

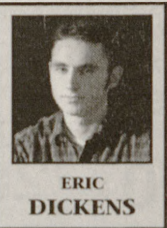
A kilo of prevention

Should people addicted to illegal drugs get paid to receive long-term forms of birth control?

Just say no

Just say yes

Who said being a drug addict does not pay? A private organization, Children Requiring a Caring Community (CRACK), is actually giving away money to drug addicts with the stipulation that they receive permanent or long-term birth control.



ERIC DICKENS

Since 1994, Barbara Harris' program has been sending a \$200 check to anyone of child-bearing age who has or had a drug problem provided that they go to their doctor for a sterilization procedure. Harris, who wins a feel-good award for adopting eight drug-exposed babies, says her program is a direct way of preventing the birth of even more substance-exposed infants (SEI). Certainly nobody can fault Harris for her benevolent thoughts and good intentions.

However, somewhere in between wanting to save the children and giving crack addicts \$200 to blow on blow, her best-laid plans have gone awry.

Harris' CRACK effort falls into the major problem of the previous programs that it is trying to be an alternative to. What was intended to be a direct cure to the growing problem of drug-exposed newborns has turned out to be just another misguided effort that puts a flimsy bandage on the symptoms of a much larger problem. As of February 3rd, CRACK has wasted donors' money on 151 clients. That is not to say these people were not in need of help.

From just those 151 addicts, a total of 1026 pregnancies arose, 364 of which were aborted. For all the math majors out there, that is over two abortions per addict. And when the pregnancies were carried to full term, the numbers are equally grim. Seventy-seven babies were stillborn, 33 died during birth and 376 are currently in foster care.

Looking at these numbers, one can see what motivates Harris and her supporters. But taking a realistic look at the big picture shows the ineffectiveness of her good intentions. One study estimated that 11 percent of all newborns, almost 460,000 babies, are born exposed



Avenues for real preventive treatment that get to the root of an addict's troubles are available and need the help of people like Harris. If she wants to put in an effort to help substance-exposed newborns, she has to first look at the substance-exposing parents. Harris' Website sums up the tragic flaw with her efforts by saying, "Barbara Harris does not have the answers about how to get people off drugs and alcohol..." While she is trying to make a difference, the sad truth is Harris' birth-control plan is just a short-term answer to a big-time problem.

Eric Dickens is a junior English major.

ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

Houston's female drug addict population has a new friend, an organization called CRACK, Children Requiring a Caring Community.



ANN HART

CRACK has begun placing billboards saying, "If you use drugs/alcohol — Get birth control — Get \$200 cash." As the signs indicate, the organization is giving drug- and alcohol-dependent women money for agreeing to long-term birth control or sterilization.

A spokesperson for the group stated that 140 participants reported more than 950 pregnancies among them. Remembering that these women are addicts, it is safe to assume that they do not have money to "throw around" for things like medical care or food. They have other priorities.

Granted, most people disagree with those priorities, but no amount of disapproval is likely to have any meaningful effect on the addict's behavior.

Of those 950 pregnancies, there were over 600 babies born. The result of pregnant, drug- and alcohol-abusing women who forego prenatal care is unhealthy children.

Some of these women have their first prenatal visit when they arrive at the emergency room — in labor. Many of them disappear from the hospital, leaving their drug-addicted child behind. John Q. Public picks up the tab for the extra medical care and for the day-to-day care of the indigent and unwanted children these women produce.

"Produce" may sound cold, but many of these babies are simply the by-products of the addict's method-of-choice for obtaining drug money — prostitution. Giving these women free birth control and paying them for taking advantage of it is common sense and cost-efficient. It is also a great kindness to the potential children that this population would certainly produce otherwise.

There are those who protest that the women will spend their money on drugs. These women will spend the next \$200 they get for drugs, regardless of where it comes from. To believe otherwise is simply naive.

Of the 600 children born to the women in question, more than half ended up in long-term foster care. These children are, for the most part, unadoptable. There simply is not a waiting list to adopt drug-damaged babies.

Drug-damaged children are major consumers of resources rather than contributors to society. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If a child is never conceived, those resources are saved.

Furthermore, drug-addicted women typically do not make good parents. Their priorities lie elsewhere. This is not to say that they do not love their children, but despite that love, they practice negative parenting behaviors that make them and their children non-productive.

CRACK's program counteracts this tendency, by preventing them from exacerbating a social problem where there are no winners and a lot of losers.

As for the "Big Brother" aspects of the plan, there is no coercion, and CRACK is a private organization.

Participation in the program is voluntary. It may be a little harsh, but there is some merit to the idea that these women are selling their right to have more children.

Because of their antisocial behaviors, perhaps they ought to forfeit further rights to have children. From this standpoint, the women are getting a very favorable deal.

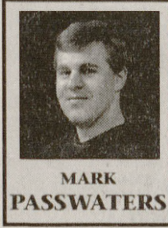
Some may find fault with the program because it appears to condone drug abuse, but the point of the program is not to make life easier for the addict.

On the contrary, the program eases the burden carried by society and the suffering endured by the children these women drag into the world. Someone needs to look out for those kids, because their moms will not.

Ann Hart is a senior English major.

Clinton's last plan to increase federal spending 'an elephant trap'

In a recent piece, *Washington Post* columnist Carl Rowan discussed President Clinton's latest proposals to increase federal spending. Rowan decided that Clinton's proposals were developed solely to better the nation.



MARK PASSWATERS

Rowan is an established columnist and is entitled to his opinion. Some people, upon looking at Clinton's proposals, may see things differently. They may see an elephant trap.

This election year, President Clinton finds himself in a win-win situation. If the Republican majority in Congress agrees to Clinton's proposals, it helps Clinton improve his legacy as president. If they do not, which will almost certainly happen, the Democratic Party adds ammunition for the fall elections.

At first glance, Clinton's proposals seem kind-hearted and generous. Everybody gets a goody. In his State of the Union address alone, Clinton proposed budget increases in excess of \$43 billion for the next year. These include increases for education, Head Start, and scientific research. These increases do not include Clinton's stated desire to increase the defense budget by \$150 billion. Not to be left out on one

of the more popular current issues, Clinton proposed a tax cut of \$250 billion to be implemented over 10 years.

With such planning, Clinton has fired an impressive first salvo. The Republicans — should they want to keep control of Congress and win the White House — must come up with an effective response quickly.

Simply rejecting Clinton's proposals is not enough. If the GOP were to do so, the Democrats could then make the case to the public that Republicans did not care about the well-being of the average American citizen. To put it mildly, it is a disaster to their chances of holding onto Congress.

Should the Republicans give in to Clinton, they will alienate their base constituents who are opposed to big government. This will also doom their chances in November. So what does the elephant do considering that the public will probably not forget?

The answer may be simple to say and hard to put into practice — find a middle ground.

As with all things, there are holes in Clinton's plan. If the Republicans intend to remain politically viable, they must ensure that the American people know about these flaws and the promises that he has already broken.

While the billions of dollars that Clinton proposes seem to be well intentioned, they are proposed increases to last

year's budget. With these increases, Clinton's plan will violate the 1997 balanced budget amendment. In his State of the Union speech, Clinton stated, "We are actually paying down the national debt." This is indeed the case if his budget increases are rejected. If they are accepted, the government will return to running a deficit. Clinton cannot have it both ways, and the Republicans must show this discrepancy to the public.

To simply reject Clinton's proposals as being out of hand and say that they are bad for the country is not enough.

In the last week, Clinton proposed a \$1.2 billion dollar increase in funding for Native American schools. Ben NightHorse Campbell (R-Colo.), the sole Native American member of Congress, said that he appreciated the gesture — and then asked where such increases had been for the

past eight years. Campbell's staff insinuated that since President Clinton will not have to worry about the ramifications of his proposals, he will be more than happy to give everyone a treat.

Such skepticism is warranted as Clinton will not be around to deal with the ramifications of one last spending splurge. He will be in New York or Arkansas watching his replacement deal with the fiscal problems caused by his "generosity."

What President Clinton has proposed in the last months, despite what Carl Rowan believes, is not good for America. It is a very devious trap for the Republican Party. To simply reject Clinton's proposals as being out of hand and say that they are bad for the country is not enough.

The Republicans must also prove that the problems caused by passing such fiscally careless increases will cause more harm than good. If they do not, the GOP will be shattered in the fall elections.

And the Democrats will be happy to stand there and pick up the pieces.

Mark Passwaters is a senior electrical engineering major.

MAIL CALL

Bush's sensitivity a political tactic

In response to Nathaniel Rich's Feb. 4 mail call.

I have to start out by saying that I agree with Nathaniel Rich. Just because a person professes to be a good Christian, does not mean that he or she will be a good president. Just look at Jimmy Carter.

Fine, that is over and done with. What I would really like to address is the comment in Rich's letter about Bush's lack of sensitivity in admitting publicly that he is a Christian. What a joke.

In a country that was founded on the concepts of individual rights and religious toleration it is now viewed by some that claiming a religious belief in public is insensitive. I suppose things really have

changed. Once upon a time, opinions, individualism and standing up for the things you believe in were praised in this country.

Having a certain amount of experience, I understand that public life is different, and you play by different rules when running for office. I also know that the constituents that are served are the ones who vote for the candidate.

Read this very carefully: If you did not vote the right way, he does not care about you.

He may act like he is sensitive to your concerns, but he isn't. That is because he does not represent you. He represents those who voted for him.

Bush does not have to care about agnostics or Jews, because the majority of the voting population identifies themselves as Christian (especially in the Republican Party).

Therefore, he rightly identifies himself with that population to the exclusion of others because it helps him meet his objective — getting elected.

Alex Mayfield
Class of '96

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