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We Are Cheating Our Children If...

CHILD ABUSE is a widespread problem but many parents who would never think of physically mistreating their children are cheating them.

We are cheating our children if they are pushed or dragged through school without learning to read, write and figure and learning to enjoy them. We are cheating our children if we fail to teach them their responsibilities as citizens and train them to grasp career opportunities that will enable them to become self-supporting.

We are cheating our children because child labor laws and lack of household duties may prevent them from learning good work habits while young. Many are cheated out of jobs because of their lack of experience and minimum wage laws discourage employers from hiring them. Children don't learn to work while watching TV or playing games.

Idleness and lack of worthwhile projects tends to lure youngsters into street gangs, which may indulge in stealing and purse snatching, bad habits or more serious criminal

acts. Police say a number of such gangs ranging in age from 8 to 14 years are operating in Oklahoma City.

We are cheating our children when they are continually exposed to "entertainment" rated "AFFF" — meaning "ain't fit for anybody." We may deplore increasing numbers of teen-age pregnancies but youngsters cannot be expected to cope with the parade of nudity, adultery, crime, drinking and perversion they see in print, in movies and on TV.

We are cheating our children when we fail to teach them that sports and movie stars featured in beer, liquor and tobacco ads are not being heroic when advocating these vices. We are cheating our children if we fail to tell them about the real heroes of life.

We are cheating our children if we give them the impression that bad habits become acceptable at any age. The legislature "chickened out" on setting a new legal drinking age but that doesn't matter. Adult examples before them are much more enforceable influences.

The legislature set 18 as the mini-

mum age for gambling at state-authorized race tracks. That doesn't matter, either, because voters put their stamp of approval on this addictive vice last November and even 10-year-olds know it.

We are cheating children if we fail to teach them traditional values of the American way and how socialism leads to less freedom and fewer opportunities.

We are cheating our children if we fail to bring them up with faith in God and educate them in honesty, morality and thrift.

We may be cheating our children if both parents are working in order to provide more comforts and conveniences while depriving them of close association as loving parents and as families.

We are cheating our children if we give them the impression that money and licentious amusements are the ultimate ends in life. Money is necessary and wholesome recreation is desirable but the satisfactions of true love and a good life are more valuable.

Children need not be poor in order to be underprivileged.