

PRESS & TELEVISION

have compromised press independence; however, government aid has not improved the circulation of weaker newspapers.

In West Germany, where the government of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt has been debating press subsidy plans, conservative publishers (including Axel Springer, who owns *Die Welt* and many other papers and controls 25 percent of the country's daily newspaper circulation) have opposed direct government aid in favor of tax concessions and an opportunity for publishers to own shares in a proposed third commercial TV network.

The difficulties of British newspapers have prompted only indirect government aid (notably exemption from certain taxes), despite a doubling of newsprint costs since 1974, chaotic labor troubles, and antiquated printing facilities. Publishers in Britain, fearing interference by the state, are leery of outright financial support.

Central to the issue of subsidies, says Hollstein, is the question of "whether newspapers supported even in part by government can remain independent and uncorrupted." Beyond this, he adds, the West European nations are still trying to determine "whether subsidies can keep marginal newspapers afloat over the long term, whether governments will be willing, if necessary, to subsidize the newspaper press indefinitely, and whether readers will tolerate a subsidized press."

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What's 'Best' for the Child

"Psychology and Day Care" by Alicia F. Lieberman, in *Social Research* (Autumn 1978), 66 West 12th St., New York, N.Y. 10011.

Approximately 4.5 million American women with children under age six are now employed. The children of these women—an estimated 6 million—are cared for in a variety of ways: half are watched at home by a father, housekeeper, or relative; one-third are supervised outside the home by neighbors, relatives, or women who care for groups of children on a regular basis; others go with their mothers to work or stay home alone.

Only 6 percent of these children are enrolled in day-care centers, because space is either not available or not affordable. The average private center charges \$20 a week per child, and "quality" day care with "enriched" programs costs twice as much.

Day care for children outside the home has long been controversial, says Lieberman, a research psychologist at the National Institute of Mental Health. Proponents of federally-funded day-care centers argue that group environments stimulate "cognitive development" more than home environments. Opponents contend that day-care children

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risk psychological wounds caused by maternal deprivation. According to Lieberman, there is no conclusive evidence to support either of these assumptions.

Arguing about day care versus home care ignores the fact that most working mothers do not have a choice. Federal policymakers should examine a variety of alternatives. Instead of funding programs aimed at putting welfare mothers to work and forcing them to leave their children in costly federally-funded day-care centers, Lieberman asks, why not give the money directly to the woman as a guaranteed income and let them care for their children at home? Lower-middle-class mothers contemplating work solely because of financial need might be offered the chance to remain out of the job market and to stay with their children through government subsidies or no-interest loans. The government would get its money back when the child reaches school age and the mother returns to work.

Curbing Teen-Age Highway Deaths

"Driver Education and Fatal Crash Involvement of Teenaged Drivers" by Leon S. Robertson and Paul L. Zador, in *American Journal of Public Health* (Oct. 1978), 1015 18th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The number of American students enrolled in high school driver education courses more than doubled (from 1 million to 2.5 million) between 1962 and 1972. Contrary to the arguments made by proponents of driver education, however, these high school courses do not reduce highway fatalities among teenage drivers. Indeed, such instruction leads to higher death rates by enabling young people to start driving at an earlier age.

Data from 27 states analyzed by Robertson, a behavioral scientist at Yale, and Zador, a statistician with the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, indicate that most teenagers who had high school driver education would not have obtained licenses until they were 18 or 19 if the education had not been available. The data also show that the fatal crash rate per 10,000 licensed drivers among 18-19 year olds was not reduced by earlier driver education. (A 1975 British study reached the same conclusion.)

In 1975, some 4,000 drivers under 18 years of age were involved in fatal crashes in the United States. In half those crashes, only one vehicle was involved, and either the occupants of that vehicle or pedestrians were killed. Thus, removing drivers under 18 from the highways would prevent at least 2,000 fatal crashes per year, without even counting crashes in which other vehicles were involved.

The authors concede that some driver training programs may have small effects, positive or negative, that do not show up in aggregate statistics. But high school driver education would have to reduce fatal crashes at least 60 per cent merely to offset its effect of increasing licensure among 16- and 17-year-olds.