

Society debates importance of family values

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enabling workers to care for infants and ailing relatives; increased spending for child health and nutrition programs; and affordable health care for all Americans.

Bush made the Republican pitch for family values in a speech given at the Knights of Columbus Annual Convention in New York City this past August.

"America needs a leader willing to do what is right, not what is politically popular at the moment ... We will keep our focus on the potential in our families and, most of all, in our young people, our kids," said the president.

Although Bush is in step with the Catholic position on abortion, he recently vetoed the Family and Medical Leave Act, which would have required businesses with 50 or more employees to permit as much as six months of unpaid leave to workers needing to care for children, spouses or parents. The act also would have required employers to guarantee that workers on family leave could return to the same or comparable jobs, and to continue their health coverage during the leaves.

The House of Representatives voted 258-169 — falling short of the two-thirds majority required — to override Bush's veto of the bill.

Bush's veto would seem to undermine the family-values theme that he emphasizes. This — combined with Clinton's combination of pro-children but pro-choice stands — has left many U.S. citizens struggling to reconcile contradictory statements on the issue of "family values."

"I don't think (Bush and Clinton) mean what they say, or know what they mean. They're trying to get elected; they don't know how to put family values into action," Wayne Hamilton asserted in a recent telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier*.

Hamilton, an Ann Arbor, Mich. resident, is co-president of the U.S. division of the International Confederation of Christian Family Movements. This organization, which dedicates itself to the promotion of Christian family values, has an approximate worldwide membership of 120,000 people.

While Hamilton has doubts about the candidates' sincerity regarding family values, a Time-CNN poll



revealed that this subject may be garnering too much emphasis in light of other key issues.

Results of the poll, which appeared in *Time's* Aug. 31 issue, revealed that only 3 percent of 1,250 Americans surveyed said family values should be the No. 1 issue in the campaign. More than one-third said the economy should be the top priority; 19 percent cited unemployment as their primary concern.

Yet 71 percent of those polled said the moral tone of this country has deteriorated because of permissive attitudes reflected by the media.

However, these permissive ways appear to come under closer scrutiny when a presidential candidate is the focal figure. Therefore, Auburn's Father Paul Brennan observed, allegations that Clinton had an extramarital affair can damage his credibility when he speaks about family values.

"I'm becoming a little impatient with the use of the concept 'family values' as a campaign slogan," Father Brennan wrote in the Sept. 20 bulletin for Sacred Heart Church, 90 Melrose

Road, Auburn, where he is pastor.

"It's not that I don't think it's an important issue; I don't like the way it is being used," Father Brennan continued. "On the one hand, faithfulness and integrity are praised; on the other hand, supreme effort is made to dredge up every sleazy detail of candidates' private lives. The picture ... is that there is no such thing as faithfulness among public figures. There are no admirable role models."

Father Brennan also told the *Catholic Courier* he believes the Republicans' family-values stance "came as a result of Murphy Brown." He asserted that the Republicans created the family-values debate to save face for comments Vice President Dan Quayle made about last spring's episode in which the lead character portrayed by Candice Bergen chose to have a baby out of wedlock.

In a May 19 speech delivered in San Francisco, Quayle had remarked, "Bearing babies irresponsibly, is, simply, wrong. Failing to support children one has fathered is wrong. It doesn't help when prime-time TV has Murphy Brown — a character who supposedly epitomizes today's intelligent, highly paid, professional woman — mocking the importance of fathers, by bearing a

child alone, and calling it just another 'lifestyle choice.'"

But the presidential hopefuls are not alone in efforts to emphasize family values. In November, 1991, the U.S. Catholic bishops issued a pastoral statement entitled "Putting Children and Families First: A Challenge for Our Church, Nation, and World."

In the statement, the bishops pledged to become "a persistent, informed and committed voice for children and families," and said the United States was "failing our children."

The bishops said they would not cease their efforts at calling attention to the problem, but would also "fashion a response that builds on the values of our faith, the experience of our community and the love and compassion of our people."

In conjunction with this statement, the bishops' public-policy agency, the U.S. Catholic Conference, has sent a resource manual to all 19,000 U.S. Catholic parishes to help them participate in the Catholic Campaign for Children and Families.

Hamilton believes that developments which bring family issues to the forefront, such as the presidential campaign and the bishops' statement, are long overdue.

"It's taken us 25 or 30 years for us to figure out that the family is in bad shape," he remarked.

A recent report on child poverty, compiled by the Children's Defense Fund, drives Hamilton's assertion home. Using statistics compiled from data in the 1990 census, the report revealed the number of U.S. children living below the poverty line grew from 1.1 million in 1979 to 11.2 million in 1989.

"These findings confirm that child poverty is not just a problem for a few states or isolated underclass," said Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund.

Father Brennan observed that long-term economic action must be taken by the President-elect to prevent family-related statistics like these from worsening.

"We've got a (budget) deficit that's out of sight and that's going to affect us for generations to come. And nobody (in the election campaign) is talking about it," Father Brennan commented. "These are the issues that will eventually destroy the family."

EDITORS' NOTE: This story contains information compiled from *Catholic News Service* reports.

Organization challenges candidates

DALLAS (CNS) — A national group of Catholic family life ministers challenged the presidential candidates to spell out exactly how they intend to support family values.

"You speak about family values and say that you believe in them, but we haven't heard you clearly define family values," said a Sept. 27 letter the group's president sent to President Bush and Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton.

The letter, which requested a response from the candidates, called for an end to promoting one kind of socioeconomic family as the "ideal model," and urged development of government programs that give "clear priority" to children.

Donald J. Paglia, president of the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers, said in the letter that the national debate about family and family values was "essentially a good one because family is our country's most

important institution."

But he expressed concern that the discussion not degenerate to "simplistic partisan slogans." The letter was sent the last day of the association's Sept. 23-27 annual conference in Dallas. The meeting drew more than 450 people.

In an address to the conference, Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago, said the public debate on family values had been "polarized by those on the political left and the right."

The cardinal, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family Life, said the right "emphasizes the primary role of moral values and personal character, often ignoring broader social forces such as the impact of economics, discrimination, and anti-family policies which hurt family."

He said the left focuses on the "social and economic forces that undermine families, often ignoring the important role that basic moral values play in family life."

Unified board signals new trend at Nazareth

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the academy.

Sister Mary Anne Laurer, SSJ, principal at Nazareth Hall, noted that the changes implemented in the past few years have produced a seemingly positive effect on enrollment. She noted that her school's total enrollment has risen from 248 to 304 students — an increase of 22.6 percent.

Boys and girls in grades six through eight are still considered Nazareth Hall students even though they take their classes at Nazareth Academy.

"We've had many opportunities to share our human and material resources, and this board has facilitated that sharing and strengthened our position," Sister Laurer remarked.

Sister Ann Collins, principal at Nazareth Academy, said enrollment at the high school has totaled approximately 225 girls each of the past two years. She added that freshman enrollment has risen "by almost 9 per-

cent."

Most female graduates of Nazareth Hall continue on to Nazareth Academy, said Sister Collins. Thus far, she added, she hasn't heard any problems because ninth-grade girls can continue their schooling in the same building while boys must search for a new high school.

"People know what they're getting into," she acknowledged.

Despite changes made in recent years, Sister Collins emphasized that Nazareth Hall and Nazareth Academy will remain separate entities.

"It's been mostly an administrative consolidation. We've maintained the integrity of both programs," she said.

"This took a lot of energy, work and prayer by the Sisters of St. Joseph, because these are two schools with very separate histories," remarked Mary Ellen Carpino, director of development for both schools.