

Dr. Spock Sees a Need To Inoculate for Bias

Cleveland—Here is Dr. Benjamin Spock, the noted authority on child care and development, talking about a childhood disease that very few parents know about:

"We have statistics on polio and rheumatic fever, but nobody can tell you the number of children crippled by prejudice. . . . Really, it ought to be listed in the medical books. Prejudice, Highly Infectious."

This is the unusual theme of an hour-long TV documentary called "The Victims," featuring Dr. Spock and produced by the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company in cooperation with the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. The documentary, growing out of a pamphlet Dr. Spock wrote about prejudice in children, will be seen shortly on TV stations throughout the country.

"There are pains of childhood that never come to light in any routine examination," explains Dr. Spock, who is professor of child development at Cleveland's Western Reserve University and author of best-selling books on child care. "There are wounds too deep to be seen by the human eye. . . . There's no laboratory test that can help to diagnose humiliation. No surgery that can clear up insecurity."

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The documentary shows examples of prejudice from childhood on up through adulthood—prejudice ranging from ethnic jokes and selection of playmates to discrimination in jobs and housing experienced by persons of different races, creeds and nationalities.

It starts, Dr. Spock says, in the tendency of three, four- and five-year-olds to pattern their behavior after their parents—from patterns of speech (he notes how little girls playing house will address their playmates as "dear"), to attitudes on sex and evaluation of other people.

"And certainly the commonest mood they're apt to pick up is anxiety," he said. "I think that this is the age when a parent can detect anxiety in an even-aware of themselves. How ironic it is that there should be a disease where parents are one of the sources of infection."

By age six, the documentary suggests, "if a child has picked up the virus of prejudice, this is a time there's liable to be fever."

Among the many illustrations of prejudice that the developing child has not been "vaccinated" against, the documentary offers these:

• A white mother tells about the time her little girl told a

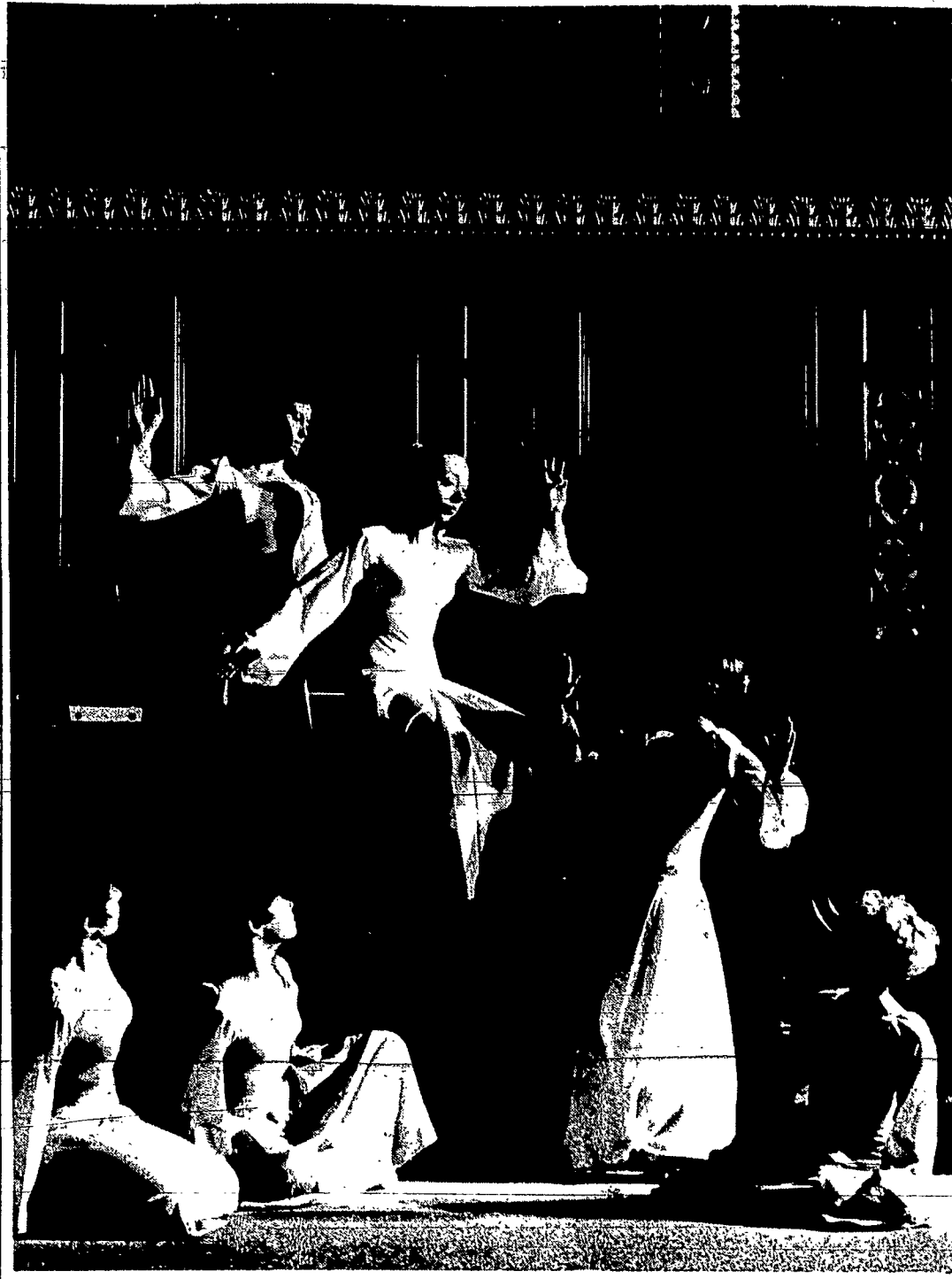
family gathering—grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc. — that "a colored boy kissed me today." The girl went on to explain that they ran into each other coming around the same corner and "we bumped face to face, hip to hip." She was unconcerned about it, but everybody was horrified. . . . When she was going to bed she said, "Why did everybody make me think that I did something real bad? What concerns me, though, is the family showing their concern. Now this is where it starts."

• A Jewish woman tells about the time a neighbor was killed in an automobile accident, leaving a husband and three young children, and how everyone on the block took turns cooking meals for them: "And you know when you're cooking for somebody else, you go all out and you want everything the best because you want them to be pleased with it. So I hobbled across the street, you know, and brought my little meal when it was my day and I fried a chicken and I made a beautiful salad and rice pudding and all the little goodies that go along with it."

"And two or three days later one of my neighbors comes over my house and says, 'Elaine, I hate to tell you this—I said, 'What's the matter?' She said, 'Well, she says, 'you know, this family that you cooked the meal for, they threw the food out. They did not want to eat any Jew food.'"

Dr. Spock warns that the child who is discriminated against "accepts the low estimation, to some degree, of the discriminating group." A Negro mother tells Dr. Spock: "And they might accept it all their life, and when the time comes when they do not accept this, then they become bitter and then there's this chip on their shoulder. Ah, I've often felt that bitterness myself. And it's so hard sometimes, when certain things do happen, where I'm afraid that I might even transmit my own feelings to my child."

The main hope now for checking the childhood disease of prejudice lies with teachers in the very early grades, Dr. Spock suggests. "This is a time when a teacher can have a lasting impact. If she's prejudiced, or even in the politest way, even without knowing it she can spread infection to thousands."



In Sacred Dance Program

A highlight of the Ninth Annual Rochester Festival of Religious Arts will be The Rochester Dance Theatre's production of "A Sacred Dance Program" based on First Corinthians 13. Performance will be given Sunday, April 23 at Central Presbyterian Church, 50 Plymouth Ave. N., at 8 p.m. Shown in a sequence from the program are Irma Topper, Gretchen Glover, Jo Robbins and other members of the troupe.

If she values the marvelous variety of the world around her, it's a pretty good bet she'll pass it on to her students.

"She'll teach them it's more grownup and worldly to appreciate all kinds of people. She'll teach love all day, even without words. The way to protect our children against prejudices or prejudice is by inoculating early." — (Catholic Press Features)

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Dr. Spock with a patient in a scene from "The Victims," a TV documentary on prejudice.



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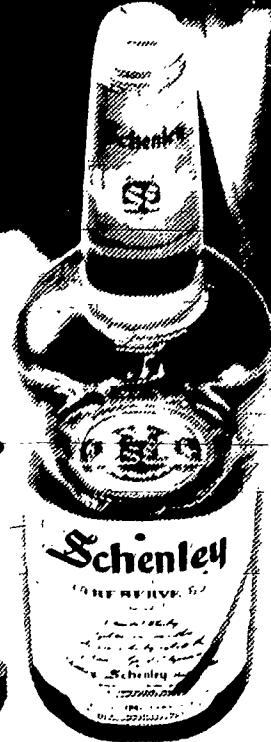
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