I?S to the NEWS

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FEDERAL CHILD CARE

Walter Mondale has not yet made it clear whether he will use his new prestige as Vice President to push for passage of what used to be called the Brademas-Mondale Child Care bill, or whether he will let sleeping dogs lie.

During the last Congress, this bill was buried under an avalanche of opposition mail. Senator Mondale himself said that it "started down in Oklahoma and Texas, then it came north like the hoof and mouth disease."

The Brademas-Mondale bill was a proposal to spend nearly $2 billion of the taxpayers' money to set up a new bureau in charge of babysitting and child development facilities to be operated by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. A new Federal Office of Child and Family Services would supervise a network of Federal day-care centers for children.

By no means was the Brademas-Mondale bill limited merely to custodial care. It covered the physical, educational, nutritional, social, recreational, psychological, and emotional development of the child, as well as "other such services and activities as the HEW Secretary deems appropriate."

The bill would make child rearing a "partnership" between parents, HEW, and other state and local bureaucrats and organizations that claim they are "interested" in your child. The dictionary defines parent as a "father" or a "mother." The Brademas-Mondale bill, however, defined parent as "any person who has primary
day-to-day responsibility for any child."

The bill was not designed primarily to help the poor and needy. It clearly stated that the program "shall include children from a range of socio-economic backgrounds." This would make the taxpayers pay to care for the preschool children of middle-class and even wealthy mothers who want to evade the so-called burden of caring for their babies.

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There are moral, social, and financial issues involved in the concept of Federal child care. Do we want to transfer the responsibility for the care of preschool children from the family to the Federal Government? Do taxpayers want to pay the cost of a giant Federal babysitting service for all mothers regardless of means? Is it a social good to offer financial inducements to promote an exodus of mothers and babies from the home?

There are certain pressure groups that would answer yes to these questions. Certain branches of the teachers• lobby see Federal child care as the solution to the growing problem of empty classrooms and teacher unemployment caused by the severe decline in the birth rate.

Obviously, if our society can be induced to finance the notion that every child should be put in school or a school substitute at age two or three instead of at age five or six, this would eliminate teacher unemployment.

Another force eager to move babies out of the home into government kiddy-care centers, and mothers out of the home and into the job market, is the consortium of vested interests that always works toward more government spending and control. It is obvious that the American people are now paying all the taxes they are willing to pay.

Where, then, can the government spenders find new sources of revenue to expand their staffs and increase their budgets? The 40 million homemakers offer a tempting source of new tax revenues. When they stay in their homes, care for their own babies, and cook their own meals, no money changes hands.

If these homemakers can be induced to leave their homes and take jobs, thereby having to rely on child-care facilities and to purchase other domestic services (such as packaged foods), the tax collector gets his share and bigger government results.

Whether or not Vice President Mondale renews his personal efforts, the powerful forces lobbying for government child care will not go away.

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