Family Council

Editor's Note: The Family Council consists of a judge, a psychiatrist, three clergymen, a newspaper editor, 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.

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Mrs. S. V.: My hsband ignores our young son.

Mr. S. V.: He's a very cold-blooded youngster.

Mrs. S. V.—We have two children, a boy of 9 and a girl of 6. My husband only has eyes for the little girl and pays no attention at all to our son, except to shout at him or slap him occasionally.

He's a good child, but lately he clings to me like a baby, refusing to play with other children. I feel his father should make a real effort to be his pal. It's not normal for a boy to stay so close to his mother. And yet, how can I push him away when his dad also pushes him away?

Of course it's easier for my husband to spend time with our daughter. She's solid sunshine. But it's his duty to cultivate his son, too.

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Mr. S. V.—My wife is so wrapped up in the boy that she's only too glad I take the baby off her hands. She spends hours helping him with his lessons, taking him ice skating, and supervising his violin practice. She gives him enough attention for three parents.

Besides, whenever I try to warm up to the kid, he gives me the cold shoulder. I've always felt that my wife wants him to herself and that she turns him against me by little things she says and does. It's she who keeps asking me, in front of him, why I don't kiss him as much as our daughter. I don't keep track. It's just that the girl is kissable, and the boy isn't.

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The Council: All the experts agree that a baby needs his mother desperately for the first six years of life and then, from about 7 to 11 needs his father just as desperately, for optimum development. When, through any sort of tragedy, the natural parent isn't available for the essential ministrations, every effort is made to provide substitutes. Even institutionalized children are offered, when possible, the caresses and concern of visiting "mothers" and "Big Brother" dads.

Mr. V. then must be helped to see that his role in his son's life isn't an optional one. As part of being a man, a husband, and a father it's a sustained obligation, and often a pleasure, to become the man in his young son's life. It can't be an on-again, off-again relationship depending upon mood.

This is not to frighten these parents, for there is still time to balance matters, but when a man fails to achieve a full masculine adjustment, when he grows up effeminate and cannot succeed in a hetergeneous marital adjustment, the lack has usually been traced by researchers to a faulty relationship with his father.

And often the kingpin in the machinery needed to correct this situation is really the queenpin, that is, the mother. It is Mrs. V. who must, like a good press agent, build a favorable "image" of the father for the son, and vice versa. Thus far the boy sees that the women of the house get the affection and the attention and he may well prefer to be a girl himself. His mother, and then his father, are the ones who can help him see the advantages of being a boy, and guide him to that mainstay of mental health, acceptance of self.

Look closely at your son, Mr. V. He may not be as kissable as your little girl, but he's not "missable" either. These are your innings with him and it's a fast game. Figure out how to win him, and it.

Mediators Meet Union Negotiators

New York — (UPI) — Mediators in the 38-day-old New York newspaper blackout let striking printers cool their heels on the picket lines today and turned to a new round of talks with other unions.

Talks among mediators, publishers' representatives and officials of the stereotypers, photo-engravers and mailers union were scheduled after printers voted to continue their walkout "indefinitely until a just contract is reached."

Mediators planned to keep in touch with the printers today but did not call for any negotiating session. Officials of the printers union have said the simultaneous bargaining talks with other unions are placing the printers at a disadvantage.

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