

# Costly 'Band-Aid' would only disguise ills

Drug czar William Bennett has at last found a target that can't fight back in his drug war — a group armed neither with lawyers nor submachine guns: children

He has asked for "agreement on the principle" of taking children away from drug-ridden parents and neighborhoods, and placing them in foster care or children's homes.

Outlining his Urban Children's Plan at a National Urban League convention in New York July 30, Bennett called for easing restrictions that govern when courts can remove children from homes of "drug and child abusers in patterns of neglect," and urged creation of more foster homes and orphanages.

Bennett must have missed the broadcast a week earlier of "No Place Like Home," a five-part investigative series on New York City's foster-care system. The series alleged that foster care is sometimes more abusive of children than are the homes from which the children were taken.

In the broadcast, children told of being shuffled from placement to placement, sometimes for years; of being abused emotionally and physically; of feeling worthless and unloved.

No upstate county faces the onslaught of drug-related social problems that is rotting the Big Apple, but foster care here faces some similar dilemmas.

Forty percent of the children in Monroe County's foster-care system "go out the door and come right back into the system," according to Irvin A. Gill, administrator/case worker of the program.

Meanwhile, the number of children in foster care locally has climbed steadily over the past several

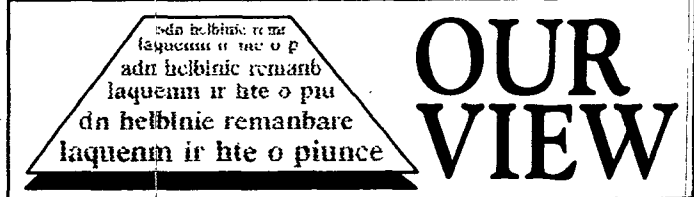


**'Just Say No!'**

years to 1,500-1,750 this year.

Foster care is only a Band-Aid; it removes a child from home temporarily. All kinds of other services — substance-abuse treatment, counseling, education, support — are needed to pull a family back together and prevent recurring crises.

Arguably the least therapeutic of the above-mentioned options, foster care costs by far the most — between \$5,000 and \$40,000 annually per individual,



depending on the needs of the child. That compares to an average \$2,500 per year for preventive services.

But agencies providing the kind of services that might circumvent foster care are starving for resources to meet the increasing demand. "the preventive agencies we contract with very often have waiting lists of three to eight weeks," Gill said. "By that time, a crisis has come and the child has been removed."

Certainly in some cases, children ought to be removed from their parents' care. But Bennett's proposal didn't indicate what degree of drug abuse would constitute sufficient cause for taking a family apart. Nor did his proposal appear to include parents who abuse alcohol, which claims more lives each year than any other kind of chemical abuse.

Bennett also appears to gloss over the problems institutional care can produce among children: insecurity, apathy, lack of identity, emotional immaturity.

Since he asked, why not take a moment and let the drug czar know what you think about his Urban Children's Plan? We suspect that when a general starts firing potshots like this one, his side is losing more than just a battle.

— The Editors

## Rabbi joined Catholic vigil in defense of 'the unwanted'

To the editors:

On Saturday, July 21, I attended the Prayer Vigil led by Bishop Thomas Daily in Brooklyn. As 1,000 people prayed at the child killing facility I noticed a gentleman in distinctively rabbinical attire. I walked over and introduced myself. He was Rabbi William Handler of Congregation Beth

Israel. Because this was the Sabbath he walked miles, all the way from Flatbush.

As I stood close to Rabbi Handler, several reporters interviewed him. I do not presume to quote Rabbi Handler, but this is the sense of his story:

Q: Why have you joined this Catholic Prayer Vigil at a child killing center? You

are a Jewish Rabbi.

A: My grandparents, an aunt and an uncle were killed in the Nazi Holocaust.

Q: Are you comparing abortion to the Nazi Holocaust, which everyone opposes?

A: Yes, because Adolf Hitler did not initiate the Nazi Holocaust. The idea of killing human beings to solve a social problem

was developed before Hitler came to power. It was developed by the doctors and lawyers, the eugenicists, the (birth-control) people. They declared as unwanted and unfit to live, not only preborn babies but also Downs Syndrome children, mentally defective, the old and the feeble and even bed wetters. When Hitler came to power it was then easy to add another category of unwanted — the Jews. All of this was perfectly legal.

We are doing the same thing. We started with the preborn. Now we are proceeding to euthanasia.

We are in a revolution. I am here to serve Bishop Daily. He is doing a wonderful service for our society. The Catholic Church is the only church that has the numbers and the discipline that can save our society.

As I listened to the Rabbi I wondered: Isn't it strange that in (an archdiocese) of one and a half million Catholics, only 1,000 showed the understanding and the discipline which Rabbi Handler so admires?

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## Our Lady urges return to fountain of grace, mercy

To the editors:

With regard to your article "Catholics adapt to evolving penance rites" (CC: Aug. 2), my feelings are that many Catholics have "adapted" themselves right out of the use of a necessary and beneficial Sacrament — that of Penance.

Let us not forget that this gift given to us by Our Lord is a means to experience His merciful forgiveness and to have sanctifying grace restored in our souls. It is a place where as someone once said, the misery of the sinner can come face to face with the mercy of his God.

We should no longer delude ourselves by rationalizing our sins out of existence or

## Loveless substitutes replace commitment

To the editors:

Government funded family planning means birth control by unnatural means such as plug, pill or sterilization.

Until 1930 every Christian church condemned it, so it may be morally wrong. It has harmed America more than all wars by increasing sexual permissiveness.

Cost? It makes many, perhaps most, marriages wear out faster than a car or TV. The increased welfare cost exceeds the national debt.

Casualties? Five former sexually transmitted diseases are now more than 40 million sexually infected.

Those killed exceed all our war dead. The poor substitutes of loveless sex, divorce and sleeping around cannot replace commitment, true love and marriage.

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denying them because of freedom of conscience. Rather, we should acknowledge the fact that as the Bible tells us we all have sinned and continue to fall each day.

In lamenting the fact that in our times sin is no longer seen as an evil but rather it is welcomed as something good that has penetrated our lives, please consider the thoughts of Our Blessed Mother as they are related in (the book) *Our Lady Speaks to Her Beloved Priests*.

Here she exhorts us to "... resort to the medicine which the mercy of Jesus has prepared for you: the sacrament of reconciliation." She continues, "Never as in these times has the practice of frequent confession been so necessary. Today confession is disappearing from the lives and practices of so many of my children ... I wish to have the sacrament of reconcilia-

tion in the church brought back to its splendor. I wish all my children to hasten in great numbers to this fountain of grace and divine mercy."

This seems to be an urgent request. Will we heed these words from our Heavenly Mother and humble ourselves, look at our sins, acknowledge them and seek forgiveness? Or will we continue on the road of indifference and apathy?

When so wonderful a gift is readily available to all, we would do well to once again make it a regular and frequent part of our spiritual lives. Let us therefore "... hasten in great numbers to this fountain of grace and divine mercy."

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## Avoid complacency

To the editors:

While Mary Ellen Frisch's letter of July 12th has much merit, there is this to be considered. "Somewhere in the middle Catholics" can also become complacent.

Do not be silent when pressing issues of abortion, euthanasia and the living will are discussed. Speak up and defend the Catholic Church's position, else we too will become victims of the opposition.

In this age of evangelization, come forth, answer both curious and earnest questions of those seeking to enter the church. Suggest those inquirers attend RCIA classes. Also refresh your own knowledge of the Catholic Church. These are other suggestions which will aid the unified church in becoming a reality and not "just a pipe dream."

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