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Edwin L. Harper Assistant to the President for Policy Development (x6515)

The Hearleje

Working-Couple Parents And Their Order of Priorities Set the Army's Brass to Worrying

A good deal has been written lately about the rising number of families with a single parent or with two parents who work. Among those who have taken note of the trend is the Army, which is worried that in the event of a war or national emergency, these parents will place their family responsibilities above

their Army duties.

The Army has already restricted the enlistment of single parents or a parent whose spouse already works in the Army and has considered restricting future assignments and reenlistments as well. But the General Accounting Office says that's a bad idea. "The Army lacks a solid basis" for taking such actions, it said in a recent study. It surveyed first-line supervisors and found that, while some problems exist, most of the parents in those situations have performed satisfactorily. In a letter to the GAO, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary William D. Clark criticized the survey for focusing on the quality of the performance of these parents, rather than on their "deployability," which he says are two different issues. Clark said the Army will continue "on a caseby-case basis" to discharge "those who are unable to perform their prescribed duties due to parenthood."

FOOD BANK DEPOSIT... The Agriculture Department has long struggled with the question of what to do with the surplus dry milk, butter and cheese it holds. Since last winter's popular cheese giveaway, the USDA has been experimenting with the idea of giving some of the food to food banks, or local charities that provide food to needy people during emergencies. USDA is testing the program in Worcester, Mass., Kansas City, Mo., Albuquerque, Nashville, Indianapolis, Santa Clara, Calif., and Pittsburgh. USDA plans to evaluate the program and submit recommendations to Congress in 1984.

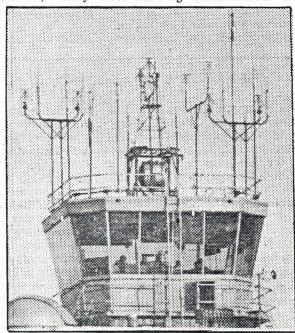
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SOLAR BANK UPDATE . . . Earlier this year, a coalition of energy conservation groups filed suit to force the Reagan administration to distribute \$21.85 million that Congress had appropriated for the Solar Bank. The bank was created within the Housing and Urban Development Department in 1980 to provide low-interest loans for solar and energy conservation work, but no money has ever been disbursed. But in June, the court ordered HUD to distribute the funds as quickly as possible. HUD recently asked states to submit proposals for the program, saying it will target money to states that submit "innovative proposals." They are due by Oct. 15.

David Moulton, policy director of the Energy Conservation Coalition, said, "We're extremely pleased that HUD is proceeding, that's the fundamental point." But he criticized HUD for prohibiting grants for "active" solar systems, such as installing solar panels. (HUD argued that the grants are supposed to go to low-income families who can probably only afford energy conservation methods such as installing more insulation and caulking.) Moulton also noted that HUD plans to forbid states from using more than 2 percent of the funds for administrative costs, which he said "could have a chilling effect" on the financially strapped states. And he said cities, as well as states, should be allowed to apply.

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JUST LIKE THE GOOD OL' DAYS...Last year's air traffic controllers' strike closed 80 airport towers, mainly those handling noncommercial or



commuter traffic. Now the Federal Aviation Administration is reopening 26 of those towers, and nearly half are expected to be reopened by early January, according to FAA spokesman Fred Farrar. Some will be closed permanently, although a final decision on that has not been made.

The first towers were reopened when the first group of new controllers completed their training. Another 11 towers will be restaffed over the next four months, the FAA said. Local or state authorities have already taken over the tower responsibilities at four airports in Oklahoma, New Mexico and Kentucky, while a nearby military installation took over a tower in Maine.

— Sandra Sugawara