

Family Council

Copyright, General Features Corp. Editor's Note: The Family Council consists of a judge, a psychiatrist, a women's editor, and two writers. Each article is a summary of an actual case history. The Council reports on problems that have been dealt with by responsible agencies and counselors.

James B. - A 3-year-old belongs home with his mother, not at a school.

Karen B. - Nursery school would be good for Kip, marvelous for me.

James B. - Our little son Kip is only 3 and already his mother is trying to duck out of taking care of him. She wants to register him in an all-day nursery school so she can be free to do what she wants.

Can't she wait for kindergarten at least? The poor kid will have enough years to go to school without tacking on a few extra ones at this end. She tries to tell me Kip will have a good time there and pick up new words and new abilities. The only thing I hear of youngsters that age picking up is disease.

He's still entitled to stay close to home and with his mother. Karen is shirking her duty to want to farm him out at this age.

Karen B. - Jim makes the idea sound grim. Actually it will be sheer joy for Kip and a big break for me because it will make it possible for me to take a part-time job. So, indirectly Jim and our home will be benefited, too.

There's a fine nursery school in the community house near our home. Instead of playing alone at home or in the park, Kip can have a dozen playmates. And there's a wonderful variety of equipment - blocks, wagons and playhouses. Besides, there are experienced teachers who help the kids settle their squabbles and teach them little games.

And each mother must help. I'll have to serve lunch and set up cots once a week. That's why I'll only sign up for three days a week as a salesclerk.

The Council: You've heard of subcontracting, Jim. If there were some phase of your own job that could be performed better by a specialist, we'll bet you'd farm it out, get it back, and enjoy the way it enhances your final result. Even though Karen is dealing with precious human material here, the analogy still holds. She isn't shirking. She's ameliorating.

All depends upon the professional qualifications of the nursery school personnel. If it's a fly-by-night setup which merely "parks" the little ones so that their mothers may flit, Jim's right and should put his foot down on keeping Kip at home. But if the center is well run, with daily health inspection and a licensed kindergarten in charge, we're all for Kip trying it. Usually these live-wire schools exact so much parent participation, from fathers as well as mothers, that the whole family - not just the preschooler - winds up as part of the venture. Kip won't be shunted off to school. His parents will be there, too, via their interest, services and enthusiasm.

Why not? Jim ought not let the word "school" mislead him. Little Kip will be doing what comes naturally only much more of it - playing, singing, clobbering and getting clobbered. The difference is that he's more likely to learn something constructive each day, some of the rules of how to succeed from the way his teachers handle each situation, than if he played alone with only a preoccupied mother around to yell, "Stop that!" every few minutes.

If Jim were to visit a good nursery school, perhaps the neighborhood one Karen describes, he'd find it much more than merely custodial. Children really grow there. "dare" to try new experiments in play and behavior. Learn to give as well as take. And, above all, their transition from home to school is so smooth as to be almost imperceptible.

As to Jim's misgivings about Karen joining the working mothers a Stanford university study of kindergartners found no significant differences between children of the latter and children whose mothers stayed home. Once Kip enrolls, we have a hunch his dad will be one of the group of fond fathers who turn up one night a week to repair swings and paint "tiny towns" red.

A law requiring that public schools be established in every town of 30 families or more was enacted in the year 1647 in the Massachusetts Bay Colony region.

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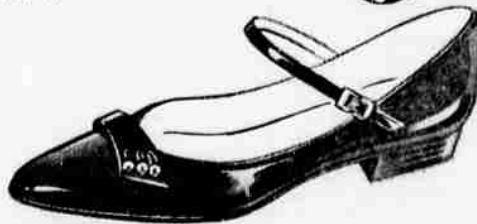
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