

It's your opinion

The "baby boom babies" are entering their childbearing years. In the coming decade there will be twice as many people in the peak reproductive age categories as previously. Even if these individuals limit their childbearing to two children (which is unlikely) we'll add another 72 million persons to our population in the next 28 years. Services are overburdened now — what then? (Note that this point is applicable to more than just services to those with birth defects.)

Let me add another point. We are consuming (and polluting) at a fantastic rate. To support the life style to which many people have become accustomed means increased use of power, resources, fertilizers and pesticides, among other things. Meanwhile the early warning signals from our "lower" organism friends (birds, etc.) go unheeded. To me these early warning signals say, "don't count on maintaining that one in 10 ratio — you ain't seen nothing yet!"

So we must seek new alternatives. There are many ways a person can work towards prevention. One of the ways is to organize citizens' groups to lobby, support more research, community clinics, etc. There are many such groups in existence, so that there is plenty of work for everyone to do. One such group is called the March of Dimes, which is composed of people committed to the prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of birth defects.

I would like to point out to anyone who enjoys working with young people that this spring thousands of students are organizing to help the March of Dimes fight birth defects. They're having a Walkathon on April 16, and they need the community's support. If anyone wishes to help, even for a few hours, they can call the March of Dimes office, GI 7-1171.

But in any case the community must reorient its thinking to include prevention, before our problems become so unmanageable that there's no hope in finding any workable solutions to them.

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Proper care not costlier

In reading your editorial comment of Feb. 23 about "Training isn't cheap," I find it completely out of order. I do believe that whoever writes your editorials should also find the time to read other parts of your newspaper. There has been much written pro and con about our state "schools," (particularly Willowbrook) lately. As a parent of a child in Willowbrook, I object strongly against the inference of your editorial to the effect of change being more costly,

The Advance welcomes your opinion. However, letters will not be used without the signature and address of the writer. It also would be appreciated if letters were kept as short as possible.

and I do assume that you would wish these children to vegetate and hopefully die. My child is one who has vegetated for five years in Willowbrook. I need not go into the frustrations and futilities of running from doctor to doctor to doctor, now, but for the first time in 13 years I'm beginning to have some hope that there might be some help for her, rather than just

"vegetating."
The State of California has made drastic changes from institutionalized retardates to more progressive community oriented program with phenomenal success, and the cost for this change has been nominal. The cost of maintaining a more progressive and helpful system is one-third of what a "dark ages" system is in New York.

I would hope that your editorial staff take some time to check out facts before coming out with such rash statements like: "That, sir is going to cost money. Providing learning and skills is more expensive than just letting the retarded vegetate."

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(Editor's note: State Sen. Dalwin J. Niles, to whom the editorial was addressed, has since announced that he will try to obtain \$14 million more from the state for staffing 500 beds now unoccupied in hospitals elsewhere in the city, for shifting patients out of Willowbrook into neighborhood centers.)