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NEWS

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PARENT-LOCATOR LAW

Congress has finally demonstrated that it can, if it so chooses, crack down on some of the nonsense and waste in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and force the bureaucrats to comply with a sensible program that is beneficial to the needy and takes freeloaders off the backs of the taxpayers.

Ever since our massive welfare system began, government officials have knowingly acquiesced in the fiction that the so-called absent fathers could not be located, and that when a husband or father de serted his wife and children, there was no recourse except to make the taxpayers support the dependents he left behind.

This system amounts to rewarding the absent fathers with a tax-free gift as a consequence of his violating state laws requiring a husband and father to support his wife and children. All these years, HEW forbade the obvious solution -- that is, using the Social Security number to locate the disappearing father in his new job, wherever he may have fled anywhere in the 50 states.

A new law went into effect last month which requires the states to determine the paternity of welfare children, locate the fathers, and collect child support payments. This parent-locator service will have access to most government records, including Social Security, Internal Revenue, FBI, Pentagon, and Veterans Administration.

The new law eliminates bankruptcy as a means of avoiding support payments, and allows Federal salaries and retirement benefits to be garnisheed for support payments. If the father isn't working, the

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support order can even be enforced against his unemployment compen sation check.

To ensure cooperation with the new law, financial inducements are provided both to the welfare mother and to the state welfare program. The Post Office and the Defense Departments are now running neck and neck for the honor of being the Federal agency that has already processed more court orders against its employees who haven't paid child support.

The new law also assists non-welfare women in locating an absent father and enforcing a court order for support. A fee will be charged for this collection service, but it will be much less than the cost of a lawyer. Some people think that HEW may become the busiest missing persons bureau in the world.

Sponsors of the law are predicting that this plan will pay for itself many times over, because of the successful experience of the parent-locator system already in use in California (where it was put into operation by Governor Reagan), and in Massachusetts, Michigan, and Washington. In three years, California has removed about 300,000 persons from welfare rolls and saved more than $100 million. Because the present Aid to Families with Dependent Children program now involves an estimated 1,300,000 absent fathers who provide no child support for their own children, but could pay if the law were en forced, it is estimated that the new Federal law will save the tax-payers $1.3 billion annually.

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