

# *La Leche League International*

*Good Mothering Through Breastfeeding*



*The World Over*

## *Transcripts*

### *Section V*

### *Mothers Ask*

**FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION**

*July 15, 16, and 17, 1971*

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## PROS AND CONS OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

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MODERATOR: MARIAN TOMPSON, MELROSE PARK, ILLINOIS

MRS. TOMPSON: We're very happy to have you here this morning. We are amazed at the turnout for the pros and cons of preschool education. In fact, this is the most popular session of the Convention, with just under a thousand registered for the two sessions, so we know you must have a lot of questions and we know there must be a lot of things on your mind.

We have an excellent panel with us today. I want to tell you a little bit about our first speaker. Nancy Stanton is a League leader. She has been a member of LLL for eight years, and State Coordinator of Florida for four years. She has four children—Laura, twelve; Jeffrey, nine; Bradley, eight; and Leah, two. Nancy has a degree in elementary education and is a certified Montessori directress. She has helped to set up programs, and worked in various preschool programs usually on an experimental lab basis. She has been a consultant on Montessori for the Nova School in Florida, which is a public experimental school. So would you welcome Nancy.

MRS. STANTON: Thank you very much, Marian. My roommates know how nervous I have been, but I've decided to pretend that this is just one gigantic League meeting, so if you will all bear with me, I'd appreciate it. Some of you probably think I am going to tell you all to rush right out and enroll your preschoolers in the nearest Montessori school, but I can assure you this is not the case. I will try to give you some of my thoughts and experiences in this area of preschool education. Of course, this refers to education outside the home, because we all know that your children are learning at an alarming rate no matter where they are. Concerning how rapidly children are learning, I have heard different statistics quoted, but the latest I've heard is that perhaps 90 percent of all knowledge is gained within the first four years. This may cause you to wonder, am I giving my child all the good experiences that he could possibly have at his young age? Of course, as League parents you know you've given the best start in life that he could have through the nursing experience. But sometime, perhaps around the age of three, you notice a new spirit of independence; an ability to socialize with peers. The neighbor down the street says, "My three-year-old is going to this preschool

and learning to read Shakespeare and to divide and multiply, and he is obviously the most brilliant child on the block." You know that *your* child is just as brilliant as her child, and you may begin to wonder if you should have him in this wonderful school, too. You ask yourself, "Can I, as a parent, provide him with the things that he may need?"

We also know that children have sensitive periods for learning. One example of the sensitive period is the facility for learning languages that young children have. You know that you can take them to a foreign country and they can learn two, even three languages at once. While the parents are struggling to communicate with the maid, the children are picking up the language and can converse with anyone at age four. This is true in many other instances too. Preschool-age children learn easily through the sense of touch, while older children are not so sensitive to learning through this avenue. The point is that we want to provide the kind of environment that will consider the ways the child learns most easily for his particular age. Jerome Bruner, for instance, has said that anything can be taught to any child at any age in some meaningful way. This may explain how some youngsters seem to be geniuses at two and three years of age.

Let's imagine that you all have preschoolers and, as concerned parents, you decide to investigate the possibility of preschool education outside the home for your children. You naturally will expect nothing but the best for them. Maybe your situation is such that you have a three-year-old, a two-year-old, and a nursing baby. The baby nurses fifteen times a day, and in your spare time you're occupied with the two-year-old—rescuing him from the top of the refrigerator and so on. You really would like to be all things to all your children, but somehow or another you just can't find the time you'd like to spend with the three-year-old, who is broadening his horizons; so you begin your search.

I will try to give you just a few guidelines to go by. First of all, go to the library. Look up preschool education. There are so many, many excellent books on the subject, you'll be able to find out what type of philosophy appeals to you. I have an idea what type will appeal

to you as League parents. Education is in a period of transition, even upheaval, and I think you will find that many of the new books will appeal to you. Having read, you can look around with perhaps a better educated view of what you want for your child, and you can ask intelligent questions. I certainly would never drop a child off for the first day of school on the recommendation of a neighbor. You would want to investigate thoroughly and talk to the teachers in the school before you would ever send your child.

Let's take the practical considerations first. Is the school close to home? If you have to drive an hour to and from the school, you are defeating your purpose; your whole day is shot, and it doesn't do anybody any good. Do the physical facilities meet the health department requirements? Is the school set up for children rather than adult convenience? How about outdoor space? In Florida we can play out of doors every day. I think this is very important because a great deal of learning can be done out of doors. I feel that a child should be put in touch with nature at an early age. If he has to stay indoors all of the time, this is rather a sterile environment, no matter how exciting you try to make it. A child who grows up really loving nature will certainly be a kinder, more tolerant human being. The cost: now this can be a sleeper. First, I've found that unless a preschool is subsidized by the government, a university, or a church, it is very difficult to make a profit or even a subsistence living at all from it unless a high tuition is charged. Now this leads to other things. For instance: you are paying seventy dollars a month or more and your little one just doesn't feel like going to school today. He says, "I want to stay home, Mommy." You tell him, "You are going because it is expensive and I paid in advance!" If you can't afford to be flexible enough to let the child stay home when he doesn't want to go, I would say to forget it.

We have rather a unique situation in our area. Dr. Caspari, who is a French Swiss woman, spent four years in India with Dr. Montessori. She now lives in Ft. Lauderdale and teaches Montessori courses. Some of us have taken the course and either use this knowledge at home with our children or volunteer to work at one of the nearby preschools, taking our toddlers with us. (If you have confidence, it usually works out to bring your little one with you.) It's nice to have all the lovely equipment that is provided in a good environment like this. The expense of getting such equipment, or even just a lot of ordinary toys, for the home is avoided. Many of the mothers in our area have found this a grand solution. They don't have to feel that they are depriving the child of mother, and the child certainly doesn't feel put out of the home. We can disappear for a few minutes for a nursing break or come home and have a little nursing time too, if the toddler isn't weaned yet.

There are other important considerations too. I feel that the number of children in the group is extremely important. Now one thing that Montessori taught us is

that there should be "no more than the heart of a little one can hold." You can have the most beautiful school, and the best trained teachers, the best ideas, but if you put too many children together you won't get the results that you want. In one large room or one school, there should be no more than thirty children to a group. Preferably fewer, but thirty would be the maximum. The child would just feel hemmed in, he just wouldn't be able to relate and I don't think it would be a good experience if there were any more children than this in his particular group. With the thirty children, under six, at least two trained teachers and one helper would be needed.

Concerning teacher training: You can have someone with a Ph.D. in preschool education, but when you talk to her, you know her attitude is not right for your child. So *you* must be satisfied with the training. I do think that if someone has gone to school for many years she must be very much interested in children to have given so much time to this; but please do talk to the teacher before you turn your child over to someone else. I could tell you all kinds of horrendous experiences mothers have had by not investigating thoroughly the teacher and the situation. Too often we assume that just anyone can teach or care for preschool children. But remember they are shaping the future minds of these little people, and that is absolutely one of the most important jobs that there could ever be. No amount of feeling for children, or training, could be too much for this job.

Now, the equipment. I would say "Beware!" if you walk into a school and see thousand of mimeographed sheets of paper and fat crayons, and fat pencils, and stereotyped art projects up all over. This probably means the teacher was up for hours stapling things together, and the children just scribble all day long on these mimeographed papers. This gives you a clue to the type of experiences the child will be having in that school; certainly he would gain little from them.

Let's not forget the boys. You know, we mothers and female teachers can easily provide a lovely environment for our little girls, but since there are, no matter what some groups say, tremendous differences between boys and girls at a very early age, we need to provide plenty of opportunities for outlets and activities for both sexes. Even if there are just women involved, if they are sensitive to the needs of little boys, these teachers will not forget to put in such things as little carpentry corners with real nails and real hammers and real wood, or plumbing corners with pipes and wrenches. If you don't have a lot of outdoor space, I am very much in favor of a room with a huge punching bag and perhaps even mattresses on the floor to jump up and down on. I think you will find this will cut down a lot on punching each other.

Now, as to kinds of learning experiences. Briefly, you want to make sure that no avenues of learning are neglected. For instance, I think we put far too much emphasis in our schools on just the visual and audio senses. Be sure that there are facilities for learning through every sense of the body. The sense of touch, because children

at this age learn a great deal from the sense of touch, as you League parents are well aware. The sense of smell. At this age you can develop *all* the senses very keenly. (Of course, you can do this at home too.) Just be aware of the different avenues of learning, because we're so used to learning primarily through the visual and the auditory that we tend to neglect the other senses.

How is discipline handled in the school? One time we worked next to another preschool class of five-year-olds where there was a great deal of yelling and shouting and putting children in corners, and then when all else failed they would give *us* their "really immature children" because we had three- and four-year-olds. They would put tape over the children's mouths—big huge, wide pieces of tape. I was horrified.

After investigating, you need to observe. If the school refuses to let you observe, then I would not consider that school at all. You should certainly be welcome to observe in any school. Just see how the little problems that arise are handled, and whether you would want your children in that school. I do feel that too many times for many years it was "school is school, and home is home, and never the twain shall meet." Now, it shouldn't be that way at all. If you decide to put your child in school earlier than first grade, I think a rapport between parent and teacher is very, very important. They should have regular parent meetings, regular discussion with you, they should be willing to talk to you any time as to what your child is doing. However, when your little one comes home, don't say to him "What did you do all day? What did you learn?" He is sure to say either, "Nothing," or "I played."

Finally, we should ask ourselves, "Education is for *what* and for *whom*?" We are just beginning to know some of the miraculous capabilities of the mind of the tiny child. We know that the possibilities are infinite, but you know we could wind up with psychotic geniuses if we are not very careful about the environment in which we place our children. We want to look at the long-range goals. I think education for all ages is in a state of transition because many of us are realizing that schools are often providing more negative influences and results than positive. So what we want to know is this: Are we fostering confident, happy, stable children who feel good about themselves? I think this is the key. They must feel good about themselves.

If you have found the perfect school, and you decide to take your child, stay with him a few days. Any school I have been involved in myself has been very flexible in letting parents stay. If the child is just not ready, don't send him. Every child is ready at a different age, and some are never ready. My own children are in an experimental school. The school year is longer, and they can go at their own pace. I believe very much in individualized learning. Each child is an individual. Sometimes my older children ask to stay home for a day—just to read, relax or "mess around." I usually say, "O.K., if you want to stay home, stay home a few days." It's our culture that has ingrained in us that

they *must* be in school every day that they are perfectly well. But when you look at the long-range goals I sometimes wonder, "Who are 'they' to say where your child should spend every weekday of every year?" As confident and competent parents, I think that you can make some of these decisions yourself.

I have seen in preschools some of the best and most dedicated teachers, and they do have beautiful ideas on life and what it can provide for children. Often it's the preschools that are leaders in the educational movement. Of course the inevitable question comes, "Nancy, what are you going to do with Leah?" My answer is, "At the present time I don't feel the world deserves my Leah." Not just yet . . . perhaps a little later.

**MRS. TOMPSON:** Thank you, Nancy, yours was a most informative talk. I am sure all of you are familiar with the old show-business story where the star of the show gets sick and a substitute has to step in at the last minute who then goes on to tremendous triumph and becomes the new star of the show. Well, I think we are really in that sort of situation today. Dr. Gertrude Hunter, who was to have been one of our panelists, found on Monday that she couldn't come. So at the very last moment, this lady graciously stepped in even though she is a very busy lady. She is a columnist for the *Chicago Tribune* and her column is syndicated in forty other newspapers around the country. Her column in today's paper is all about Princess Grace and the Convention and is entitled "Princess Grace and the Beauty of Mother Love." If you haven't read her columns, she is still probably familiar to you through her book, *How to Raise a Brighter Child*. So, would you please join me in welcoming Joan Beck.

**JOAN BECK:** I think Marian should have waited until the reviews were in before she said I was a good substitute. I want to begin by telling you, as I am sure you know, that the preschool movement is a great vast collection of different ideas and conflicting and controversial ideas about what children need between the ages of three and five. So first of all I want to sort some of the things out into categories so that when it gets to the time and you want to make a choice for your child, you have some idea of what the different philosophies are from which you can choose.

First of all, there is "nursery school," and this word now usually implies a two- or two-and-a-half-hour program for children who are three or four and in some areas five years old, intended primarily for the benefit of the child. On the other hand we have an increasing emphasis on the day-care movement. And the word "day-care" usually implies an all-day program for children of any age up to six, primarily intended to take the child off the mother's hands and away from her responsibility so that she can do something else. Day-care is primarily for the benefit of the mother. Whether or

not it is good for children is another question, but people in the day-care movement are thinking first of all of the mother and secondly of the child. I would assume that, because you are involved in the League, you are probably not interested so much in things that are good for mother, as much as you are interested in things that are good for children. So when you get to the nursery-school age, the thing that you must do is exactly what you are doing now. Look at your child first, and see what your child needs, rather than looking at the schools and the things that are available.

The bulk of the experience and the research that we have done on children who are three and four indicates that they need several things. First of all, they need *mental stimulation*. This we are, as the first speaker noted, learning more and more about. But we do know that children need vast amounts of exciting, fresh, mental stimulation. Secondly, some of them may be ready for a *warm and loving relationship with other caring adults*. As they begin to move away from mother, they may be happy for an hour or two without mother in the company of one of these adults. They all need a *chance to use their large muscles*—to run, to shout, to jump, to make a lot of noise in a way that is usually not possible within an apartment. They need a *chance to use their small muscles*—to be creative with art materials and craft materials; to do things that involve the hand and the eye—sit-down sort of activities with the paste pots and so on. They also need a *chance to play with other children of their own age* with as little supervision as possible, but still with supervision. They need a *chance to play both indoors and out-of-doors*. They need *someone to teach them and someone to leave them alone*. Someone who will watch over them and someone who will let them take a few beginning steps to independence.

Now each of us who is a parent has different amounts of these ingredients that we can give our children. If you live in an apartment, you can't let your child run out and play and be very independent in most urban areas these days. If you live in a country place, your child may be perfectly safe out of doors and free, but he may not have anybody his age to play with. You may have all the time in the world, and all the skills and interests in helping your child develop mentally, but you can't be a three-year-old or four-year-old playmate. So the thing to do is look at your child first and decide which of these needs you can supply happily and easily. Then look for a nursery school to supply what you cannot.

There are neighborhoods where, when you open the front door, you have twenty preschool kids right there on your doorstep. What a child in such a neighborhood probably needs is a chance to get into a nursery school where he is given a chance to work independently on his own. If you have to get in the car and drive twenty minutes to find another four-year-old for your child to play with, what he needs most is one of the social-development types of nursery school. If you enjoy reading to your child, if you delight in this one-

to-one teacher-type relationship (and to me this is one of the ideal models of parenthood), what your child might need is simply some big outdoor equipment and a chance to use it with a few other kids. When he comes home you teach him what you like to teach him because you enjoy this most.

There are several main types of nursery schools that are available. One is the traditional social-development nursery school, and for a few kids in the right kind of home this is great. This is the little-old-lady-in-tennis shoes sort of nursery school that thinks that all these little kids are so cute and that all they have to do is learn to share and this will solve all their problems. You also run into the type of school where the director thinks that everything is psychological and that there are great dark mysterious things going on between you and your husband. This type you should pick up your child and run away from very quickly. Before I knew better I had an experience like this with one of my children. The teacher reported in great shock and anger that my child had hit another child, and she thought that there was probably something wrong with his relationship with his father. Well, I knew that he got along perfectly well with his father, so I turned to my three-year-old and asked him, "Why did you hit this kid?" and he said, "He hit me first." We left and we didn't go back. The Montessori schools I think are delightful, and I am very much for them for particular types of kids. I think Nancy knows much more about the pros and cons of this than I do, but I have seen very creative and very wonderful children in the right Montessori. There are also increasingly nursery schools that intend to give children a great deal of intellectual development, and this can be very good or it can be very bad, depending upon the child and the home he comes from, and depending upon the philosophy and the understanding that the director has in this area.

I think that the best way to evaluate these things is to go and visit, to take your child to see if he is happy and then watch to see how he reacts when he comes home. I have seen children come home from nursery school with the most wonderful secret smile on their faces as though they had been to some absolutely enchanted land. They are eager and they can't wait to go the next morning. They hate Saturdays because they can't go. This is obviously the right program for these children. I have seen other children come home, open the front door, throw themselves on the floor and start to scream and cry, hit their mother, throw up their lunch. They make sure that they have to go to the bathroom for a long session just the time the nursery bus comes every morning. There is something wrong here. You have to back off, take another look, get this kid out of this program and into something else.

Mothers like you are already very much sensitized to looking at your child to see how he reacts to what you do, and I think that you can tell very quickly whether or not your child is in the wrong program.

You may not be able to find the type of nursery school

that you think is ideal for your child. Many parents have simply gone out and organized one. Most of the Montessori schools in this country now were started by parents who wanted this type of education for their three- and four-year-olds. They got together with other parents, raised the money, and hired the teachers. This, I think, is the model that many of you may have to use, depending upon the communities in which you live.

My own son was a very active buster-type kid. He learned to say the word "out" before he learned to say "Mama" or "Daddy." He was not a scissors-and-paste-pot, crayon-type kid. What he wanted was activity. We found in our area a boy's sports club for four-year-old males. The man that ran it was a coach. The children were all called by their last names; and if you are only a year out of diapers, it is great to be called "Beck" instead of "Chris." This guy picked these kids up in a station wagon, rain or shine, and whether it was zero or seventy, and he took them some place different in the Chicago suburban area every day. One day in the spring they went out and rolled down a hill all morning long—just rolled down the hill, which is great. I didn't happen to have the kind of life where I could spend the morning watching him roll down a hill. In the winter he would take them down to the beach where the snow was clean and absolutely untouched, and he would teach them to build igloos. He had a great vast number of possibilities that he could use with these kids. He told them stories in the station wagon while he was driving them around, and he taught them physical games by the rules. He taught kids to wrestle for two minutes and stop when the whistle blew, which is a great thing for four- and five-year-old boys to know. He taught them the beginning rules of baseball and the beginning rules of football. A five-year-old boy who knows these things has a great deal of physical self-confidence, and when he is physically self-confident, a young male can walk into a school situation and be perfectly assured. I think this is one of the best things that can happen. I am a great supporter of Montessori, but this type of four-year-old male can't start cold in a Montessori school and be very happy. Now a two-and-a-half-year-old girl like my daughter would have been absolutely delighted with Montessori if it had been available then. Here again, you look first at your child, and then you try to find the right sort of nursery school.

The other type of facility for children that I hope you will all learn as much about as you can, and take some strong stands on, is the day-care center. The White House Conference for Children made universal federally-financed day care one of the overriding concerns of this country by vote, which I thought was absolutely horrendous. There are bills in Congress now with open-end financial commitments which have already passed the House Education Subcommittee to provide for federally-financed universal day care for children of any mother who wants it. I know there are families where a young child is better off in a day-care situation than he is at home, but I think they are very few and very far between.

The people who are pushing day care so hard and fast want it for *everybody*, on the grounds that if they just supply it for the children who have economic or emotional or psychological need for it, this will be discriminatory. They are talking about bills that will cost up to ten billion dollars within the next four or five years. The costs of putting a child into a day-care program are much more than elementary school. They estimate a good program now costs between two and five thousand dollars a year for one child in day care. This is because it takes a ratio of one adult to four children for the one- and two-year-olds and I'm sure you can understand why. And it takes a ratio of at least one adult to every ten children in the three-, four-, and five-year age group. This care must be provided on an eight- to ten-hour-a-day basis and a fifty-two-week-a-year basis if mothers are going to be "as free as men from the responsibilities of child care in order to pursue their own professional interest"—which is the wording that I have taken from some of the feminist literature. There is an enormous amount of Congressional support. This education bill that I mentioned has a hundred cosponsors in the House of Representatives. I think you need to be aware of these things, and I think that a group like yours that is very much attuned to the benefits and particularly the joys of a good parent-child relationship ought to be speaking up and saying, "Hey, wait a minute, you forget there is a lot going on besides the physical custodial care of children in these very early years." I think a group like yours needs to say loud and clear that feminine rights and the Women's Lib movement should not be at the expense of children.

I would like to point out that these Women's Lib ideas have been around a long time. The really bright, well-educated women in the last two or three generations have been exposed to the philosophy that they ought to be as free as men to have a career; but something happened on the way to this career, and that was a baby. And the same thing happened to them as happened to me. You take one look at this baby, and he's the most fascinating thing in all the world, and you can't go off and leave him. I think women, particularly the bright, intelligent, caring women, stay home during these early years of their child's life by choice. Women know instinctively, and intellectually, and emotionally, and every way you can possibly know anything, that there is nothing more important, or happier, or more fulfilling, or more rewarding than taking care of your own kid, particularly during these early years of life. I think we have to oppose anything that comes between mother and child during the first six years of life particularly.

MRS. TOMPSON: I think I was right about her after all. You know it was at our first Convention that we first heard day care mentioned, and I was a bit startled at the time because it was our next speaker who said, "You know, I think that day care is the coming thing, and it might not be a bad idea." This man is the director of the Pediatric Out-patient Department of Michael Reese Hospital and an Associate Professor in Community Pediatrics at the University of Illinois. He has held various

positions in the Head Start movement and really has many more titles than we have time to give you this morning. He is one of the local members of our Professional Advisory Board, which means that he meets with us to help you. He is the father of two teen-age daughters and a very popular speaker. So would you welcome this morning, Dr. Robert Mendelsohn.

**DR. MENDELSON:** Well, that's one hell of an introduction, to tell me how wrong I was years ago. Thanks very much, Marian. I will tell you why I used to say that kind of thing. It was because I was "educated" then, and I believed what my teachers told me. Everybody told me that nursery schools and day-care centers were good, so I believed them. That is why today I am a little suspicious of anything that carries the word "education," even preschool education. At the outset, I would like to find out how you feel about it. I never went to nursery school, so I am no expert on this. How many of you went to nursery school? How many of you went to day-care centers? How many of you didn't go to either place? How many of you are sending your children to some kind of preschool education, or day-care center? Not too many, maybe more than I thought.

I'm not really against education, except that I have learned through Head Start and other places that for a lot of people, the longer you are in school, the stupider you become. In most of the big cities it has been shown that if you start school with an I.Q. of 100, by the time you reach the eighth grade your I.Q. may be down to about 85. The Head Start experience has shown us that the alumni of Head Start often have a lot more trouble in the public schools. They won't stand for the public schools after they have seen how good school can be. I have had a lot of trouble understanding medical schools because it took me about ten years to forget all of the baloney I learned in medical school. I would guess that many of you have had the same kind of experience with other professional schools.

Some of you may have heard of Ivan Illich and his theories on education. He and I developed a joint slogan that goes something like this: "Schools are to education as hospitals are to health." They may promote them, they may stand in the way, or they may be totally irrelevant. I'm not against teaching children how to divide and multiply. But I do get a little nervous when the school starts teaching them how to be fruitful and multiply. (Or conversely, how not to be fruitful and multiply.) Also I don't know what it means when we say that 90 percent of a child's education is gained in the first four years. I suppose I agree with that, but maybe it's the other 10 percent of a child's education that really counts. Like the difference between men and women is only supposed to be 5 percent; but you know what the Frenchmen say about that: "Vive la différence!"

We might look at the day-care center movement and the nursery-school movement from a historical perspec-

tive. I will give you my interpretation of it. The institution of day-care centers and nursery schools has risen in this country as the disappearance of the grandfather, grandmother, aunts, cousins, and uncles, from the family circle has increased. As I see the families getting weaker, I see the institutions getting stronger. I'll give you the end of my talk first, in case any of you have to leave in a hurry. The end of it is that as American family life becomes weaker, institutions for children will become stronger. We will see more and more day-care centers.

If you want to look at this from historical perspective, Plato in his *Republic* and *Laws* advocated day-care centers because he claimed that parents weren't really qualified as far as bringing up children were concerned; the state ought to bring them up. I suppose all of you know what happened to ancient Greece. Yet, here we are borrowing from the same source. This means that if you don't learn anything from history, you are destined to repeat it.

I would like to tell you a fairy tale. Here it is. Once upon a time there was a rich country. The country got along pretty well, and people lived as families. There was never such a thing as the "extended" family and the "nuclear" family, since nobody would have understood what those words meant. There were grandparents around, and the grandfather might take the grandchildren out and do the kind of thing that Joan Beck describes. (I have to interrupt myself to tell what a good friend Joan Beck is to us. Some of you may know that there was an article in the *New York Times* by some doctor; Joan Beck called us up the Thursday before it was going to appear in the Sunday *Chicago Tribune* and gave us the opportunity to write an answer which also appeared in the *Tribune* alongside it. It's nice to have friends in high places.) Grandfathers used to take grandchildren and do the kind of thing that Joan Beck described with her child. They used to take them out and play with them.

Unfortunately, things began to change in the country in this fairy tale; the rich men at the top took a look at the profits they were making, and they saw that the profits weren't as big as they would like them to be. One of the reasons why the profits weren't so big is because they had to pay the working men a lot of money. They decided that instead of paying the men all this money, they ought to increase their labor market; the best way to increase the labor market was by making it possible for women to work, because if you have more people applying for the same jobs, you wouldn't have to pay them so much. So they started a campaign with an attempt to brainwash women into believing that they should work and that work was good, even for those who didn't want to. These men either founded or at least encouraged such things as Women's Lib. They encouraged Women's Lib to ask for all kinds of equal rights for women so that women could get paid just as much or *just as little* as men. Furthermore, they would do the same work as men. In a few years, these rich men were able to double the potential supply of workers for their plants. They were then able to cut down the salaries, or at least not raise

them because of all these women who were coming to take jobs. Previously, where a man was able to earn enough to take care of his wife and kids and maybe even support his aging parents, now a man couldn't earn that much anymore; so his wife would have to go to work. Even with his wife working they often couldn't make that much. As soon as the wife went to work, the question came up, what are you going to do with the kids? Thus the day-care-center movement and the nursery-school movement were born.

Now I want to tell you one of the interesting things about this fairy tale. The *rich* folks didn't send their kids to the nursery school, and they didn't send their kids to the day-care centers. I'll know that day-care centers are good as soon as I see all the rich folks sending their kids. Until I see that, I'm suspicious of them without even visiting them. The next thing that the rich people did was to hire a bunch of professionals such as pediatricians and educators and psychologists, and they got them to believe that day-care centers and nursery schools could be good. They concocted whole philosophies of educational development, so-called "preschool education." Nobody really knows whether it is any good, especially since most of you in this room managed to grow up without it. I don't know how you feel about it, but if I like myself, I want my kids to grow up a little bit like me. If I don't like myself, then I want to do something different with them. If I want my kids to grow up like me and I didn't go to a nursery school, I'm not so sure that I want my kids to go to a nursery school. There may be something wrong with that kind of reasoning, but I will leave that up to your judgment. The professional experts did manage to develop some good nursery schools and day-care centers. About 5 percent of them are good, so that we can point and say, see, you can really run a good place. They almost never let the parents control any of these centers. I find practically none that have parent boards where the parents can hire and fire the teachers. These 5 percent provide some kind of image that you can publicize on the front pages of the newspaper and convince the population that something is being done.

Well, what is the end of the story? If my predictive capabilities are accurate, I see the day-care-center movement and the nursery-school movement as increasing in scope every year. I predict that more government money will be spent, more private money will be spent, and more of you will be under pressure of one kind or another, from your neighbors, psychologically, not to deprive your children of that experience. I predict that we will see a continuing weakening of the American family. We will see a continued strengthening of the Women's Lib kind of attitude, and we will see the rich folks at the top sitting and rubbing their hands with glee as their supply of available cheap labor continues to increase.

Now there is another way it can go, and I think the other way depends to a great extent on what happens in this room today, and what all of us decide to do. What you can do is to turn this thing around, so that we can maybe get back on the track where we were forty years

ago. Where men made enough money so their wives didn't have to go to work. Where even grandparents were able to be taken care of by the man's salary. Maybe we can even go further than that and borrow an example from Europe, where mothers are considered to be worth something and are given children's allowances. We don't really know how many women *want* to go to work; the only way that we can really find out is to pay a woman as much for staying at home as we pay her for going to work. Now, I think that those are the choices that we face. That's the context in which I see the entire field of preschool education. I will be very interested in the comments that you have to make, and I would like to say that it is a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to meet with all of you lovely people who I think represent the real future of our country, and I think of our Western civilization.

MRS. TOMPSON: Thank you, Dr. Mendelsohn. You can see why we feel so lucky to have him. And now we have some questions. Here's one for Nancy Stanton. Do you feel that the LLL philosophy parallels Maria Montessori's feelings about children?

MRS. STANTON: Let me collect my thoughts a bit. I think if you've ever read some of her books, for instance, *The Secret of Childhood*, you'll agree it is a beautiful insight into the workings and the needs of a little child, and I can't see that it conflicts in any way with League philosophy. Dr. Montessori starts at the beginning with the birth and with a lovely description of how it should be. That certainly does parallel the League, and this is why perhaps so many of us have "graduated," so to speak, from League philosophy into Montessori when our children begin to wean. I know there are many other very good educators—Piaget, Bruner, Holt to name a few, and it's important to learn about the different educators and the contributions they have made.

You do have to be aware of the fact that some people are trying to capitalize on the fact that some parents will put their children in any school with a Montessori shingle hanging outside without investigating first. In Florida there are few restrictions on those who wish to open schools, and sadly the children are the ones who suffer. We used to ask Dr. Caspari, "How do you know a good school?"—"Well, you watch your child," she said, "just like in *La Leche*." Naturally, you investigate first. Hopefully you don't make a mistake.

MRS. TOMPSON: This mother says the only nursery school available in her community is very regimented, and she wasn't planning to send her child there, but since she is very disorganized herself, she wondered if a little regimentation might be good for the child.

MRS. STANTON: Well, let me tell you that my nickname is "Spacy Nancy," and I understand the problem. But I would say, considering the brief description that you have given of this nursery school, that no matter how disorganized you are at home, you are probably

better off keeping your child at home and looking into what you can do. Maybe you could spend just ten minutes a day at a special activity. I'm a great believer in teaching your own children to read (not at age two particularly). Our culture expects the child to read, and he will feel very confident when he learns to read. Almost every mother is capable of teaching on a one-to-one basis. Think of all the other wonderful things he's learned from you. How to brush his teeth, feed himself, and so on. Reading opens up a whole new world, and he will have *you* to thank. There are several books titled or subtitled "Montessori in the Home."\* Certainly some feel the cost of Montessori equipment to be a problem. But there are so many, many things that are already in your home. Some guidelines through a book like *Secret of Childhood*, which does have a beautiful insight into the stages of development of children, and a few extra minutes for preparing some things for the child to work on at home, will help immensely.

Our homes are made adult-size, and this is probably one of the biggest problems that we have with our little ones, because they are forced to work with gigantic kinds of furniture and equipment. Just read a few books and be aware of what you can do with the things that you already have in your home.

**QUESTION:** I would like to ask Nancy what she feels about the Montessori school setup in that children have to be away five days a week. There are a number of mothers who have three-year-olds and who are very interested in this type of schooling and feel that it offers some advantages, but are concerned about having their children separated from them five days a week.

**MRS. STANTON:** The best reason I have been able to ascertain for the five-day week is the cost of setting up the very expensive equipment and the cost of training the teachers, so it just becomes a matter of not making ends meet unless the children pay for a five-day-a-week program. If a school says you must send your child five days for continuity or something like that, I would have to disagree, because the continuity is there in the environment anyway. So, hopefully, you can afford to be flexible with your own child. It's true that if you choose to send your child only three days a week, you may have to pay for five days. This is unfortunate.

I think many of the really dedicated, very fine teachers that I know in this field feel that they have prepared such a beautiful and exciting environment for the children that they would *want* to come five days a week. Again, what can you say? It depends on the child, really. There was another question along those lines. Say you have a very intelligent child (which most of us think all of our children are). Will you create a superchild, if he has all this fantastic intellectual and sensorial stimulation? I have never seen a case of a child coming from a

\*Two excellent booklets are:

*More Than Sandpaper Letters: Montessori in the Home*, by Doma Petrutis, 50¢. General concepts of mothering. *Montessori in the Home*, \$1.25. "How-to" by a group of mothers. Both available from La Leche League International (add 25¢ postage and handling for one booklet, 30¢ for two).

loving, stable home, who has been in a good school, have this happen to his detriment. But there could be problems if he does not go on to a good educational situation. This doesn't mean to say "just forget any kind of preschool education because it is all a big washout when he gets into first grade anyway." Hopefully you would have a choice of finding a good sensitive teacher even when a child gets into public school. I just hope that you will all keep up with your children; don't just turn them over to the public school system, because I find that constant communication with the child's teachers even within the public school help us help him grow.

**QUESTION:** Much money is spent in Arizona in preschool education for Mexican children. Arguments are that Mexican-American children must have this to catch up. What do you think of tax-paid preschools for minority groups only?

**DR. MENDELSON:** First of all, I wonder if I could respond to that question about regimentation. You can tell from the way that I talk that I am more disorganized than practically anybody sitting in this room. Is disorganization bad? How many think it is better to be organized? Let's take a vote. [Audience response indicates that it's better.] Well, maybe, I'm not convinced.

Let me say something about the children of the poor. One of the things that happens when Mexican and other Spanish-speaking kids go to school, especially preschool, is that the people who are in the preschool try to "acculturate" them. I used to think that "acculturation" was a good thing because it meant that you were getting used to something. I didn't know at that time that acculturation means that something is being taken away from you. What do they do with Spanish-American kids, or with Navajo Indian kids? They punish them for speaking their native tongue. For example, if a Navajo kid goes to school and he speaks a word in his Indian tongue, he has to throw some money into a fine box. If he says enough Indian words, the punishment is more severe than that. I don't know how many of you come from foreign parentage, and how many of you are able to speak foreign languages. I do hope that if you are able to speak a foreign language you speak it at home. Let your kid learn English when he gets to school, if at all. These days nobody knows what language will come in handy later on.

I've got a lot of reservations about preschool education for minority children when the teachers belong to the majority culture. We now know that one of the recipes for making kids stupid goes something like this: An experiment was done at Harvard some years ago where they measured the I.Q.'s of the kids, and then they lied to the teachers. They told them that some kids were stupid and some kids were smart—and you know how it worked out at the end of the year? The students performed according to the expectations of the teachers. This is called the self-fulfilling prophecy. Middle-class teachers come into the schools of the poor with a bias at the outset because all of us "know" that poor people

are stupid, otherwise why would they be poor? That's the American philosophy. If you come in with that feeling, you can take a group of perfectly normal poor children and you can make them really retarded by the end of just a few months of training.

So, as far as I can tell now, I would be willing to have preschool education for the poor under these conditions: (1) All the teachers should come from that community, regardless of whether or not they have credentials. I don't pay much attention to credentials these days, whether they are medical or educational or anything else. (2) The parents should have the right to approve the budget and to hire and fire teachers. Under those circumstances, I am in favor of it. Since I hardly ever see that kind of school with the poor people, I don't end up being in favor of very many schools.

**QUESTION:** (for Joan Beck): Do you feel cooperative preschools are a good idea? That is, mothers helping out in the schools. Do they get too involved with their own children?

**JOAN BECK:** I'm frankly kind of surprised that anybody in this group would ask that last question. I don't think you *can* get too involved with your own child—that's what motherhood is all about. I think cooperative nursery schools, like those on any other level, depend very much on how they work, who's involved, what philosophy they use, what is really happening there. I don't think that you can give a categorical "yes" or "no." But, in general, I think that is the way we should go. We need to get away from the expert that comes in and tells us what to do. In the first place, there isn't that much good sound honest knowledge available about preschool kids. I started covering this beat as a journalist, not knowing very much about kids except my own experiences with my own children, which certainly aren't relevant except in a very small way to other people's experience. I started out trying to learn everything I could from the experts. I read all the scientific journals, and I even checked their references, and pretty soon the whole thing just sort of evaporated. There isn't any real knowledge in this field. Dr. Burton White at Harvard (he knows more about it than most people do) says we know a hundred times more about raising cows than kids. I think a cooperative group of parents is a great thing, and I think that if they have the time and interest, it's a great way to run a nursery school.

There are some interesting models that have been developing in Chicago along these lines. They are for very poor people, but I don't see any reason why middle-class people who aren't so poor can't have them too. This is a day-care center run for kids *and* mothers. They come between 10:30 and 2:30, and there are teachers there who are young mothers who have simply been exposed to some of the ideas of what children need during their early years of life. The mother has a chance to learn how to sew, learn how to cook, learn anything she wants to, and also take care of her children and other children. There is a great wealth of interesting activities

there for the child, but the mother and child learn together and work together with other young mothers. Very much the same sort of thing that you are doing. They support each other, they exchange ideas. You are *not* having a bunch of middle-class mothers coming and taking over the children of other economic groups and saying "Our way is best." They are simply exposing mothers to some new ideas. These are mothers between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, most of whom are not part of ongoing families. They are simply stuck in housing projects, many of them by themselves with two or three little kids. Many of them are at an age where they need some mothering themselves, because they are only sixteen or seventeen. You simply give a mother an idea, like "what makes the child happy is a new sensory experience, or something to do." If you look around the room today, you will see that the children who are happy are the ones who are either being breastfed at the moment, or who have something interesting to do. The ones who are not happy are the ones who are either hungry (but I don't think that any of your children would be hungry) or who have simply exhausted the sensory input that is available to them in this particular area.

If you tune a mother into this simple idea of what makes a child happy, you have opened the way for her to give her child an enormous wealth of educational material. You simply tell her it's important to make him happy, and that when he is happy, she is happy. And this is the essence of what she needs to know for the first six years of the child's life. If you give her a few hints like what you can do with pots and pans, or two blocks, or the things that you see in the room today, she has a wealth of ideas for giving her child the intellectual stimulation that he needs. Too often in many minority homes (and I use this word very loosely—you can substitute any word you want) parents simply don't know this. They think that child care consists of discipline and teaching the child to obey, and the child is told to shut up. This does have a deadening effect on his intellectual development. Centers like the one I was describing I think are a good model for helping minority groups who need help in a way that is consistent with strengthening the mother-child relationship and preserving the values that are in the minority culture.

**DR. MENDELSON:** I would like to add a comment to that, because Joan is referring to something that is very dear to my heart. I have watched a number of these parent-child centers over the years, and some are really great. The mothers go with the kids. There are sewing machines there, and the mothers learn how to pick up skills that they never had before. As a matter of fact, many of them learn from each other rather than from the people we hire to teach them. The mothers learn how to cook, and they have a good time. Then you and I come in to the picture (you and I of the great middle-class), and we take a look at the parent-child center. We find out that it is costing two thousand dollars a year to have a kid in there, and we say, "If we have the children there, their mothers ought to be out working." The first thing you know, the appro-

priation begins to be whittled away. Occasionally I visit these places as a consultant. One of the mothers was very perceptive at one place I went to in Minnesota. At the end of my visit she said, "Well, what have you done for us?" I said, "I don't know. Tell me what you think." She said, "Well, I'll tell you what we really need here. We mothers come here three times a week, and that means that we haven't got time to wash and dry our clothes at home, and so what we would like is a washer and dryer in the center. Would you tell your people in Washington to substitute for your next visit a washer and dryer." I thought that was a pretty good idea. I went ahead and made that recommendation, so now I think I am no longer a consultant.

I hope that these parent-child centers will grow and multiply. I think that you can take any program and make it good, and you can take any program and make it bad. It all depends on your motives.

QUESTION: Can't our schools be used for family education?

DR. MENDELSON: Well, I suppose they could be. You are already indicating that they are not. My answer is that I would love to see this kind of stuff taught in the schools, as long as all you people were doing the teaching.

One of the best things would be if we ever decided in this country to take advantage of the foster-grandparent program—to pay old people for coming in and taking care of young kids. That was begun, you know, in the 1960's; however, the program is now being cut back, I presume because it was so successful.

MRS. TOMPSON: Here is a kind of question that I think a lot of mothers have. Some people say that the three-year-old's interest in his peers shows that the preschool has something to offer him. Others say that *my* three-year-old, who doesn't want to go and play with other children, but prefers to play and interact with me, his mother, needs to go to preschool to *learn* to play with his peers. Do you wait until a child wants to play with peers, or does playing make him want to?

MRS. STANTON: I have thought about this. Some parents feel that if their child has few children to play with he will in some way grow up antisocial. I do not believe this. It's true that many times you will see a child perhaps acting antisocially toward another child. His mother will say, "Well, he has never had a chance to play with anyone else." I do not believe this is always the reason. Some children are just a little more aggressive than others. I don't think that you need to be terribly concerned that having few playmates to interact with at age three will make him antisocial in any way. Surely, unless you live in an absolutely totally isolated area, sometime he will come in contact with some little people. I'm sure he will socialize in his own way if he has loving parents to pattern after. So I don't think this need be your primary concern if you are happy with

him at home and he occasionally sees other children.

DR. MENDELSON: I apologize for monopolizing the microphone. But does the person who asks that question really think that there is anybody up here who knows the answer? I have to give you more credit than that. We don't know the answers to most of these questions. How would we be able to scientifically determine the answer to a question like that, or similar ones? Mothers ask me "Should my child stay in a playpen, or should we let him roam free?" As a pediatrician I have given such mothers an answer—whatever comes off the top of my head, although I don't do that very much anymore. How would I find out the scientific answer to that? Well, I would have to take a hundred thousand kids and put fifty thousand in playpens and leave the other fifty thousand out, and I would have to follow them for fifty or sixty years. Then I would have to determine which ones turned out better, and I don't know what "better" is anyway. Then some other scientist would come along and say, "Oh, you're crazy, the whole study has to be repeated." You know that's the way this whole business is with behavioral scientists. I hate to disappoint anybody, but we don't have the answers to most of these questions. Do whatever seems right; and if I can give you one other piece of advice—don't worry if you are not consistent.

JOAN BECK: You're not a mother, Dr. Mendelsohn, and I'll tell you how to find the answer while you're counting your hundred thousand kids. Look at your own baby; you know the answer already. You know what makes him happy, you know what he needs, you can tell whether he is hungry now, you can tell whether he is sleepy now. You know these things because you look at him and you use your mind and you see what you do that lets him go the way that you can tell his natural growth is. The same thing is true when he is three and four. Look at him first, before you go and read all the theories and listen to the experts and read the newspaper columns. Don't ever pick up anybody's theory on child care without looking at your own child first.

If a mother and child are getting on each other's nerves, if the mother is feeling tied down, if she can't stand this kid twenty-four hours a day every day, or if he is reacting that way to her (because he will probably a lot sooner than she will), then she needs to find a playmate or two for him. But if they are perfectly happy, if they are relaxed, if they are comfortable with each other, if the child is growing, and learning, and developing, then she's got no problem. She can tell whether or not she has a problem.

However, I don't think it is good for a three-year-old *never* to see another small child, and I think that there are situations where this does occur. A child is at a very unequal relationship with his mother, with an adult, all the time. Someone who is always bigger, and better, and stronger, and more dominant than he is. He needs to be with children who are smaller. It is important, I think, that you find this relationship somewhere, because the dependent-child relationship with the mother is not

enough totally year after year after year. It is perfect at the beginning, but you need to gradually expose him to other types of interaction and other types of development, and it's best, of course, if you can do it naturally and easily in the community in which you live.

**QUESTION:** How can medical schools be influenced to put emphasis on breastfeeding? Are there any avenues available to educate those who are in medical school?

**DR. MENDELSON:** Well, the answer is "no." There are a couple of little activities on the fringes. Some of the LLL leaders every once in a while talk to medical-school classes, and some of us who are on the Professional Advisory Board have occasional opportunities, but by and large nothing can be done with the medical schools. For a long time to come, nothing will be done. Therefore, some of us are exploring other opportunities. Your League Executive Board is now preparing a compilation of doctors sympathetic to breastfeeding and knowledgeable about it. I would like to see us get a couple of hundred or a couple of thousand such doctors on our list, and then you could leave the rest of them alone. Then we'll know who's with us, and who can give you proper advice on how to bring up your kids, and also who's practicing better medicine. If a doctor doesn't know anything about infant feeding, I am not so sure how much he knows about anything else.

What can you do with medical schools and hospitals? First thing you can do is to try to stay out of 'em. A hospital is like a war. You should try not to get into it, and if you get into it, you should try to get out as soon as you can.

**QUESTION:** Is there any type of preschool education available to help a child with a learning disability, such as the inability to concentrate, who cannot learn in a normal way?

**DR. MENDELSON:** I don't know exactly what a learning disability is. I used to know; in fact I even used to teach about it. So, if you had heard me four or five years ago, you would have known that I knew what a learning disability was. I am now pretty well convinced that a learning disability is something that we professionals make up, particularly if we profit from it. If I am in special education, it's to my interest to have as many kids with learning disabilities as possible.

**JOAN BECK:** Since you have already done such a good job of putting down doctors, Dr. Mendelsohn, and the focus of this meeting seems to be that maybe mother knows better anyway, I would like to take exception to what you said about learning disabilities, which is an argument we have both argued before.

I have been working with parents who think that they know what learning disabilities are for about ten years, and have been trying with varied success to convince doctors that there *is* something wrong with these kids. I am very much on the parents' side on this question. What mothers are saying and trying to convince doctors

of is that there is something wrong with this kid that makes him different in a major and important way from the normal kid. If you have a kid like this—if you know enough about other children to have a basis for comparison and you've read some books, and you think there is really something wrong with this child—then I would urge you to get in touch with one of the parents' groups, because here again the parents' groups are way ahead of most of the professionals in this field. (Stop giggling, Dr. Mendelsohn, I'm not attacking you personally, this is in general.) What a learning disability really is I think is a mild form of neurological injury, or difference, or abnormality, or malformation, or any of the weasel words that we have to use when we really don't know what we are talking about. It is probably in some cases a minimal form of cerebral palsy and minimal mental retardation, a minimal kind of brain injury, perhaps an undiscovered inborn error in metabolism. There are lots of vague possible causes for this sort of thing; but what we are really saying is that this child is not behaving within the range of normal for some physical reason. By that definition, then he does need help. The basic problem is to find some way of getting learning into this kid's head by a way that will work. If he can't learn because there is something wrong with his eyes, or the visual centers of his brain, then you have to up his auditory input, his kinetic input.

If you have a child that really has a serious learning disability, then you need to find a neurological diagnostic center, because this is where you will find the doctors that *do* understand the problem, or at least have some clues as to what it might be and how it can be helped. In most areas the parents' groups are particularly well informed on where to get such help, and that is why I urge you to get in touch with one of them first.

**DR. MENDELSON:** Well, you know, sometimes I get so flippant that I miss my point, and that is what happened to me today; so I beg everybody's pardon, because of course I agree with practically everything that Joan has said. As a matter of fact, I want to extend it: learning disabilities and perceptual handicaps are getting more and more common in our society. In addition to the causes that she has mentioned, the primary cause among poor people is malnutrition. Learning disabilities and perceptual handicaps among us middle class and among the rich may come from other causes, such as too much analgesia and anesthesia during childbirth. I completely agree with the recommendation that if you want to find a knowledgeable doctor, go through other parents, just as you do in LLL. You can't trust most physicians on learning disorders, especially when they prescribe drugs, because most of the information we pick up in medical school on learning disorders is just about as good as the information we pick up on breastfeeding. I think that it might be worthwhile at some of our future meetings to schedule a session on learning disorders, because I think this is becoming an increasingly important problem, particularly for members of the League who are interested in alternative forms of childbirth. Breast-

feeding and a proper mother/child relationship may help avoid developmental defects and compensate for children who have some kind of inborn disturbance.

QUESTION: Who decides what's normal for a child, as far as learning disabilities are concerned?

DR. MENDELSON: The reason why that question is so hard is that all of us know that Churchill didn't get through high school, and Einstein couldn't pass mathematics. So, who's to decide? That is why I am so concerned. The educators set up standards and we have to be careful because in the lockstep system of modern education everybody is supposed to do the same thing. [Comment from the audience: I know a child who supposedly has a learning disability. But he excels in many, many areas that our children don't in the least and I wonder, isn't he normal really?] You know, all of us share what you are saying. If only we could learn to emphasize the assets we have instead of our deficiencies. How many of you have had the experience of reading a psychologist's report? It almost always begins by telling you what the child cannot do. The mother however, always starts out by telling you what the child *can* do. I have to make a choice. In my present state of knowledge (contrasted to what I believe was my former state of confusion) I now choose mothers over professionals. So if a mother tells me her kid is normal, I believe her.

QUESTION: What are your feelings about the Doman-Delacato method of patterning?

JOAN BECK: I have wrestled with that question since 1964, and I still don't know the answer. I think the area of learning disabilities is a great elephant, with the blind people all fumbling, and I think they all have hold of a different part of the elephant. I have followed dozens of children, some of whom have made great gains on the

program, which they might or might not have made without it. I have also followed a large number of children who have not made any gains on the program. I know others who have felt that it has been the salvation not only of the child but of the parent. I know of no way now to prove scientifically whether or not this is a good program. I think it is impossible to prove, as Dr. M. indicated, exactly what learning disabilities are; it's impossible to prove what the normal growth of a child would be with or without the influences of the environment that impinge on him. So I know of no way to answer that question, and I don't know of anybody who does know an answer to it. I know a lot of people who have a great deal of emotional investment in either condemning or promoting it. It's too bad that it got to be this way, and that's the best honest answer that I can give you.

DR. MENDELSON: I have one last story, and I think, Joan, you will be interested in this. About six or seven years ago, I was traveling with my daughter, and we got stuck in Atlanta. The plane came down for some kind of mechanical reason. So, what do you do when you are in Atlanta? I went to visit at the Ebenezer Church with Martin Luther King's father. Since I was interested in preschool education, I asked him what it was like when he and his wife were bringing up their kids. It turns out that every kid in the King family went to nursery school—except Martin Luther King, Jr. The reason why he didn't go was because he learned by himself at a very early age to read books, and he would sit there and read. As his father described it, it didn't make any difference if the whole building was coming down, you couldn't get his nose out of the books.

MRS. TOMPSON: I think I'll go back to Joan Beck's words, "Look to your babies and then make your decision," to bring this panel to a close. Thank you, everybody, for your contributions.