

Bush applies 'Chinese model' to welfare

by Kathleen Klenetsky

In the midst of a depression, when welfare rolls are skyrocketing because millions of people have been thrown out of work and can't find new jobs, George Bush has decided to make "welfare reform" a central theme of his reelection campaign. Pandering blatantly to the intensifying racial and economic tensions spawned by the collapsing economy, Bush is promoting welfare programs that are specifically designed to cut the number of children born to welfare mothers.

On April 14, Bush staged several widely publicized media events, including a press conference and a radio address, in which he touted his decision to waive federal regulations to allow an experimental Wisconsin welfare plan to be put into effect. Wisconsin has already slashed its welfare rolls by 44,000 in the past five years, and the new initiative is aimed at bringing down the rolls even more drastically.

Initiated by Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson, the Parental and Family Responsibility Initiative is being sold as encouraging "family values" and "responsibility" on the spurious grounds that it permits married couples to receive AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), and to earn up to \$14,000 a year without losing benefits. But the core of the program is a mandatory cap on AFDC benefits to welfare recipients who dare to have more than one child. Said one critic of the plan: "You know, this isn't much different from the Chinese 'one-family, one-child program.' They might not yet be forcing abortions, but that's not far down the road."

The Bush-approved program would give only a half-benefit to the second child born to a welfare recipient, and none at all to any additional children. Under the plan, a woman with one child would receive \$440 a month (hardly a princely sum). However, payment would be capped at \$479 for this person, no matter how many additional children she might have.

An AFDC mother with one child who marries could see her grant increase by \$77 a month to \$517. But to qualify, the husband must participate in a jobs program or complete school, and so must the mother if the child is above age 2. The couple must also participate in sex education classes, obviously to learn contraception.

Bush not only gave his blessing to the program, but held

it up as a model for other states to follow. "It'll be a good example for the rest of the country," Bush said during a picture-taking session with Governor Thompson and Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan. "States often act as laboratories for innovation." The President added, "Nowhere is the need [for reform] more apparent than in our nation's welfare system. . . . Our current system allows welfare to be a way of life. We must try new ways to get welfare to yield to work."

Aside from the fact that it penalizes innocent children, the program has raised well-grounded concerns that it could force welfare recipients to undergo abortions out of fear that they would not be able to feed any more offspring. But Bush—who claims to be "pro-life" because he dropped his zealous advocacy of abortion when he decided to run for the presidency in 1980—dismissed these concerns when questioned on them at his press conference.

Asked if the plan wouldn't encourage abortions, Bush tossed the question off with the remark: "I haven't heard that allegation about the Wisconsin plan. What I say, is to let them try it . . . and see if it works to strengthen families and to break the cycle of dependency on welfare."

At a separate briefing, Health and Human Services Secretary Sullivan claimed that the program would encourage "family planning," not abortion.

Not enough jobs

The program has also been criticized because it fails utterly to address the real causes of the welfare crisis: There are too few decent jobs available. "All of these reforms presuppose that there are enough jobs out there for people, jobs that are going to pay a living wage," noted Milwaukee's Roman Catholic Archbishop, Rembert Weakland, in an ABC television interview April 12: "And I'm just simply saying those jobs aren't there."

The Wisconsin program is part of an ominous nationwide trend that seeks to control the growth in welfare by dropping people from the rolls completely, as in Michigan, where 88,000 people were cut off from general relief this past winter; and by reducing benefits to children. Wisconsin is not the only state to push through programs targeting children; New Jersey put one on the books late last year, and California state officials recently decided to offer Norplant birth control implants to welfare recipients at virtually no cost.

That Bush should put himself in the vanguard of this movement should come as no surprise to those familiar with his background. As *EIR* documented in 1991, Bush has a long history of backing overtly genocidal population control programs; during his years in Congress, he played such a pivotal role in promoting such measures as setting up "family-planning" clinics in low-income areas, making population control a central element of U.S. foreign policy, and encouraging the view that blacks are intellectually inferior to whites, that he earned the nickname "Rubbers."