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Those Sobriety Checkpoints

Many lives have been spared since the State of Maryland instituted a get-tough policy with those who drive under the influence of alcohol. One of the biggest deterrents in this crackdown has been sobriety checkpoints set up randomly along highways.

The AFRO applauds a recent decision by the Court of Appeals upholding the constitutionality of sobriety checkpoints.

Two Marylanders who were stopped by state police at a checkpoints. Two Marylanders who were stopped by state police at a checkpoint charged in court that the checkpoints violated their right of protection from searches and seizures. They also charged that the checkpoints denied them due process.

The two men who challenged the legality of the checkpoints are exactly the reason for the checkpoints. At the time they were stopped they were driving under the influence of alcohol. The checkpoints did what they were designed to do, get them off the road.

The checkpoints are saving lives and causing persons to think long and hard before taking to the road after a bout of drinking. The checkpoints are a good thing and they should be continued and perhaps even increased. Safety on the road should take precedence over any small inconveniences that they create.

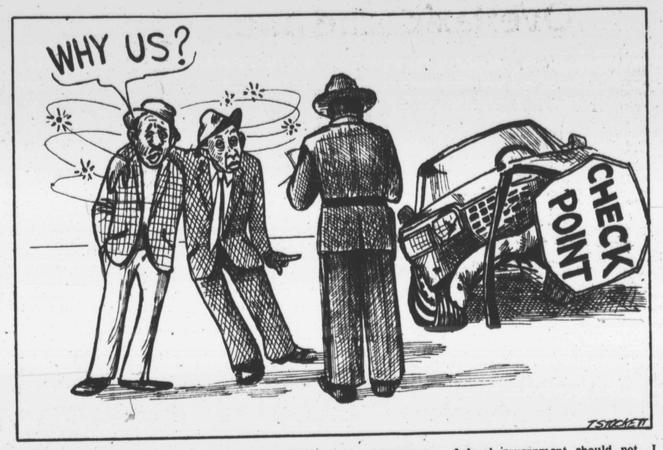
About an elected schoolboard

The elected schoolboard is a widespread institution in this country. In neighboring countries such as Montgomery, elected schoolboards are functioning, apparently to the satisfaction of most of the citizens of that subdivision.

In Baltimore City, a petition drive was successful in getting the issue of an elected schoolboard on this year's ballot. The mayor is opposed to an elected schoolboard which is not surprising, since the present system allows him to hand pick the members.

One of the main arguments that have been used against electing schoolboard members is that it would inject politics into what should be a quiet deliberative body. Another argument against an elected schoolboard is that people will use it as a stepping stone to higher political office. For example, Mayor Marion Barry of Washington, D.C. is a former schoolboard electee.

The arguments that have been put forth against an elected schoolboard are not strong enough. An elected schoolboard, in all probability, will be more responsive to the sentiments of the public than a mayor picked group that serves at his pleasure and not that of the parents and other concerned citizens. Politics finds its way into most government functions, so an elected schoolboard will merely bring the political aspect of schoolboard member selection out into the open.



Parren J. Mitchell

A white political party

When George Wallace, the then arch segregationist Governor of Alabama, made his bid for the office of President, he made no bones about where he stood. He was a rabid segregationist, he wanted the Democratic Party to become a white political party - where the guiding rule would be white supremacy.

George Wallace almost succeeded. The attempt on his life slowed the momentum of his racist appeal, and a white political party was not created at that time.

Today, a white political party has been established. It held its convention in Dallas this week. No matter the denials, no matter the cries of outrage that will come from Republicans, we must face up to the fact that the Republican Party at present is a white political party.

Of the thousands of Delegates at the convention, 3 percent were black and approximately the same percentage was Hispanic. As I recall, of the more than 100 Republicans who made up the Rules Committee for the convention, one was black.

Of course, there are persons who will challenge my characterization of the Republican Party by saying "3 percent black means the doors of the party are open to all, one black on the Rules Committee means that there is equal opportunity in the Republican Party."

To those critics I say "Hogwash." For many years the black gardener on a wealthy estate was allowed to attend the local church for Sunday services.

Approximately 225 white people attended the Sunday Services, our gardener was the only non-white who attended. I would call that a white church, wouldn't you?

A company employing about 250 people retained throughout its history, a black man on the janitorial crew. One black employee out of 250 employees. I would find it hard to call that company an integrated outfit. I would find it easy to call the company a "whites only company."

The present day Republican party is in reality a white political party.

To make matters even worse, the party of today is under the total control of the conservatives. A few moderate republicans sought to give the republican platform a broader base of appeal. They were quickly crushed.

We hear the words "liberals," "moderates," "conservatives" and "arch conservatives" and it is sometimes difficult to make clear distinctions.

In the case of the arch conservatives who are already now in command, it is easy to make the distinction. They believe that the federal government should not, I emphasize, not, be the provider of anything to citizens - not housing, not education; not jobs; not health care; not anything.

All of these services must come through the private sector. They contend that those receiving the services should pay for those services.

The arch-conservatives believe that the doctrine of Social Darwinism, the survival of the fittest is gospel. "If you can't make it under this great and glorious system of capitalism, free enterprise "they say" then it does not mean that the system is flawed, it means you are not fit, you are flawed."

By sins of omission and commission, the arch conservatives either pander to or subtly encourage racism.

So my friends, we now have a white political party and a wealthy political white party. (More than 80 percent of the delegates for the Republican Convention in Dallas had family incomes of more than $100,000 a year.)

Is this the political party you want to see in power the next four years? If it is, then you are asking for the abolishment of social loan programs; business loan programs; housing programs and all other programs which do not benefit the affluent class in America.

Don't listen to the siren's song which says you have nothing to vote for. Don't heed sullen urging of the disillusioned who will tell you to sitout this election. Let me put it bluntly, don't be dumb.

In November, vote to kick Reagan out. Vote as if the future of Black Americans depends on your vote - it really does.

Letters

Gospel Greats competition?

In view of the recently held Baltimore Gospel Greats Gospel Music Competition held at the Pier Six Pavillion sponsored by the Baltimore Office of Promotion and Tourism and WJZ-Television Harborlights Music Festival, I would like to make a constructive criticism concerning the category of small ensemble.

Allowing this category to consist of two to eighteen members in each group is in error to any observer and since the competition I have learned it is a general concern of both performers and the audience.

In my daily routine I am confronted and frequently asked, "Why was your group (The Singing Deacons) included in the small ensemble category?" My instant reply is of course that according to the qualifying criteria, that is the only category in which we could enter.

As I thought about this I observed that musically two people can only sing two-part harmony or unison as opposed to four or more who can accomplish harmony in four parts and very impressive choreography which is very appealing to the eyes.

To my thinking, gospel music in its general connotation does not include chorale works, Negro spirituals, or anthems although when performed by the larger ensembles has worked for them every time. If we wanted to, we couldn't perform any of the above with an ounce of success.

Your past record of winners in this category speaks for itself.

The Fernando Allen Singers - 1982;
The Raymond Wise Community Ensemble - 1983;
The James Peterson Singers - 1984.

All of the above are not only musical colleagues but personal friends who also agree with me. Please don't view this as sour grapes because The Singing Deacons did not win, that is not my point.

My point is simply that as it now stands the alternative to this unfair competitiveness is to add a category to the competition of duets-trios. Soloist denotes one, quartet denotes four and choir speaks for itself.

Realistically, The Singing Deacons have paid the price (two consecutive years) and without a blood-thirst for punishment, chances are slim of a return to Pier Six next year.

However to encourage other duets and trios to participate in your event in the future, take a little time to reevaluate your program and consider the idea of fairness to the participants and audience alike.

R.D. Howell

A breath of fresh air

Dear Sir:

Recently columns and editorials in the Baltimore AFRO - AMERICAN may be likened to a breath of fresh air beginning to purge the new stale smog of anachronistic rhetoric. I refer specifically to Anthony Armstrong's 7-28-84 column entitled A Vote For Reagan Dr. Samuel L. Banks' 8-11-84 column, Vanessa Tragedy: Time to Separate Chaff from Wheat and the AFRO Editorial, Shake and Bake: A Possible Solution of the same date.

The tired and dated rhetoric I refer to is that touted by some so called leaders who, with an air of self-righteousness, still espouse a continuation of the welfare philosophy of "gimme", and at the same time, fostering a position that holds that there is no need for accountability.

Mr. Armstrong's risque and welcomed public position that a growing number of black persons are no longer attracted by the "give me world" of past political administrations: is one that should not go unnoticed.

The AFRO editorial is complementary to this position as it also properly holds that as a people, we have a responsibility to utilize our vast resources to help our own. (Yes, it is a fact that we have vast unutilized resources.)

Finally, Dr. Banks' courageous and honest position regarding the Vanessa Williams tragedy accurately addresses the issue of unilateral and group culpability and projects the responsibility of all of us to once and for all refrain from initial knee jerk reactions of "racism" whenever a black person is involved in conflict or controversy in a white dominated society.

We all have responsibility to resist our traditional emotional reaction and take the time to objectively, honestly and pragmatically analyze all such situations to ultimately come up with well reasoned opinions, positions and strategies.

The above referenced editorial and columns strike me as being reflective of what appears to be a growing and much needed maturity of thought in the black community. Let us join, therefore, in developing constructive and viable approaches towards addressing those problems and issues we all share.

Such an honest approach will truly prove to be beneficial to the total society which will not flourish without the constructive and viable contributions of all of its segments.

John B. Ferron

Anthony Armstrong

Blame America first

"This is unbelievable, this place looks like the set they use for the television series Dallas."

The thing that is so normal about living in this country is that people expect to live well. If they don't live, at least like barons, Americans think their lives are not what they should be.

Indoor, in-ground swimming pools, private tennis courts, pretty white stone gravel circular driveways, cleaning ladies and, seasonal vacations-these are some of the symbols of the American dream.

Those who can pinch themselves and find it not a dream usually take their opulence in stride; they are surprised, even embarrassed, by anyone who does not. This is, after all, America and; as countries go, this is the Rolls Royce of them all.

Imagine two businessmen. Both are successful enough to do just about anything money can buy. One has his already attractive offices redecorated. The other, not out of need but out of the desire to remain competitive, decides to redecorate too.

Now, instead of two businessmen, imagine the competitors to be two countries; say, the United States and Bahrain (a small oil rich sheikdom in the Middle East). Almost everyone in Bahrain is rich, by whatever monetary standard one chooses to use.

Americans, aware of this, then feel they too ought to be just as well off. The Americans I refer to do not believe in and will not for long, tolerate being a "Mercedes" country if there is a "Rolls Royce" nation anywhere else on the globe.

"Blame America first" is not their cup of tea. Even in confusion, these people believe America is much stronger than it was four years ago-stronger then it has been since 1952.

They believe to one degree or another in noblesse oblige, the concept of responsible social behavior on the part of the rich; but they are not about to buy anyone forty acres and a mule.

These people have a genuine problem understanding why there are not more blacks in their ranks; they wonder, some aloud, why more of us do not seek the "Rolls Royce" life they believe is the American birthright.

They don't have any problem with America building more nuclear weapons - the Russians are building them too. Buttressed by a one percent unemployment rate in their ranks and, understanding that everyone simply won't always do as well; they still have trouble figuring - out why so many of us "don't do better".

They speak of perceptions and attitudes. Their attitude is clearly, "I am the best, I am an American". It is a positive, up beat, confident attitude.

America may, in fact, not be beautiful to all and, these people acknowledge as much as it applies to those who have not shared in the abundance of this country but; they truly believe that "others will think of us as we think of ourselves". It is, they believe, a question of perception.

"Tell any child she is beautiful, no matter how unattractive, and the child will believe she is beautiful". Repeatedly tell a raven haired beauty she is ugly and no amount of cosmetic attention will change her perception of herself".

At one time, we black Americans viewed ourselves so positively that we felt we alone held claim on being the moral conscience of the country. It was said that if America would be "saved" it would be because we would knit her together, in all her "ugliness", with the strength and hygiene of our moral standards.

To say such a thing, let alone to believe it, spoke of a decidedly positive attitude about ourselves. Remembering how, years ago, one of us would never let another starve for lack of some potatoes - we felt good about our ability to see ourselves in such a bright and positive light, that helping each other was just the normal thing for such a noble people.

Now we blame America first. While the others say, in between the tennis lesson, the private swims and, the short vacations - "don't blame America first". Who then is left to blame but ourselves?

Samuel L. Banks

Urgent black imperatives for 1984 and beyond

The historic and momentous March on Washington for Freedom and Jobs on August 28, 1963 and repeated last year, for symbolic purposes, has failed to arouse the conscience of the majority white body politic as regards the lamentable socio-economic, political and educational state of most black Americans.

Whatever the socio-economic indicators utilized to gauge or assess the socio-economic status of 35 million Black Americans, the result for the preponderant number can be summarized in one word: disastrous.

In this conjunction, in 1963 almost one million Americans were forced into poverty as a result of the policies of Reaganomics. While white Americans, numerically, make up a majority of this number, Black Americans form the largest percentage. Additionally, almost half of all Black children in our nation under seventeen (17) years of age live in poverty. This figure has risen from five years ago when the percentage of Black children in poverty was approximately 43 percent.

In terms of a global assessment, blacks remain under siege in education, housing, health care, jobs and care for senior citizens and infants. For the foreseeable future, given a national mood of prodigious indifference, hostility and recalcitrance, the overwhelming number of 35 million Black Americans will remain in a perilous state.

Briefly stated, the imperatives are as follows:

1. REGISTER AND VOTE. The ballot is the key to personhood and power in a democratic society. The national enthusiasm generated by the superb effort of Reverend Jesse L. Jackson for the Democratic nomination for the presidency must not wane or die as we face the November elections.

Black Americans, whatever their ideological persuasions must coalesce now and vote in record numbers in the presidential and state elections. The political axiom, "He (she) who pays the piper dictates the tune."

Then, too, where a clear majority, Black Americans must seize through the ballot, political control. Political power determines how limited economic resources will be allocated and for whom. The ballot is a non-negotiable necessity in local, state and national elections.

2. POLITICAL PRESSURE FOR FULL EMPLOYMENT.

Although we have over 101 million people gainfully employed in our nation, we, too, have over 8.5 million people structurally (i.e., long-term) unemployed. Black Americans constitute the largest percentage of the structurally unemployed. There cannot and must not be tranquility in our nation when over 8.5 million of our fellow-citizens who want to work are unable to do so.

3. EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY.

It is a clear and irrefutable fact that 30 years after the epochal Brown decision of May 17, 1954, equality of educational opportunity does not prevail in the 16,000 school districts in our nation serving 40 million students. The same deplorable and unjust condition exists in the 3200 institutions of higher education in the United States. The 114 predominantly Black colleges and universities, in view of federal and state fiscal cutbacks and societal neglect, are struggling against very formidable odds for their survival.

4. DECENT, SAFE, AFFORDABLE AND SANITARY HOUSING.

Blacks, Hispanics and the poor and disproportionately housed in unsafe, indecent and wretched housing. This situation, in spite of housing legislation is a national disgrace.

5. AN EFFECTIVE AFFORDABLE AND EFFICIENT HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEM.

Inasmuch as Black Americans are disproportionately unemployed and occupy, when employed, tenuous and low-paying jobs, it is they who receive, for the most part, the worst health care in our nation. The situation is a colossal affront to a free society.

6. ADEQUATE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE POOR.

Public assistance and entitlements should be geared to realistic and fair levels that will permit the nation's 35 million poor people to live in dignity and elemental security. Our present support programs are atrocious and demeaning for impoverished people.

7. UNRELENTING SUPPORT OF BLACK BUSINESSES.

We must do a better job of supporting our own businesses and institutions (i.e., churches, institutions of higher education, etc.). The Baltimore Afro-American and African American News and World Report should be required reading for the majority Black community. Shake and Bake, Park's Sausage, Jackson Oil, Soul Shack and other Black businesses are most deserving of the support of Blacks in Baltimore and across Maryland. We must support our own if we want corporate power and independence.

8. INSIST THAT OUR YOUNGSTERS ATTEND SCHOOL DAILY.

Correspondingly, insist that our youngsters are challenged in school daily and are taught by caring, demanding and able teachers. Demonstrable excellence should be demanded of administrators, teachers and staff at all levels. There should be no room for mediocrity or shoddiness.

9. BECOME INFORMED AND PARTICIPATE IN CHURCH, POLITICAL, EDUCATIONAL AND CIVIC EVENTS.

This, of course, requires reading newspapers, books and periodicals on a regular and consistent basis. Such an endeavor too, will be effective modeling for your children.

10. WORK TO RE-ESTABLISH A SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

We need to become more caring, loving and supportive of each other. To the extent we do this, our communities will show cohesion, solidarity, self-respect and pride.

The imperatives that I have proposed represent, I believe, a viable and sensible starting point in the midst of our present societal crises. We cannot afford to defer any longer in terms of planning, organizing and working for our survival as a people. A failure to act will be a clear and present prescription for continued and programmed institutional impotence and failure.

AFRO SURVEY

Should there be an elected schoolboard?

Dee Johnson

Thomas Turner

Craig Thweatt

Lorraine Chambers

This week the question to the man and woman in the street was, "Do you think the city school board should be elected or appointed?"

Dee Johnson, 33, teacher's aide, "They should be elected, not appointed. People appointed are people we don't even know, haven't got a chance to learn anything about. People should have a voice in that decision."

Thomas Turner, 34, ship filler, "People should vote for the board. I think appointed people will be on the same side as the mayor or the person who appoints them. That doesn't mean they are right."

Craig Thweatt, 20, student, "Elected. People can choose their own representatives instead of the mayor. An appointment may be the result of the mayor's favortism towards a particular person."

Lorraine Chambers, 33, nurse, "The board should be elected. There would be more feelings for kids I think. There are not enough programs for the kids now, and I think an elected board of people we've chosen would be more considerate."

Daryl Thomas

Michael Alston

Stephen Thomas

Daryl Thomas, 27, D.J., "They should be appointed. The mayor will select those people he thinks are good. He knows their capabilities. Besides, an election would cost the city a lot more money.

Michael Alston, 36, manager, "They should be elected. People should choose whom they want. An examination of whom these people are would let us know if they are qualified. A parent could be a lot more satisfied knowing their qualifications learned through an election process.

Stephen Thomas, 69, retired, "We should vote for them. We should vote for everything. Things would be a lot better."

REPORTER'S REPORT

By R. B. Jones

Recently I had a conversation with some black Republicans. They are a rare species and they are in danger of extinction due to the fact that most of them are middle-aged or older.

Since the election of Franklin Roosevelt, black Republicans have found it harder and harder to multiply and they have not found a solution. They keep issuing a call for more blacks to enter the fold yet their cries go largely unheeded. At a recent business conference, a favorite nesting place for black Republicans, three of them shared some thoughts with me.

Theron Bell, deputy director of the Minority Business Development Agency, a part of the U.S. Commerce Department, voiced a familiar complaint. "It's time that leadership in the black community concentrates on business development just as much as social development. The government should be a facilitator of minority progress but people should not always expect the government to hand them something."

Bell added, when questioned about what the Reagan administration and the Republican Party in general have to offer black people, "He has promised no tax increase which is very important, especially to the poor who'll keep more of their income. He also supports minority set asides which bring a tremendous amount of money into minority communities through government contracts."

Dewey Thomas, executive director of the National Association of Minority Contractors, another black Republican, praised the Republican administration for a different accomplishment. "There has been a significant reduction in crime under the Reagan administration. The drug traffic that saps the resources of many black neighborhoods has been reduced. I think the crime issue is one that black Republicans can hang their hats on.

Dr. Aris T. Allen, a prominent local Republican praised the party for its encouragement of entrepreneurship and self-help in the minority community. "President Reagan has a commitment to the development of minority businesses and to the improvement of historically black colleges. The philosophy of his administration is that if you give a hungry man a fish you've given him a mean, but if you teach him to fish you've given him a job."

These black Republicans seemed to fit the part. They were clean cut, prosperous looking without being gaudy and sincere, I believe. They seemed like nice guys that one would welcome to a family reunion. It is their appearance of being reasonable along with the nice guy demeanor of their president and party leader that makes the situation of black Republicans so sad.

Voices crying in a vacuum?

They grasp at straws when trying to win other blacks to their cause. They will grasp at the thin straw of support for minority business, of which the minority business set asides predates Reagan, when in reality, more businesses, particularly small ones, have failed under the Reagan administration than any other time in recent memory.

How can black Republicans keep a straight face when supporting a man who wanted to give tax breaks to schools that practiced racial discrimination such as Bob Jones University?

How can they look the rest of black America in the eye and endorse a president who openly embraced South Africa, with its defiant racism? That is a society that does not believe in black entrepreneurship.

How can black Republicans look the homeless, the impoverished, many of whom are black women and children, and the unemployed who have suffered under the budget axe, in the eye and say they support Reagan?

How can black Republicans support a president who says that marginally poor workers must survive without government aid while giving obscenely large amounts of money to a military - industrial complex that is bloated, yet ever greedy?

If black Republicans are not repulsed by the insanity and insensitivity of their party's president and platform, then they deserve to be the almost extinct species that they are. Hopefully there will be museum displays soon.

PLAIN TALK — CONSTIPATION

By Derrick Matthews, MD.

Constipation is a condition frequently seen at various times in childhood which can have a direct relationship with dietary intake. It can be very uncomfortable but does not usually cause significant illness.

It is usually temporary and without long term consequences. On occasion, however, certain steps have to be taken to prevent or alleviate problems from chronic constipation.

Constipation is defined as hard stools. They are usually produced with difficulty. Constipation has little to do with frequency. Missing a day or more can, however, contribute to constipation and is frequently associated with constipation.

Constipation is most frequently misdiagnosed in infants. Babies may frequently change their stooling pattern in the first two months of life. They may stool after every feeding for a week or two. Then they may have bowel movement every 3-4 days.

When babies change the frequency of their stooling pattern, they may also grunt and strain. They sometimes turn red in the face and pass gas.

If the stool is soft and not hard the baby does not have constipation. The grunting and straining is a transition that every baby goes through to learn how to stool.

While in the womb the baby did not have to stool. All wastes were removed through the umbilical cord.

During the change to the outside the baby feels some discomfort when experiencing the new sensation of passing stool.

The baby does not know how to help the movement. In addition, because she is lying, she does not have gravity to help. Thus the baby may grunt and strain.

If the stools are soft during this period and the baby is feeding well, usually no treatment is necessary. The baby will work out the process of having a stool by himself.

Most pediatricians will not allow more than about four to five days without a stool, however. At that time stimulus with a rectal thermometer is helpful. If that is not effective then sometimes one quarter glycerin suppository from the drugstore may be used.

If stools are hard, a diagnosis of constipation should be considered. Various pediatricians have different approaches to the problem.

Some will add corn syrup to one or more bottles of formula for several days. The syrup helps to attract fluid into the bowel by osmosis, thereby making the stool softer.

Dietary and formula manipulation is also tried. Changing to high whey-low casein formulas may sometimes improve the hard stools. Low iron formulas have also improved some babies with constipation.

Medications such as Colace, Sennakot, and Maltsupex have also been used successfully to soften and move the stool. As mentioned before, glycerin suppositories may help move the stool. Fleet Babylax is a lubricant given by rectum that may help move stool also.

Using medication is usually a decision that should be discussed with the pediatrician first.

Overuse of laxatives can interfere with the baby learning to have a bowel movement naturally. In addition the bowel will have a decreased response as the frequency of use increases.

In older children constipation is usually a dietary problem and can be treated as such. Americans generally eat a relatively a high fat, low fiber diet. This can cause constipation.

Fiber is poorly digested by the intestinal tract and thus provides bulk as a stimulus to the bowel. In addition it attracts fluid into the bowel, thus softening the stool.

Dietary fiber can be obtained from many sources. Raw vegetables such as celery and carrots help. Leafy green vegetables and whole grain cereals are other good sources. Bran, regardless of the source (wheat, corn, oat, etc.) is well known for providing fiber.

Fresh fruit is a good source of fiber, especially when eaten with the skin. Fruit also provides fluid and has natural stimuli to move the bowel. Prunes are well known for their laxative effect.

Decreasing dairy product intake helps to improve constipation. Milk has a high fat and calcium content; both of these products may interfere with water content in the stool. Big milk drinkers tend to eat less of other foods, especially those high in fiber.

Constipation should be discussed with the pediatrician if completely resistent to dietary management. Rarely it may be a congenital defect of the large intestine.

If soiling of underwear occurs, the child may have a megacolon, an expanded colon dilated by impacted large amounts of stool. The soiling is due to liquid leaking around the impacted stool.

Blood in the stool is also a condition that needs intervention from the pediatrician. A rectal tear may need repair if severe enough.

Constipation is a condition that can cause a great deal of concern in parents while dietary treatment is usually best, complications may require medical intervention.