

## Child Care Dilemma

Carl Djerassi's solution (Letters, 1 Jan., p. 10) to the very real problem of adequate child care for children of faculty persons engaged in demanding research efforts is provision of funds, provided by the government, to subsidize live-in or super-full-time domestic care. While well intentioned, this suggestion trivializes the overwhelming domestic crisis facing the United States at this time. With a significant proportion of the female population of this country in the work force, the majority of families are in constant search for adequate child care. To segregate out children of faculty members of universities is both elitist and does not address the underlying problem. What is required is small, comfortable, developmentally beneficial child care in the workplace, both in universities and in businesses throughout communities. It seems obvious that the universities, as educational institutions, should be in the forefront of efforts to establish such centers within each unit of the university, perhaps one in each building comprising a university campus for children of faculty and staff. This approach requires a commitment of space and resources as well as staff on the part of the employer which seems large but pales in comparison with individual subsidies to women (and men) with small children. In fact, in the 1940s, when it was perceived that women were needed in factories as part of the war effort, exactly these sorts of day-care facilities were provided by factories.

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My colleagues and I were pleased to see a letter concerned with the plight of women scientists. However, the author appears to fall into the same trap that most of our society is fooled by. Raising and caring for children, except for a short period following birth, is as much the father's responsibility as the mother's. Therefore, attributing a problem to mothers—rather than to parents—only serves to perpetuate a crippling stereotype. Also, I think a focus on the financial aspect of raising children is inappropriate for a two-income family. Even if both parents are in relatively low-paid academic positions, the crucial constraint is time, rather than money. Money is more of a problem for single parents and students. Competent

child care is certainly necessary, and some progressive institutions and companies provide it on-site. (Thank you, Leon Lederman for the Children's Center at Fermilab.) But competent child care is by no means sufficient. The real need is for more flexibility in both schedules and attitudes to allow parents to spend time with their children and also to tend to the myriad of managerial details that result from contracting out the household duties it would take even more time to perform. Such flexibility would allow scientists to lead normal lives and be useful citizens outside of their laboratories. This would entail reexamination of "the 60- to 80-hour macho work weeks" as a requirement for being accepted into the scientific community, for both males and females. Neither parent can serve as much of a role model if the children never see them.

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We commend Djerassi for calling attention to the difficulty of raising a family while passing through the academic science hurdles. However, the solution he proposes would continue the same mentality that has produced the "macho work week" required to achieve tenure. While the impact of ten women scientists having their children early might draw attention to the problem, it is certainly not a solution.

Second, the proposal ignores the emotional demands of motherhood (and fatherhood). One does not simply have a baby, turn it over to a full-time nanny, and disappear into the laboratory. What sort of role model would these grant recipients provide? Certainly not one that most mothers would relate to.

A humane rather than a macho solution is needed. What ends are served by the 60- to 80-hour work weeks we put new scientists through? If a career in academic science requires a full-time support person at home and therefore is limited to the wealthy, then our technological society is certainly doomed. What is needed is a level of societal support for child-raising similar to that provided in virtually all other advanced societies. The career hurdles must also be reduced to a level consistent with maintenance of both a professional and a personal life. The long-term cost of *not* taking these actions is too great to be rationally considered.

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Reading Djerassi's letter "My mom, the professor," I was reminded of a biographical note by Kathleen Lonsdale (1) which shows that W. H. Bragg had the same idea almost 60 years ago.

Lonsdale writes: "In 1929 my first baby came and I found it rather difficult to do everything at home and also find time for 'Arbeit'; so I wrote to W. H. Bragg and he persuaded the Management of the Royal Institution to give me a grant of £50.- for one year with which to hire a daily domestic helper. . . . I managed to continue the structure analysis of  $C_6Cl_6$ . . . . In November 1931 Sir William wrote to me again: 'A piece of good news: Sir Robert Mond is giving us £200.- with which you are to get assistance at home to enable you to come and work here. Can you come . . . ?'"

Lonsdale replied that her expenses could be estimated as £277 and Sir William eventually came through with £300. Lonsdale's distinguished career is certainly a strong argument for the value of Djerassi's suggestion.

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## REFERENCES

1. K. Lonsdale, in *Fifty Years of X-ray Diffraction*, P. P. Ewald, Ed. (Oosthoek, Utrecht, 1962), p. 595.

## Radar Systems

As reported by Stephen Budiansky (News & Comment, 27 Nov., p. 1219), the Royal Air Force (RAF) suffered the loss of five or possibly six aircraft due to Argentine anti-aircraft missile defenses during the Falkland War. If true, this would mean that approximately 25% of the mission-related aircraft losses (fixed-wing and helicopter) suffered by the RAF were due to missiles. Budiansky's statement is not supported by the available facts. Ethell and Price (1) detail the aircraft losses for both sides and attribute only two RAF aircraft losses to missiles, one a Roland and the other a "missile, type not certain." One of the lessons learned from the Falkland War was that the anti-aircraft missile systems designed for the terrain of Europe did not work well in the hilly countryside of the East Falklands (1).

As for the Exocet versus HMS *Sheffield* incident, the Exocet is an active-radar-guided antiship missile, using its own radar to locate the target, not a passive system, as implied by Budiansky. The extensive decoy procedures that were used by the Royal Navy would have been pointless against a