

# Failures Reflect Family Life's Decline

**I**N DISCUSSING problems and shortcomings of public education recently, Dr. Dale Mullins, dean of the school of education at Central State University, made an observation that touches on many of our troubles.

"It's easy teaching children who come from homes where education and learning are valued," Dr. Mullins said. "Trying to teach youngsters without these incentives is a monumental task."

Homes aren't solely to blame for failures in education, but obviously poor home life is a major cause. American home life is on the downgrade because of declining moral values, disregard of marriage bonds, lack of personal cultural interests, and a widespread notion that freedom includes authorization to disregard rights of others.

The transient nature of many homes is not conducive to transmission of permanent values and standards from parents to children.

The family meal, where private matters, public interests and cultural activities were discussed, is be-

coming a thing of the past.

Statistics show that more divorce petitions were filed in Oklahoma County last year than marriage license applications. Mere numbers do not describe the insecurity and bewilderment that children of divorced parents may experience as they try to adjust to new family situations, different households, and possibly new schools.

For some these experiences may occur several times while growing up, and brutality may be substituted for loving discipline.

Sexual permissiveness of parents or observable immorality of other adults, along with habitual use of alcohol or drugs, frequently lead children to experiment.

No data is available on how many girls become pregnant by boys they hardly know and for whom there may be no real affection. When children begin to have children, neither abortion, abandonment nor marriage is a satisfactory solution. Young parents still need education.

Movie stars, politicians, athletes and other so-called heroes are tell-

ing our children day after day that it is an acceptable way of life for unmarried couples to live together. This practice further deteriorates family life.

Disintegration of urban neighborhoods has been accelerated by bus-ing pupils across town to obtain racial balance in schools. This has reduced parents' interest in schools and undoubtedly increased children's feelings of instability.

Education and learning seldom are highly valued in unstable homes. Thus, the decline in family life may be suspected as a major cause of both learning and discipline problems in public schools.

A family argument might be preferable to an evening in which members see each other only briefly as they grab for snacks before rushing out to separate activities or to stare mutely at television.

At least, the family might develop a feeling of need for unity and better relationships while arguing. Members might even discover what is wrong with family life — and with America!