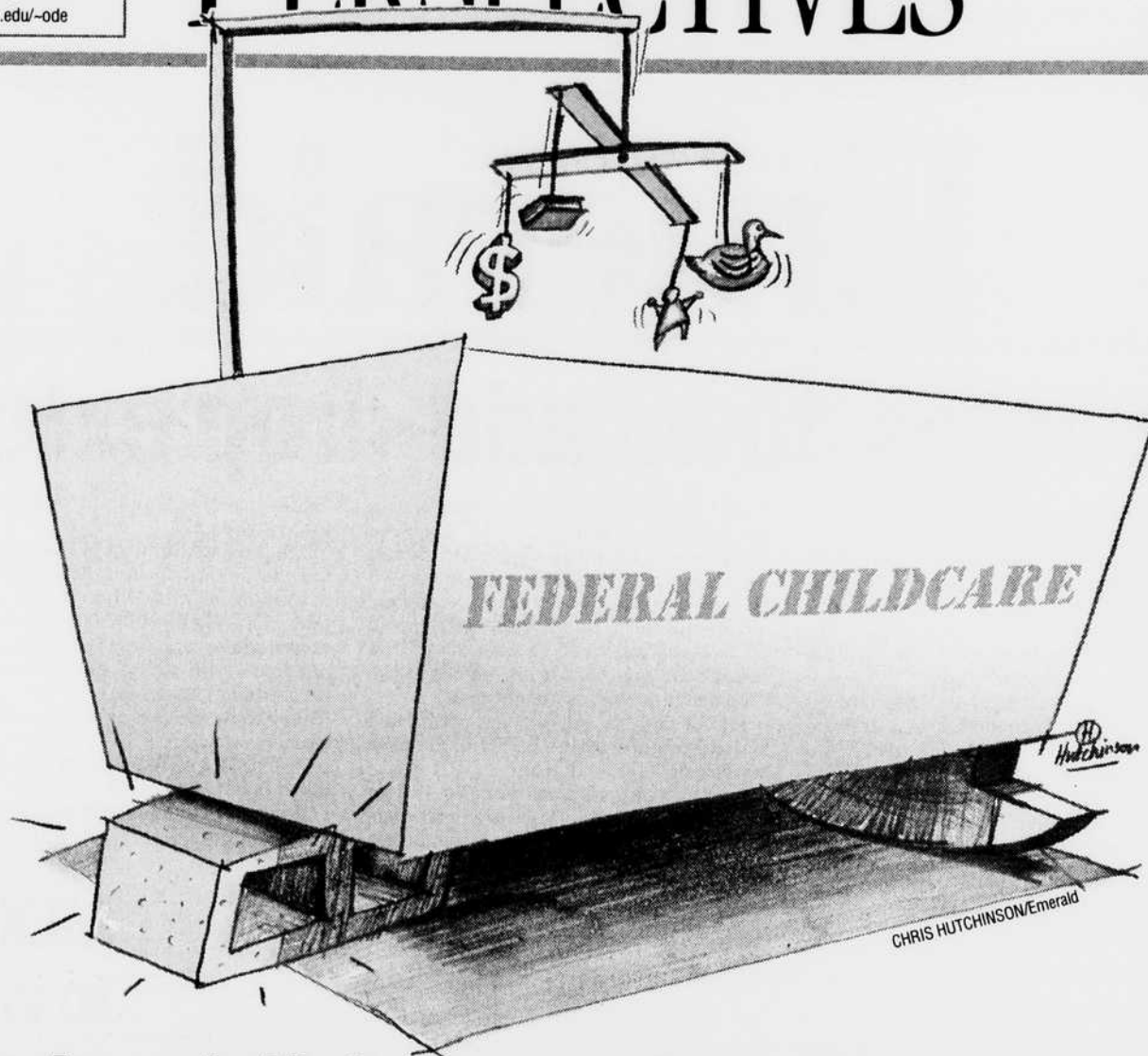
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# PERSPECTIVES

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## Clinton's childcare plan is only a start

### AN EMERALD EDITORIAL

*Although admirable, Clinton's proposed tax breaks don't do enough*

It's no secret Bill Clinton is not our favorite human being. Too often, the president's policies read more like they were written in corporate board rooms than in the Oval Office.

Nevertheless, Clinton occasionally hits upon an important issue. His proposal last week to increase funding for a variety of federal programs that ease the cost of childcare reflects that ability to stumble upon something the American people need.

Inadequate childcare is one of the biggest problems facing poor and middle class families. Childcare represents a major expense for families, but without available care, parents cannot earn the money needed to raise a family.

Providing care for children has proven especially troublesome for single parents on welfare. New laws require welfare recipients to leave the program after two years, regardless of employment or family status.

For many single parents, this restriction is devastating. Unemployed or poorly paid parents cannot afford to place their children in care during work hours, making it impossible for them to work.

Clinton's proposal hardly solves this problem. The bulk of the aid comes in the form of tax credits that reimburse parents for the cost of care.

Unfortunately, such credits do not help parents who make so little money they don't pay federal income tax. In addition, they don't help parents who don't have the money to pay for day care immediately available, as the credits don't come into play until the end of the year when

taxes are paid.

This isn't to say the money won't help lower middle-class families. The problem is providing care for those even farther down the economic ladder.

Clinton's plan does contain two proposals that might help solve this difficulty. One is a tax break for businesses that provide childcare facilities, equal to one-fourth the money spent on such services.

While the idea of having businesses provide childcare for their workers is admirable, the reality of corporate-funded services is more troublesome. For one thing, the tax break is limited, meaning large companies will have less incentive to fund care, despite the large number of lower income workers who are often employed at such companies.

In addition, the tax break only partially funds day care, leading to the likely effect of reduced wages "compensating" for the benefit of company-provided

care. Finally, the history of such business-run programs is poor; companies often cut services to the bare minimum, harming those served in the process.

Another one of Clinton's plans would give more money to states in the form of so-called "block grants." These grants would be designated for childcare but would otherwise have few restrictions on their use.

Ideally, this money would go to poor families that otherwise would not benefit from Clinton's tax breaks. Unfortunately, this is only in the ideal world.

The reality of such grants is that we don't know what will happen to them. If they went directly to families, Clinton's plan could work fairly well. If the money was restricted or came with strings attached, the plan could still fail to address the fundamental reason why federal support for childcare is necessary.

By making childcare, education

and child health priorities, Clinton is addressing a crucial issue. In addition, his proposals take an important step toward solving this issue.

Until Clinton does more to address the fundamental issues underlying childcare in this country, however, his proposals will not go far enough. Families who are losing welfare support without any assistance intended to ease the transition or help the children are not going to be saved by simply providing more tax credits.

Instead, a restructuring of the way childcare and work are approached in this nation is necessary. We admire Clinton for taking a step, but caution those who would praise him that he has a long race to run.

*This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu*

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Control pesticides

I am writing because I am concerned about a very important issue. The use of pesticides in Oregon has skyrocketed in the last few decades. In 1996, there were approximately 9,000 pesticides registered for use in the state. Pesticides are poisons! They are the only class of toxic chemicals that are deliberately released into the environment specifically to kill living organisms.

Though all of these things are true, we don't have the right to know about what pesticides are being used in our community and on our foods, such as fruits and vegetables. We are being kept in the dark about these poisons, which can cause such long-term health effects as cancer and reproductive disorders.

For all of these reasons, OSPIRG is wag-

ing a campaign against the use of pesticides and for the right to know about what pesticides are being used, where and on what crops. We are organizing a statewide campaign to pressure Gov. Kitzhaber to expand our right to know about pesticide use here in Oregon.

Students need to take a lead in this campaign. We have to protect ourselves and our future generations from the harmful health effects of pesticides, not to mention protect the environment from the damage that pesticides can cause. We must take it upon ourselves to get involved and affect these problems.

The best way to do this is to get involved with the OSPIRG pesticides project group, which will be planning a Pesticide Free Community Project to raise awareness around the issue. We will also

be working on a grassroots campaign to expand our right to know about pesticide use in Oregon.

Interested students can get upper division course credit at the same time through our internship program. We offer three to 12 credits a term for doing work on issues that interest you, including pesticides. Internships are also available for working on our other campaigns, which are Hunger and Homelessness, Environmental Education, Streamwalk and Endangered Species.

For more information about pesticides or internships, contact the OSPIRG office at 346-4377. The most important thing is that you get involved and make a difference on the issues that concern you.

Glenda Marshall  
OSPIRG

### LETTERS POLICY

The Emerald accepts letters from members of the University and Eugene community, preferably under 400 words. Shorter letters will receive higher priority. Op-ed pieces will only be printed, at the discretion of the editor, if they are written by an authority about a pertinent issue.

Letters can be submitted in person at EMU, Suite 300, mailed to P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR, 97403, or e-mailed to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu. Please include your full name and telephone number for confirmation.

The Emerald reserves the right to edit for length or style.