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"Who Counts the Most Important Things of All?"

by Gary Bauer

President, Family Research Council

Gary L. Bauer, former senior vice president of Focus on the Family, is president of the Family Research Council. He is also coauthor, with James Dobson, of the best-selling book, *Children at Risk*. During the Reagan administration, Mr. Bauer served as director of the Office of Policy Development, chairman of the Special Working Group on the Family, and chairman of the Working Group on School Discipline, and he held several senior positions in the Department of Education. ▲



Preview: *In this issue, Gary Bauer asks a series of compelling questions: "What has happened to America?" "What are we to do about it?" "Who counts the most important things of all?" He provides uncompromising answers to these questions that every citizen should heed.*

His presentation was delivered last February at Hillsdale's Shavano Institute for National Leadership seminar, "Culture Wars: The Battle over Family Values," in Raleigh, North Carolina for over 800 business and community leaders.

Your Values and the Values of Washington, D.C.

If you are like most Americans today, you are skeptical about Washington, D.C., and rightly so. However, I am not sure that you realize just how different your values are from the values that prevail in the nation's capital.

You believe that government is a limited instrument. Washington, D.C. believes that government can create a utopia on earth.

You believe in a thing called "truth." Washington, D.C. believes in the all-importance of moral relativism.

You believe in the importance of faith, community, and family. Washington, D.C. believes in the all-importance of the state and the "new world order."

You believe that America could once more be the shining "city upon a hill" that its first settlers strove to build. Washington, D.C. believes that *it* is that city.

Am I exaggerating? In recent years, you have been able to see all sorts of indications that the values of Washington, D.C. are not yours. You have watched, for instance, how the men and women who produce the goods and services we all benefit so tremendously from have been branded as "greedy capitalists" because they have dared to succeed. These are the individuals who have driven the economic machine that makes possible all the grand schemes of Washington bureaucrats, but they have been condemned nonetheless.

You have watched while the Boy Scouts of America—of all people!—have been treated like criminals. You see, the Boy Scouts are stubborn as well as backward. They still insist on following all sorts of outmoded practices, like using the word "God" in their oath of allegiance and refusing to allow homosexuals to serve in leadership positions. So they have been hauled into court after court in California, Illinois, and other states to answer for their crimes. And President Clinton has punished them by refusing to address their annual jamboree (the first time a sitting president has done so in this century).

You have watched while the condom (not Pepsi) has become the symbol of a new generation—a symbol deliberately and enthusiastically promoted by Washington, D.C., with your tax dollars, in the name of "sex education." Neither you nor your children can escape it because it is everywhere—on radio, on television, in films, in magazines, in schools.

father. In 1944, a total of forty people died of gunshot wounds. In 1994, forty people are shot and killed every ten days. In 1944, one hundred babies were sent to orphanages. In 1994, thousands of babies are abandoned, some merely deposited in trash cans and restrooms. What happened to New York between 1944 and 1994?

The Right Answers

These are the right questions. Who has the right answers? Many liberal politicians claim that the real answers lie in Washington, D.C. We need higher taxes, increased regulation, and new government programs in health care, welfare, education, the law, etc. Many conservative politicians say just the opposite: We need lower taxes, deregulation, privatization, and tort reform.

As a conservative myself, I support this latter agenda, but it is not really *the* answer. There are bureaucrats in Washington, D.C. whose only job is to count the things our economy produces, like automobiles, refrigerators, computers, and tons of rice, corn, wheat, and steel. But who counts the most important things of all?

Washington, D.C. cannot tell you how many children were hugged or how many husbands and wives said, "I love you," today. It cannot tell you who did a fine job at work or who surmounted a difficult personal obstacle or who did a good deed today. It cannot tell you how many families will pray over their evening meal or get down on their knees before God and ask for forgiveness

"The real answer is to fight for the things you care about. For most Americans, life isn't executive orders, congressional legislation, agency regulations, or judicial decrees. It's a helping hand and good neighbors. It's bedtime prayers and lovingly packed lunch boxes. It's hard work and a little something put away for the future."

and strength tonight. And yet without these things this nation would surely fall. These are the things that make America what it is. These are the things we must fight to preserve. Our military power is unmatched. Our navy controls the sea. Our air force controls the skies. We are the only remaining superpower in the world. But we are faced by an enemy within: the moral breakdown of our society.

Our economic strength is also unrivaled. We have just experienced a decade-long stretch of prosperity such as the world has never seen. Our standard of living is the envy of all. But we are in danger of spiritual starvation.

So, you say, "What can I do?" The real answer is to fight for the things you care about. For most Americans, life isn't executive orders, congressional legislation, agency

regulations, or judicial decrees. It's a helping hand and good neighbors. It's bedtime prayers and lovingly packed lunch boxes. It's hard work and a little something put away for the future. No government commands these things. No government can replicate them. They are done naturally, freely, out of love, concern, and commitment.

Stand for those things. Believe in those things. Insist that the politicians who ask for your votes defend those things without shame or embarrassment. Teach your children those things. Inspire them to love what you love and to honor what you honor. If you will do these things, then this great experiment in liberty will survive, and we will again be that shining city upon a hill.▲

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"Good Morning, Mrs. Jones"

You probably worry about the economy, about jobs, about the deficit. You worry about earning a living wage, about owning a home, about saving for your children's education. But you should worry most of all about what has gone wrong with the heart and soul of America.

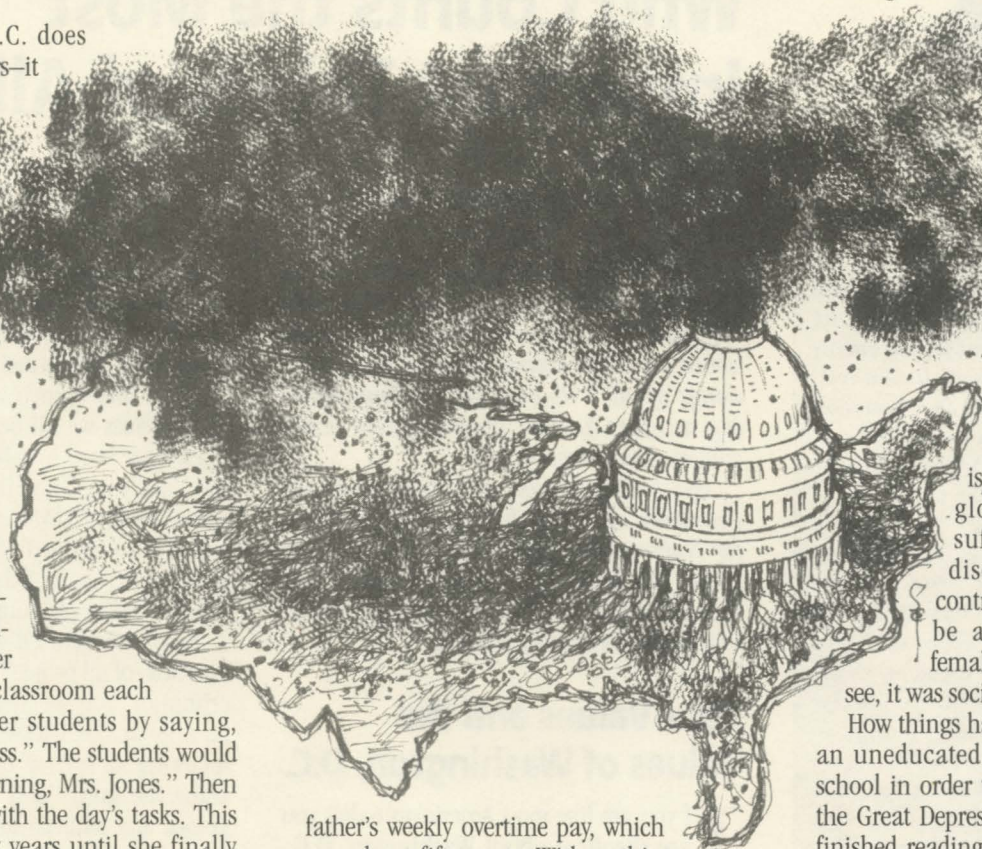
Washington, D.C. does not have the answers—it isn't even asking the right questions. The right questions were asked recently in a letter to the *Los Angeles Times* written by a school teacher. Mrs. Jones told the editors that she had taught in the public school system and enjoyed a successful and rewarding career. It was her habit to enter the classroom each day and address her students by saying, "Good morning, class." The students would respond, "Good morning, Mrs. Jones." Then they would get on with the day's tasks. This happened for many years until she finally retired.

In the fall of 1993, Mrs. Jones decided that it was time to go back to teaching. She was, of course, a bit nervous about facing students again, so she prepared very carefully. She was relieved when she finally entered the classroom and saw all the bright, young faces. Certainly, the clothes and the hair styles were much different, but she reminded herself that these things always changed from year to year. With growing confidence, she said in a friendly tone, "Good morning, class." And a student sitting in the front row shouted, "Shut up, bitch!" All the other students laughed.

The first question Mrs. Jones asked the *Los Angeles Times* editors was: "What happened in America between 'Good morning, Mrs. Jones' and 'Shut up, bitch?'" And her second question was: "Who is going to do something about it?"

From Newport to West Memphis

Igrew up in a blue collar town called Newport, Kentucky, where every neighborhood was, it seemed, on the wrong side of the tracks. People generally worked hard, drank hard, and lived hard. When I was nine years old, I was lucky to get an occasional quarter to spend out of my



father's weekly overtime pay, which was about fifty cents. With nothing but a peanut butter sandwich in my pocket, I would usually leave the house on a summer morning and stay out until dark. My friends and I roamed everywhere and never once did we have anything to fear in that rough-and-tumble town.

Contrast that experience to the tragedy earlier this year in West Memphis, Arkansas (which has been repeated in countless other communities): Three nine-year-olds went out to play and never came home. The next morning, their bodies were found. They had been beaten to death and left in a drainage ditch. A few days later several teenagers, allegedly involved in the occult, were arrested for the crime.

What happened in America between my youth and those boys' youth? Is there a parent today who does not fear for his or her children's safety even in supposedly "safe" communities?

Blame It on Society

Not too long ago there was a trial in Washington, D.C. that made the national news. It involved a school teacher who had initiated sexual relationships with three of his students. Once, he would have been a pariah; now, he is a celebrity who has gone on the talk show circuit to smugly defend his actions. First, he alleged that although he knew there was a law that prohibited him from sleeping with his students, he thought that no one paid any attention to it any more. Second, he alleged that his conduct was excusable because girls are a lot more sexually active these days. Third—and this is "modern man" in all his glory—he alleged that he suffered from a mental disorder and could not control himself when forced to be around beautiful young females. It was not *his* fault, you see, it was society's.

How things have changed! My father was an uneducated man. He dropped out of school in order to help his family through the Great Depression. I don't think he ever finished reading a book in his life. But he gave me some of the soundest advice a parent can give a child. He told me again and again: "You are going to make mistakes. Everybody does. But when you make a mistake, take responsibility for it. That's the mark of a man." What happened in America between the time when people owned up to their mistakes and when they started blaming it on society?

New York City: 1944-1994

The Family Research Council recently conducted a study about what New York City was like fifty years ago. In 1944, New York City had 150,000 more inhabitants than it does in 1994. Yet 97 percent of all children born in 1944 were members of two-parent families. In 1994, only 50 percent go home to households headed by a mother and a



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