

**Speech contest for the UN conference '04**

**Theme:** Looking at experiences in many families, what is your position on the following statement: **Family is to be valued over one's job.**

**Time:** Tuesday, 02. December 2003  
5. + 6. lesson

**Place:** Blauer Saal, AKG Bensheim

**Time of speech:** 5 minutes

**Jury:** Mr. von Machui  
Mrs. Kaiser  
Mr. J. Schwanebeck

Good morning everybody!

Please imagine the following situation: In Bensheim there lives a family that consists of 5 members, that is to say two adults and three children. Let me now give names to these members, for that it's easier to imagine. The three children's names are Sandra, Mike and Tom. Sandra is 11 years old and attends the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Mike is 8 years old and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and Tom is 5 and goes to the kindergarten. Mr. Spencer (Spencer is the family name) is working for a big company in Düsseldorf, in other words, he lives there and only comes home on weekends. Mrs. Spencer also has a full time job in Darmstadt but is at home most evenings.

So I think this general view about the Spencer's is enough to show the problem I like to discuss now. **Is the family to be valued over one's job?**

Before giving an answer to this question we should have a look at the **functions** of a family and at the changes of the family during the time. And so I will start with the

- pre- industrial family. This family- type consisted of parents and children, but it was a small family because of the high death- rate of children. The idea of >love< was unusual because families were built up mainly for economic reasons (most jobs had to do with agriculture).
- The second family type is the family today. The relationship between the members is close, even the communication is often via telephone or mail. Today, the family is mainly emotional, but also practical or financial. The state or other groups assist the family in many of its functions. That all means, that the family today is a "**mobile family**" (for example families are moving to take job opportunities).

So let me come back to the Spencer's family. As you can see, this is a **typical representative of the today's family**. Communication between Mr. Spencer and the rest of the family is mostly via phone or email, but the connections between Mr. Spencer and his children are very good, I would say that they are even better than in families where it is granted that the father is there all the time.

And that Mr. Spencer is working far away from home is respected by all members. The reasons are simple: He is the breadwinner for the family. And of course his work may be his personal interest and perhaps he wants to make a career.

For that parents can have their time to work, many institutions try to help them. These institutions can be sport or music groups, clubs or all- day schools, which are really "in" at the moment. And here we are back at the Spencer's. Sandra attends an all- day school. Mike, whose lessons normally finish at 12.30 attends two sport and one theatre group and has lunch with his best friend. And finally the Spencer's have employed a child minder who takes care for Tom in the afternoon until Mrs. Spencer arrives.

At last I like to add another thing, which is mostly overseen. A family like the Spencer's needs at least two cars. And if one of the parents is working in a big company, he can get a company car. This is a big financial advantage for the family. So, little things can effect very much for the family life.

But we forgot some ideas that make our picture of the Spencer's unrealistic. For explaining them to you, you need to know some details about our family.

Mr. Spencer works as legal counsel from 8am to 8pm five days a week. On weekends he usually drives to Bensheim to see his family. So he arrives at home on Friday evening at 11pm. Of course he is very tired, and so goes to bed soon. On Saturday he has to prepare a speech about the new laws concerning waste disposal. On Sunday morning he tries to have some time for his children, but his boss phones him, that he needs an answer about a difficult question until Monday; and in the evening Mr. Spencer needs to return to Düsseldorf.

And here is the first disadvantage of the full time job of Mr. Spencer: the **stress** makes it impossible to have good connections to the rest of his family and to do things together, which is very important for young children.

Other negative points in the Spencer's family are:

- that the **education of the children** lies totally in the hand of others, for example the child minder.
- that Mr. and Mrs. Spencer perhaps have **different holiday times**

So I come to the conclusion, that family is more important than work, because of the children. Children need their parents and you mustn't forget that children are the future. Of course, having a job is important, but there should be at least one parent to look after the children instead of working. Maybe at least one parent can reduce his work. I know that this gets more and more difficult today because of financial problems, and that is one point that needs to be improved by the state. So, my opinion is, that families should be supported more effectively by the state. If this condition were given, several things would improve: education and school-performance of the children, health, atmosphere, communication and understanding in the family and less stress and many others. These words are **keywords** for me, keywords that take me to my conclusion:

**Family is to be valued over one's job.**

And at the end I want to refer again to the Spencer's family.

It is Tuesday evening, December the 24<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Eve. Family Spencer is sitting round the Christmas tree decorated by the children listening to Christmas songs. And Mr. Spencer sees his family happy and thinks to himself: "It would be good, if this could be like that every evening." And now the idea of working from a home office or of moving to Düsseldorf occurs, and here we are back at the definition of the today's family: "**mobile family, moving to take job opportunities**".

Thank you!