

# Youth Takes A Look At Parental Responsibility

BY KEITH ROBINSON

I've got this problem. All summer I have been trying to figure out why people act as they do. Probably my main motivation comes from the lack of self-understanding.

Well, what I wish to talk about right now is the relation between parents and their children. For some reason I have found kids unwilling to talk about this. Maybe the feeling is that it is not 'cool' to talk about such things. But parents, for the most part, have been just the opposite.

I composed a series of questions that I asked to several people. This I tried to do in the course of a normal conversation. Some of the reactions I got were very interesting; but there seemed to be a certain amount of defensive vibrations within the conversation.

It was like a fear of being caught by their own words. I think some of the people that I spoke to were afraid of being criticized and condemned by their own words. But some of the people were surprisingly open.

One of the people that I talked to had a very interesting analogy when I asked him if he thought that parents had the right to influence their children. He said that kids are like a horse in a field with a fence around it. It has to be a big field because the horse needs a lot of room to move around or you break its spirit. But he went on to say that if the horse challenged the fence too often he would have to be controlled.

**ROOM TO LIVE:** So this person feels that you have to give kids a lot of room to live. You have to give them their freedom as much as possible but at the same time parents have to act like the fence to protect the kids. More often than not this is protection from themselves.

Other opinions about this question varied: some yes and some no. But the overriding feeling seemed to be that kids cannot be ordered. People seem to feel that kids are a lot smarter today than they used to be. The parents seem to fear this alleged intellectual superiority. They seem to feel

that the child is inviolate. Parents, these people felt, are bound to try to influence their kids. But this influence cannot be forced on the kids

because they just will not accept it. This is when the tie between the child and the parent is broken and lost. The child has no one to guide him and the parent fears the consequences of interfering with the child.

Another interesting thing that I found in the course of my conversations was that mothers are much more protective than fathers. They do not want to admit to the capability of their children. I would guess that the reason for this is that they do not want to be excluded from the life of their children so soon.

There is also a certain unity in the opinions of the men also. We are presently in an era in which most of the adult men were just young men during the depression. The ones that made it had to work very hard when they were young and a lot of them were on their own at a very early age. Thus, there is a tendency to feel that if they could do it so could their sons and daughters. What I am trying to point out is that the feeling of one's children being as equally capable as the parent is very prevalent.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Continuing in my search for answers I questioned my selected few about responsibility. The overwhelming response is that it is only legally that the parents can be held responsible for the actions of their children. This feeling is linked directly to the belief in the increased intelligence of today's kids. Therefore one should be obliged not to interfere. One might stifle their creative instincts.

I sense here a fear, on the part of the parents, of being blamed for the bad things that kids do today. If this is true then it is also true that parents do not have a right to feel pride in what their children achieve. For what is pride if it is not the feeling of having a hand in the achievement of someone else. It would be nice but one cannot just take the good and ignore the bad.

My final question was to the

effect what was or is responsible for the bad things that kids do today. Here I got a very mixed reaction. Some people blamed it on friends, some on parents, a few people just shrugged it off saying that everyone makes mistakes.

A couple of persons even asked me what was so bad about what the kids were doing today. These people felt that the media had blown these questions out of proportion. We used to do things just as bad but very few people knew about them. It was the response of these people. While I agree that the media does tend to over-dramatize, I do not think that it applies in this case.

Nevertheless, the opinion that I feel is the most relevant is the one that concerns the parents. Least ways the parents that give all the freedom and money to the kids without providing the protection. In effect it is these

people who remove any ambition that the child may have. Or rather they replace it with an easy source of money. They completely misdirect the values of the child. They give the kids everything that they want. Then they sit back and feel that they have fulfilled their role as parents.

**BLAME LAY:** Then when the kids get into trouble they blame everyone but themselves. They do not realize the vulnerability of the child. In short they shut the child out of their lives and force him or her to be on his own. At the same time they do not allow him to become equipped to meet the challenge of the adult world.

Here I would like to give my own view about what is happening with this situation. First of all I regard it as an illusion to think of today's kids being smarter than they used to be. Sure kids today know

more things but there are many more things to know. I can not recollect any concrete proof to substantiate this myth.

I think it all comes down to the fact that parents feel the kids should be smarter because they have the opportunity to be so. They do not have to go to work at an early age as their parents did during the depression. Therefore they have the time and opportunity to improve their minds.

Also I do not feel that the question of 'right' should be considered at all. Whether or not parents have the right to influence their kids or not is irrelevant, the fact is they do. It is all a part of the human ego to try to achieve immortality. One way of achieving it is to see yourself in your son and daughter.

Parents should take responsibility for their

children's actions because good or bad they have had a hand in it. Blame is a bad choice of words for this. It just happens to be the way things are.

It seems such a shame that people get caught on this question. The problem just exists and there does not seem to be anything anyone can do

about it. One is just caught in the trap of the human mind.

My tendency in this article has been to criticize parents but I do realize there is very little that can be done. All I can really hope for is a little more perception with regard to what is really happening.

## Bridge Winners

Twelve tables of duplicate bridge were in play in the Region auditorium, June 26. North-South winners were Terry Hansford, J. Fallows, first; second Ted Latta, Barbara Wood, third Richard Raymond and Mark Laeb, fourth. Mr. and Mrs. Arthur

Kwei, with Clayton Barbour and Tom Barnes, fifth. East-West winners Gundy Kistemaker, Duke Wilson; second, Enid Ashworth, Sandy Dawson; third, Ron Jones and Roy Turton; fourth, Sue Sullivan and Harry Arbie, with Lois Barbour and Flora Smith fifth.



ROSEY

(Herald Photo)

Helen Boomsma holds the silver Red Rose Tea trophy, and her winning red rose, at the Georgetown Horticultural Society's June flower show. Mrs. Boomsma was awarded the trophy for the best red rose in show.

## Outgoing President Says

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introduction of a French kindergarten program which parents wanted for their children and doing away of the enrichment programs for certain area schools.

"About the French kindergarten I heard a presentation and spoke to the parents concerned and they had quite a good case, but the powers that be turned down their basic rights in a bilingual country. I feel that the parents should have taken their case right to the minister of education and then ask the federal government to intervene and use its prerogative.

"About the enrichment program the wishes of the taxpayers who are parents were denied. I feel that children who can benefit from an enrichment program should be offered one. These children are deprived of an environment where they can best learn. We don't need to stultify or get children bored in the interest of politics or economics.

"We have an 18.5:1 pupil-teacher ratio which is one of the highest in the province. This means that over a thousand classes have 36 or more students in each class in the last survey of 71-72. Toronto is increasing its ratio of 16.5:1 in 1973-74. If Halton used Toronto's ratio it would mean that the board would have to spend over \$1 million to get the class size down so that more attention can be given on an individual basis as much as possible. We should note however, because of large class size and a high ratio, Halton did not have to lose teachers."

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