

Job, Family And School

A report was issued last week on 28 business firms which supply goods or services to the city. These were the firms, employing several thousand people which seemed to be lagging behind in minority employment. Therefore, they were required to engage in some affirmative action programs.

The depressing fact lay in the loss of total jobs. These are essentially "blue collar" companies. Their number of employees dropped by 15 percent in the past two years. This is indicative of the overall loss of blue-collar jobs in San Francisco.



Raab

In passing, it should be noted that, despite the loss of overall jobs, the percentage of minorities employed by those companies increased. Although total employment dropped 15 percent, the percentage of minority personnel rose by 26 percent. Before the affirmative action program, about one out of eight employees were "minority;" now, about one out of five are. That's significantly greater than any change in population patterns. It is also noteworthy that this progress was made under the supervision of the Human Rights Commission by genuine affirmative action and not by the imposition of quotas.

The possibility of further progress, however, is seriously hampered by the loss of jobs. And, beyond that, the quality of the city, the nature of its population is affected. The image looms of a city "without a middle," increasingly composed of the very poor and the very wealthy, the latter in their post-family period of life. This means a city increasingly bereft of stable family life. That is the most serious disease any city can suffer from.

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Young families in San Francisco have a great deal of trouble finding a place to rent which will permit children. That situation is both a symptom and a further cause of the city's problem. Against that background, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors has just voted down a measure, introduced by Quentin Kopp, which would have prohibited rental discrimination against children. It is unfortunate that the Board of Supervisors, if it found this bill unacceptable, did not attempt to come up with some alternatives.

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The public schools are, of course, another connected element in the fight to maintain some "middle," some significant sector of stable family life in the city. The condition of the schools is also a direct *result* of the failure to maintain such a family life in the city.

The mounting research evidence in the past 10 years indicates that "good" school plants, even "good" teachers, don't make the critical difference in educational quality. The critical difference is made by the student body which attends any given school or school system. Students are mainly affected by the quality and goals of the student body of which they are a part. And the quality of a student body is directly related to the quality of family life from which it comes. Or, to put it precisely, if the "middle" is missing, if the element of stable family life is missing, then the overall quality of the student body will suffer a stunning loss. That will affect educational quality and achievement more than anything the schools themselves can do.

It is probably not true that young stable families leave the city mainly because they don't like the schools. It is probably more accurate to say that there are a number of factors in the quality of the city which persuade them to leave—and that their leaving then affects the schools.

It is necessary to make the city generally more hospitable to such families. For example: More moderate-income housing . . . or funds with which to provide interest-free second mortgages for young families . . . or more hospitality to children in rental units . . . and other measures related to the city's quality of life. It is also necessary to concentrate on economic development and on productive public employment: the provision of the kind of employment which will increase family stability.

Under such conditions, the schools would then take care of themselves.