

Relationship Between Young Generation, Adults Said Ebbing in Advanced Country

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First Aid For Family Life
A king from overseas said on a recent visit to the United States and Canada, "I must admit I'm surprised to find that you have a problem controlling young people in such a civilized part of the world. It does not exist in my country; the young people have too much respect for their elders and for authority."

His remark made some observers wonder just which countries are civilized. For this king was from what often is described as darkest Africa: King George Rukidi III of Toro, Uganda, in Central East Africa. His people, dark-skinned Ngunis, have no problem with the young. We do. The young of Uganda respect their elders, their parents, and the constituted authorities. Do ours?

There is little doubt that the relationship between the young and the adult generation in the advanced countries, the free world of the west, is at a dismal ebb. No where else are parents so perplexed with the problem of managing their own children. Our state of family life is regarded by many as critical.

"The western family is rapidly approaching its third violent crisis," warns Prof.

New Frontiers In Living

by Howard Whitman

Carle C. Zimmerman of Harvard University. "This crisis will be the third manifestation of mass disregard of the family in western society. . . . The first occurred in Greece, the second in Rome, and facing these crises neither Greek nor Roman civilization was able to survive."

Family Flying Apart

The family, as a unit, seems to be flying apart. The old adhesives which held it together seem to be brittle and cracking.

"Has family life any real riches anymore?" asks Norma B. Carson, former women's head of the Philadelphia Crime Prevention Bureau. "No wonder many young boys and girls are delinquent. They have no home lives. They eat out of the refrigerator. The members of a family keep different hours. They leave notes for one another."

As one suburban mother put it, "My home has turned into a filling station. My two sons and daughter just come in at meal times to get filled up. Then out they go."

Family life has been going downhill for a quarter of a century, since the 1930s. As we started the crawl out of the economic depression of that era, we knew that much had changed and would never be the same again. People had been jolted hard. Old time security, rooted in old time customs and institutions, could never quite be recaptured. Changes were the order of the day - not only in government and economics, but in education, in child-rearing, in marriage and family life.

The Wrong Medicine
In family life, a costly misdiagnosis was made. True, the family was ailing. But we gave it the wrong medicine. We decided that since the good old days never could be recaptured, since the family taffy - pulls, fudge - making, apple-bobbing, and games of lotto of the 1920s were hopelessly out of date, maybe the family itself was out of date, too.

The family dinner table, with father at the head, would become just a nostalgic tincture. The roles of mother and father, with mother the homemaker and father the bread-

winner, wouldn't be separate and distinct anymore; father would also don an apron and mother would also wear the pants. They wouldn't be "parents" - how formidable! - they'd be "buddies" to their children.

They'd meet children "at their own level." One way would be for parents to encourage children to call them by their first names. So we were treated for a time to the ludicrous spectacle of seven-year-old Junior sashaying into the living room and arousing his paunchy father from the financial pages with the cry, "Chuck, dinner's ready!"

Children were to make their own decisions. One mother, who wanted to be modern, handed her 10-year-old daughter a menu when the family went out to dinner one Sunday.

"What would you like?" she asked.

The girl opened up the menu, then folded it, and said, "I'd like a chocolate soda."

"But this is dinner! You can't eat that," protested her mother.

"You asked me what I'd like," the child rejoined.

The mother, as any sensible one would, finally went over the menu with her daughter and helped her pick out some wholesome fare.

Needed Strengthening
Today we recognize the misdiagnosis. Times have changed, true. But it was a mistake to regard the family as obsolete, when it was only we who were out of step. Family life as an institution is as sound and as necessary as ever. We went about weakening it. What it really needed was to be strengthened.

The process of strengthening opens up to us today as a new frontier. We need not stand pat in the free western world while a rival culture threatens to catch up with us, or overtake us, or even "bury" us. We can build up our basic strength in a way no armaments could. For the real strength of a nation is its families. They are its sinews. The nation is simply the roof of the temple. The families are its pillars. "Fathers must again take

their rightful role as head of the family," declares Dr. John R. Cavanaugh, Washington psychiatrist. "Man must accept this responsibility for which he was designated by God and nature."

"When man abdicated his responsibility in the home, he forced his wife into a position of leadership for which she is not prepared. At the same time, the male children were deprived of paternal supervision. This too frequently results in weak, passive males inadequate to take over the leadership of the home."

Need Strong Parents

Children want and need strong parents. It is confidence in their parents which gives them the "security" we've been fumbling so long to find. The poet Kahlil Gibran wrote of parents as "the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth." And Gibran noted that even as God, the Archer, "loves the arrows that flies, so He loves the bow that is stable."

Dr. Frieda Kehm, of the Association for Family Living in Chicago, has put it this way: "A child doesn't need another playmate. He needs a parent, an adult parent. Too many of us have made the mistake of taking parents down to the child's level instead of offering the child a blueprint for adulthood."

This is not so much putting the child in his place as it is putting the adult in his place. And that place will quite naturally be reserved for every youngster when he gets there.

Family life has suffered from the notion that children have fragile little psyches and should be allowed to go and grow their own way, lest parental interference somehow maim them. But the crop of youngsters pitifully maimed by lack of training and control has taught us a stark lesson.

Must Pull His Weight

Healthy family life requires that each child pull his weight, do his share of jobs and chores, abide by the rules of group living - not only for the good of the family but for the good of the child himself. "Part of growing up is learning to do certain things which are tough," comments Director Elinor Barnstead of the Family Welfare Association of Montreal. "If a child doesn't learn this he won't be much good as a grownup. Cat-

tering to children isn't really giving them anything - except harm. They won't be able to get along with their employers later on, or with their neighbors, or with their community."

Former President Harry S. Truman put this in his own pungent way in a note to Sen. Estes Kefauver when the latter was trying to find the root causes of juvenile delinquency. Said Truman in a

nutshell, "Children nowadays have too many gadgets to fool with and not enough chores." Parents have been cowed a great deal in recent years. They've been afraid to stand up for what they believe.

Children have missed this. As they need their spinach and vitamins, so they need parents they can look up to and, as the Bible says, honor. They're crying for leadership, for parental values to hold onto, for

reliable guides who know the pathways of life and can - and will - direct them.

TOMORROW-THE WORSHIP OF VIOLENCE
(Distributed by The Register and Tribune Syndicate)

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