UN Treaty On The Child

September 19, 2001

The Bush Administration properly walked out of the ridiculous United Nations Conference on Racism in South Africa because we didn't care to be insulted (or have our friends insulted) by Fidel Castro and his allies. The Administration should do likewise about the UN Conference on Children in New York starting September 19. (The conference has been postponed because of the September 11 terrorist attack.)
The purpose of this new UN shindig is to drum up support for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, signed in 1995 by Bill Clinton but wisely never ratified by our Senate. It's been a pet project of the cult of people who believe that the village should raise children rather than their parents, including Hillary Clinton and her buddies in the Children's Defense Fund.

If this treaty were proposed as federal legislation, it would be quickly rejected by Congress and the American people. That's because it would give the federal government unacceptably broad new powers over children, families, and schools.

If we wouldn't give such powers to our own government, why in the world would we even talk about granting such powers to a panel of foreign bureaucrats, even if they call themselves "experts"? But that's the purpose of this conference: to give the UN a role in the raising of children.

This treaty purports to give the child the right to express his own views "freely in all matters," to receive information of all kinds through "media of the child's choice," to "freedom of religion," to be protected from "interference with his or her privacy ... or correspondence," to have access to information from national and "international sources," to use his "own language," and to have the right to "rest and leisure."

These are just a few of the dozens of new "rights of the child" scattered throughout the 54 Articles of the UN treaty, which is longer than the U.S. Constitution.

Do we really want to give every child the legal right to say anything he wants to his parents at the dinner table? To watch television ("access to the media") instead of doing homework? To escape household chores because they interfere with his UN right to "rest and leisure"? To join a cult instead of attending his parents' church? To refuse to speak English in our public schools?

Unlike our U.S. Constitution, which only mentions rights that can be enforced against the government, this UN treaty declares rights of the child against parents, the family, private institutions, and society as whole. Since the treaty is a legal document which, if ratified, would become part of the "supreme law of the land," we can expect liberal lawyers to bring test cases to persuade activist judges to push its reach as far as they can.

Current U.S. law prohibits our own federal government from prescribing any school curriculum, but this UN treaty on the Rights of the Child prescribes curricula with meddlesome specificity. It calls for teaching children respect for "the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations," for "the national values of ... civilizations different from his or her own," for "tolerance" and "equality of the sexes," and for "the natural environment."

This UN treaty requires governments, to the "maximum extent of their available resources," to assure the right of every child to an "adequate standard of living," including "nutrition, clothing and housing." Since

these provisions cannot be implemented without money, will the courts require our government to impose new taxes to carry out these treaty obligations?

The treaty would require us to "ensure the development" of child- care institutions, facilities and services. Every child is to be registered at birth, a provision that sounds like a global registry with I.D. cards issued by the UN.

We are not fooled by the treaty's use of abortion euphemisms such as "her right of access to health care services," "preventive health care," "family planning education and services," "reproductive health services," and "privacy." Another treaty right, "equality of the sexes," has been repeatedly used by the feminists in U.S. courts to require states to pay for Medicaid abortions.

Of course, all these far-reaching UN Treaty goals would not be complete without the establishment of a new international bureaucracy and mechanism of control, so Article 43 sets up a committee of ten so-called "experts." There is no assurance that any American will be on this committee, or that even one expert will be sensitive to American institutions and traditions.

Nothing proves the hypocrisy of this treaty more than the repeated taunts that every nation has ratified it except the United States and Somalia. Countries have already ratified it that regularly engage in child labor, slavery, mutilation, and selling girls and boys into prostitution, and we don't want to join their club.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a bad deal for Americans on every count, and Administration spokesmen should make it clear at the New York conference that the U.S. will never ratify it.