

Chapter excerpt from "Overwhelmed: Work, love and play when nobody has the time"^[1]

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Excerpt:

Pat Buchanan greets me jovially at the front door of his big white house nestled in the woods off a winding lane in Northern Virginia, not far from the CIA. As a reporter, I covered Buchanan's populist campaign for president in 1996 and rode with him through the South as he vowed to take on the Republican establishment like an angry peasant. He'd dubbed his campaign bus "the Pitchfork Express." He is seventy-three now and a little grayer. But I am struck by how little he has changed.

The conservative firebrand had recently been fired from MSNBC after executives there said his latest book—which included a chapter entitled "The End of White America"—reflected an America of the 1940s, not the twenty-first century. But I have sought him out for a very different reason. In the early 1970s, Buchanan orchestrated a campaign that overrode Congress, ignored polls showing strong public support, and so utterly obliterated a bill that would have created a high-quality universal child-care system in America that in forty years, the very idea has never surfaced for discussion again. Ever.

The veto of the child-care bill set the stage for all subsequent U.S. family policy. Or really, the fact that other than a few targeted programs to help the very poor, there is no U.S. family policy that could help ease the overwhelm for working families. Instead, the United States ranks dead last on virtually every measure of family policy in the world. Unlike countries with high-quality, government-supported child care, the United States has nothing of the kind. It is one of only 4 of 167 countries in the world with no paid leave for parents—the others are Lesotho, Papua New Guinea, and Swaziland. Saudi Arabia, where women aren't allowed to drive, offers paid parental leave. China, India, Brazil, Mongolia, and Haiti offer paid parental leave. Togo and Zimbabwe pay 100 percent of a woman's earnings for 14 weeks.

- Reprinted from the Weekly Wonk

Related link: Know Thy History: Almost a national child care program - US, 1971 & Canada, 2006^[2]

Region: United States^[3]

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