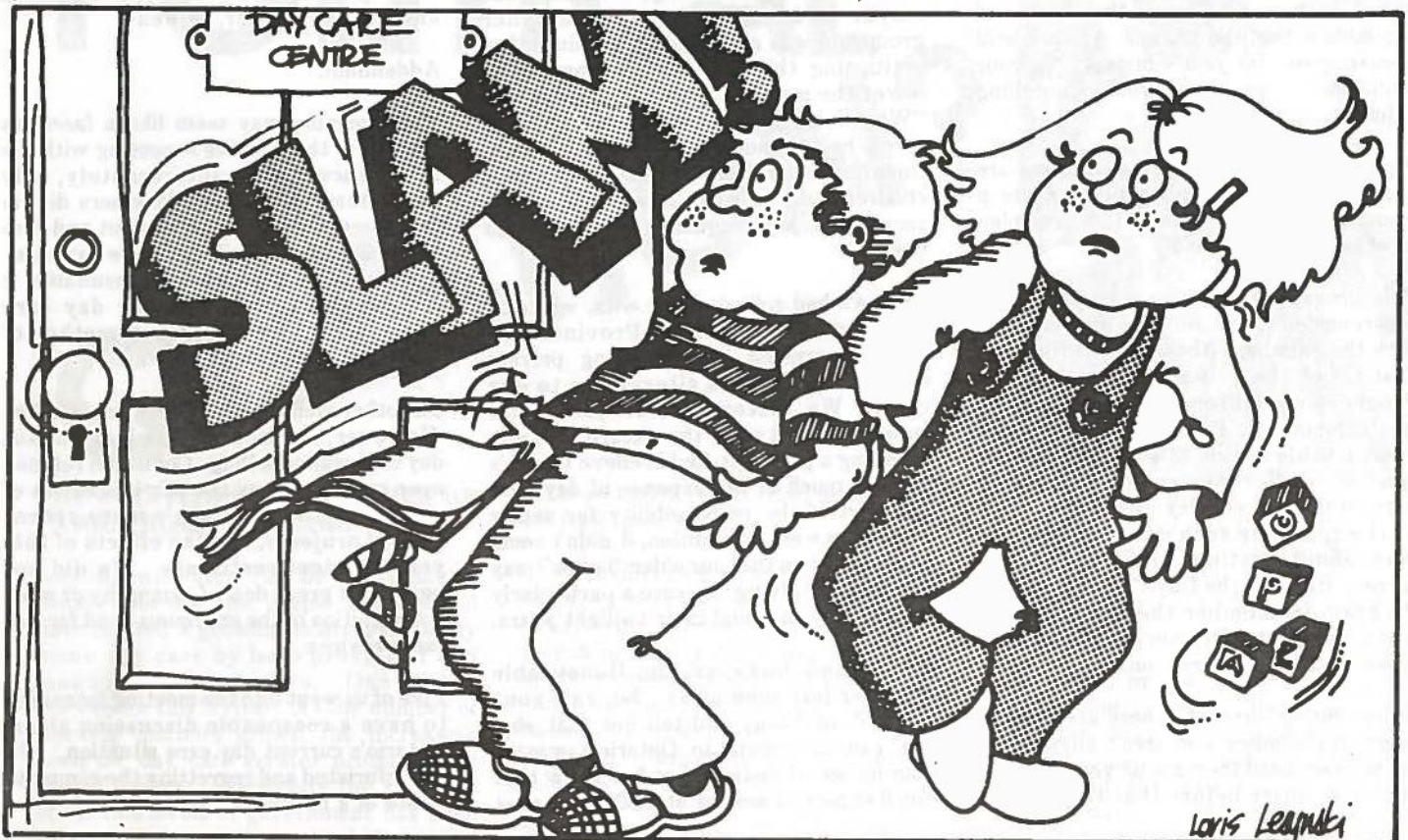


FALL '76

Good Daycare



Credit: Loris Lesynski

Cutbacks May Close Centre

Northwest Communicare of Hamilton, like day care centres all over the province, has been getting this message loud and clear from the local government. With a disastrous combination of more stringent parent subsidization regulations and unrealistic budget cutbacks on individual centres, the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Government has already forced a number of day care centres to close, and Northwest Communicare may be the next to go.

Its options are scant: it can seriously lower the quality of care it gives and put its whole philosophy of childcare out the window in order just to survive. Or it might overturn the decision of a very determined and very regressive local government which, like so many others, and like the provincial Conservative government, has chosen day care and

other social services as places to save money.

In Hamilton, restrictions have been especially illogical. In April of 1976, council passed a motion that hit at daycare three ways. It tightened subsidization regulations, making it more difficult for everyone to receive day care. It practically eliminated certain types of day care -- half day programs (except for therapeutic cases) -- and made it close to impossible for non-working mothers or families where both parents are students. It put an upper limit on subsidy per child per day (normally called a per diem in daycare) and limited the number of subsidized day care places in the region.

The effect on Northwest Communicare was devastating. Like other Hamilton centres with subsidized parents, it had submitted its budget in November of 1975,

at the region's request. Northwest communicare had asked for \$9.72 -- an increase of 8% over their 1975 per diem of \$9.00. The effect of the region's decision was to roll this back below the 1975 level to \$8.50. This in spite of increased costs right across the board. The Regional Social Services Committee had centred in on the fact that they had one more staff than required by minimum provincial standards and used this to justify the cut.

At the same time, however, it was obvious that the region was simply following a hard and fast set of rules with no regard for individual centres. Although each centre had submitted an individual budget, every centre was simply given a 5.5% increase up to the \$8.50 per diem. This meant that while 8 centres, including Northwest, were cut back, at least one

(continued page 2)

Daycare Reform Action Alliance 15 Birch Avenue, Toronto 925-3137

Grey Daycare

So, how's the day care situation in your town? Is there a ceiling on the number of available subsidized places? Are you still operating on last year's budget? Is your municipality closing centres? Cancelling subsidy contracts?

Well if all, or even only some, of these are happening to you, don't expect any help from Queen's Park. There is a new plan afoot -- grey day care.

This progressive step in social planning was revealed to the Alliance at a meeting with the members (those that turned up, that is) of the caucus of the Ontario Progressive Conservatives. It was an exciting moment. We were sitting around a large table in one of the P.C.'s more spacious conference rooms discussing some of the current day care issues. We were explaining such items as how one goes about getting subsidy and the current status of the Day Care Expansion Program (remember the \$15 million?) when one of the Honourable Members broke into the conversation.

"In my riding" he said, "there are a great many single ladies who aren't eligible for the pension until they are 65 years of age, but must retire before that time". We

nodded sympathetically, thinking that maybe he'd confused us with another group and was about to pledge himself to petitioning the Federal Government to lower the pension eligibility age to 60. "Why don't you people who need day care", he continued, "hire these ladies to come into your homes to look after your children, and do some housework at the same time? My daughter and my niece do that."

Once we had collected our wits, we tried to ascertain whether the Province was really interested in subsidizing private housekeepers as an alternative to day care. We discovered, in fact, that subsidies didn't enter the picture. He was outlining a plan that could relieve Queen's Park of much of the expense of day care and part of the responsibility for senior citizens as well. In addition, it didn't seem to occur to him that our older "ladies" may not consider giving day care a particularly fruitful way to spend their twilight years.

Undaunted, however, the Honourable Member left soon after. So, call your Great-Aunt Emily and tell her that she, too, can contribute to Ontario's master plan for social justice. Let her know that you'll expect to see her at 8:30 sharp next

Monday morning, and that you'll save the kitchen floor for her, as well.

Addendum:

The foregoing may seem like a facetious account of the Alliance's meeting with the P.C. Caucus. It is, unfortunately, only partly that. One of the Members did, in fact, suggest that we all run out and hire senior citizen "ladies" to provide day care. While this is not necessarily unsuitable, it is neither a solution to our day care problems nor a constructive method of dealing with poverty in old age.

The other members were less implausible. However, the lack of knowledge about day care was appalling. Confusion reigned over such issues as the administration of subsidies, the Province's more recent capital projects, and the effects of this year's budget restraints. We did not perceive a great deal of sympathy or even a recognition of the enormous need for day care services.

Five of us went into the meeting intending to have a reasonable discussion about Ontario's current day care situation. We left infuriated and regretting the complete waste of a morning.

CUTBACKS

received 50% more than they required. The government had simply decided that all centres were the same, whether they liked it or not, and had given virtually no warning.

But even though the government's logic is transparent, Northwest had to fight its budget case on whether or not it needed six teachers for 40 children. There is a very good case that a sixth teacher is important. Firstly there is no secretary or director -- all such responsibilities are shared. Secondly there is an unstructured program in a large area. Proper supervision demands six staff; it is not a luxury.

Northwest redrafted its budget, pushing everything to a minimum cost and asking for 5 childcare staff, a cook/housekeeper and a part-time secretary/bookkeeper. The result was a request for a per diem of \$9.41. It still waits for the Social Services Committee to decide. So far the

Committee doesn't appear inclined to help. It has however offered alternatives. One was to "turn over" senior staff and hire new, cheaper staff. Or, a variation on the same theme, cut staff salaries and see who quits.

Meanwhile other cuts have further crippled the centre. Down to only 25 children because people can no longer afford day care at present subsidization rates, staff at Northwest have been cut in half.

This brings another question, one with a very simple answer -- who then will day care serve? The wealthy and the destitute, even moreso than before.

Northwest is concerned that the quality of its care is going downhill and that it might have to close rather than continue at the present rate. The choice is a tough one. However the problem may be solved by the region. It seems to be making the choices for them.

Daycare Burns

Toronto -- On August 31, 1976 the Avenue Road Day Nursery, a 7-year old parent co-operative, closed down. The day care centre had been the victim of a fire which gutted the Church of the Messiah, where it was located on the third floor.

The damages to the centre were estimated at \$5,000. With virtually no funds, the parents and staff began combing the area around Avenue Road and Dupont Street for anything that looked like a possible temporary or permanent home for the centre. Avenue Road's programs included: an extended day care for kindergarten students in the area, a full day care, and a nursery (morning) program.

After spending two days in the park and in parents' homes, the 18 children enrolled in the school found quarters for the month of August in Cottingham Public School.

This gave those involved time to look at various church basements, meeting halls,
(continued page 7)

A POLITICAL QUESTION?



THE POLITICS OR ECONOMICS OF FAMILY HOME DAY CARE

Anyone watching the day care scene closely over the past couple of years will have noticed a growing interest in family home day care by both provincial and municipal governments. One of the reasons for this is clear. As the number of working mothers grows, the increasing need for day care creates pressures for more facilities. Frequently the response of various levels of government has been to attempt to meet some of that need while cutting costs which naturally reduces quality. That was the stated aim of the proposals made by Margaret Birch on behalf of the Ontario government in June of 1974. These proposals were defeated by parents and day care workers determined to maintain quality. Now with provincial cutbacks in spending we are already faced with restrictions on numbers of subsidized children and unrealistic budget ceilings that will in another way force a decline in quality. Governments are now proposing Family Home Day Care as a cheaper substitute for group care.

Metro Toronto recently cut back its group care for infants at the same time as it is expanding family home care. A few years ago this government began subsidizing this service through existing supervising agencies and is now beginning to do its own supervision. They are also trying to persuade suburban governments to change zoning by-laws that now prohibit family home care. In their submissions to the suburban governments, the lower cost of family care compared to group care for

children under two is cited as one reason for its expansion.

The province began to pay subsidies for children in family home day care a few years ago. Now they are directly recruiting family home day care providers; they recently sent out leaflets to all single mothers receiving provincial family benefits encouraging them to take in children in order to supplement their income.

To clarify the situation, the relative costs of the two types of service should be looked at. The capital costs for family home day care are nil to the government. The day care provider supplies the home, heat, lighting, telephone, kitchen equipment, furniture and in many cases special equipment such as cribs, prams, playground equipment, and toys. Sometimes the special equipment is supplied by the supervising agency. The cost to the government of the setting up and equipping of a group day care centre in Ontario in 1973 was \$3,452 per child/place.

By now the cost will have risen to approximately \$4,000.

The operating costs are more complex partly because municipal governments frequently do not release figures on per diem rates. However we do know that in Metropolitan Toronto, one infant centre which reduces costs sharply through the use of parent volunteers has a per diem rate of \$11.00; one for 6 weeks to 5 years using parent volunteers 4 hours per week per child, \$10.18; and one for 2 to 5 year

olds, \$13.00. The cost of family home care is \$10.47 for full-time care, \$9.08 for kindergarten children and \$7.80 for school age children. ("Average costs" for group care versus family home care are not available.)

A further problem is the quality of the family home care provided. The providers are incredibly underpaid and the agencies supervising family home care in Toronto have had difficulties with the municipal government in obtaining even the rates cited above. Such budget constraints will force a reduction in the quality of supervision and support services which are crucial to this form of care. The same constraints are true on the provincial level leading to such desperate efforts as the leaflets to single mothers on benefits.

If family day care providers were paid a reasonable wage and compensated adequately for expenses, family home care costs would much more closely approximate (or exceed) group care costs. Families could then choose from a variety of types of care the one that is most suitable for the child. With the freezing of subsidized group care spaces in Metropolitan Toronto, many parents no longer have that option and are forced into family home care regardless of the needs of the child. The day care movement must view the expansion of this service and the freezing and even closing of group day care centres as one more example of the reduced cost, reduced quality policies of both levels of government.

Views on F.D.C.*

Agency

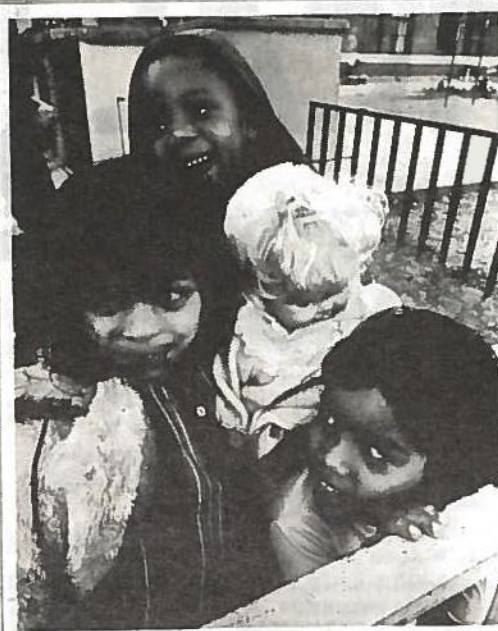
Through the efforts of a team of field workers, children are placed in private homes in the community, where they are cared for, usually by women, who are at home caring for their own children. The day care providers, as these people are called, can be recruited in a variety of ways: by word of mouth, newspaper ads, or notices in local laundromats and supermarkets. Before being "approved for care", providers and their families are interviewed extensively by staff, and efforts are made to make sure that children will be placed in a home which is reasonably clean and safe, with an adult(s) who is warm, understanding and sensitive to the needs of children. Efforts are also made to find a placement near a child's home in order to cut down on travelling time for the family, and to allow the slightly older child to remain in his own neighborhood, and attend his regular school.

When a child is first placed in a home, a pre-admission visit is made, as well as several follow-up visits with both day care providers and the child's parents, in order that the change for the child will be as smooth as possible.

Following the initial adjustment period, regular contacts are made by the field worker with both parents and providers, to share any information or concerns that have arisen. In addition to visits by the field workers, regular meetings are held with the day care providers. These meetings are another opportunity to talk about the children, to share ideas about nutrition, learning activities and child development, and to discuss any problems.

Group meetings with parents help involve them and keep the lines of communication open. As a result of regular interest and discussion, it is often possible to spot potential problems early and to help families find ways of dealing with them successfully.

As in group care, the source of many problems is funding. Payments for providers, staff salaries, and staff ratios, are all areas where there is lack of adequate funding to ensure high quality care. There is also little recognition by funding bodies of the importance of day care staff and providers working together



Credit: Garth Scheuer

with parents. The high caseloads field workers are expected to carry reflect this. Family day care could be more flexible in the hours of care; a provider might be quite happy to care for a child whose parents work shifts. Unfortunately, at this point, subsidies are not available for unusual working hours.

Family day care programs are an alternative to group care and as such offer a choice to families. Some families and children benefit from this type of program and placements should be made based on an assessment of an individual family's need.

Parent

Family day care is not just a baby sitting service. As a parent using supervised home day care, I have found it to be a beneficial service for my day care needs. It provides good supplementary care through the intimacy of a home situation and the individual attention of a loving adult. It has provided the opportunity for my son to remain within his school district. It is also a secure continuing service

Through her concern and awareness of his needs, my provider is able to discuss with qualified workers my child's developmental progress. She is encouraged to discuss with me problems that arise enabling us to

develop a greater understanding and respect for each other's child raising methods.

I feel that family day care provides the atmosphere I would if I were at home. Activities are set according to his needs and the family routine. Family day care also provides him the necessary freedoms of choice after a structured day in school. Because he is an only child, family day care provides a home setting for interaction with other children. He learns to share not only toys and equipment but the attentions of an adult in family interaction.

Stimulating toys and equipment are provided through the agency for his development. My provider takes time to encourage their use and also offers varied creative activities. She plans outings within the community and uses its resources.

Because a family home is not programmed, many learning opportunities arise from everyday routines or unexpected happenings. My day care provider incorporates discipline as a good learning situation. She explains her reasons why, indicating her acceptance of him even when he is not managing properly. This has helped him develop healthy attitudes in social behaviour and also to strengthen his relationship with adults.

Monthly meetings with my worker to discuss the day care arrangement assures me of his care. Through the agency support I have been able to achieve an even greater understanding of my son and how to manage effectively with him.

The context of family day care is a three way partnership between the parent, agency and provider. This kind of service offers me the necessary freedoms and supports to maintain a stable environment for my child's well being and happiness.

Provider

Having provided day care on a private basis for over six years and having worked for the Cradleship Creche for nearly six, I can honestly say I prefer to work through the agency. Since joining the Creche as a provider I have always felt

Providers Are Organizing

OTTAWA-CARLTON

There exist some cross-currents today which may threaten day care. Groups in the field may end up fighting amongst themselves and lose sight of their real objectives. Group care organizations feel embattled because of budget restrictions and may see family day care as a competitor.

Group care organizations may hold an image of family day care being made up of older women who are bored and work to pick up a few extra dollars babysitting, or young mothers who want cigarette money by taking in extra kids. But there are dedicated people in family day care (F.D.C.) providing good quality day care -- just as there were dedicated people working under abominable situations when group care first started.

This article is intended to outline the problems and the initial steps taken in the Ottawa-Carleton area to deal with these problems. Here are common problems which vary in degree amongst agencies and caregivers:

1. Isolation

a closeness to the workers and staff there and, should a problem arise concerning a child or the children in my care, I feel I can phone or drop in and chat with any of the staff and come away with the problem solved. It is also gratifying to know that by working through the Creche we as providers and the agency are fulfilling a need in the community. Our main concern is the happiness and well being of the children; also to give the mother or parent a chance to earn a living with the knowledge that their children are being well cared for.

The hours are long and the pay is not as high as people are getting in the business world but the work is rewarding in many other ways. However we must bear in mind the ever-increasing cost of things and perhaps come up with some sort of plan regarding Income Tax and Canada Pension. Days off and summertime is something else to think about for some future meeting when the provider is available and the children are not.

Rita Irving (provider)

Working at home alone with children can be a lonely experience. Mobility is restricted and normal social contacts which occur in other job situations are limited. There are no lunch or coffee breaks, no time off for voting, dental appointments, or compassionate leave. There is little work performance feedback, because the job has low community prestige.

2. Alternate Care Arrangements

Substitute or alternate day care homes are not readily available. There is no such thing as phoning in sick. Emergencies are usually covered by agency social workers. However, during an illness, the caregiver and his/her family are usually left scrambling for alternate care.

3. Wages

The best commentary on this issue is in the Private Home Day Care Guidelines, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Children's Services Branch (page 7.13):

"The day care mother will not be able to make a living at this enterprise; therefore no one should be approved for the service who has no other source of income and who therefore might be disposed to drop the service on discovering that it does not provide a living wage."

The concept that one must put in a full day providing quality care for children and not be remunerated appropriately is questionable, to say the least.

We have recently been given raises, but even \$7.00 a day per child, for what can be a ten-hour day, before expenses for snacks, a hot lunch and depreciation on your home, rarely comes out to a break-even proposition monetarily.

4. Career Advancement

Family day care is at present a dead-end street. It is not recognized as a job and years of experience at home with children do not count for much in the job market.

5. Education

Education and training are, to a large extent, not available in a form that can benefit F.D.C. providers. Wages are too

low to give incentive for people to take E.C.E. courses before they start to work in F.D.C. Night courses are difficult to schedule, because providers often work long hours with no relief.

6. Employee Status, Income Tax, Liability Insurance

In our area, only one agency grants workers employee status. The others are all working under purchase-of-service agreements. This means the caregivers don't get advantages of U.I.C. or C.P.P. The income tax situation is not clear. Allowable expenses range from 40% to 60% of income but it is not clear how these figures were arrived at. The extent of liability insurance coverage is also not clear.

Let's look at what these problems mean to the provider and to the children in her care. What incentives are there for her to provide nutritious meals and snacks, to plan programs and outings, and to become more educated in her field?

What family day care needs are incentives to attract good caregivers and incentives to keep them in the field.

The Family Day Care Association of Ottawa-Carleton wants to establish communication among the three hundred supervised caregivers in the area, with group care and with the community. Our plans include a newsletter to establish a forum for concerns, suggestions and information on family day care and child care. We are also planning a series of workshops. Workshops will meet during the day, with alternate child care provided at the workshop on a rotating basis by workshop participants. Workshops will be run by caregivers to meet their own needs. We also plan to study and draw up proposals on the problems facing family day care.

Family day care has a lot to offer. But let's have caregivers who are well-supported, well-trained and well-recognized for the services they provide. And let's have group care and family day care working together to provide quality day care to all children and parents.

Barb Westworth
President,
F.D.C. Association of Ottawa-Carleton

HOW IT BEGAN

In 1971 federal spending on day care was 4 million dollars. Each year since then, the amount has doubled, except this year when the \$21 million spent represented only a 37% increase over last year. But federal spending depends on what the provinces spend with Ottawa matching each 50 cents spent by the provinces. This year's smaller increase reflects the restraint in provincial spending on day care. In terms of numbers, day care spaces increased from 17,391 in 1971 to 69,952 according to most recent figures.

But it appears that this will be the upper limit in number of available spaces until changes occur in provincial spending policies for day care.

It is not surprising then to see Howard Clifford, the federal consultant on day care, quoted as saying that many of the people who were "running after the Government five or ten years ago are still at it." "It's almost a religion with a very low dropout rate," he said. When one looks back at the day care situation in the 1940s and how much it took to get day care to the present stage after the day care explosion in 1971, it seems that we'll need another so-called "explosion" to get any further increase in day care services. If a religious type of dedication was required over the past five or ten years to bring about the changes to date, it seems clear that the same type of dedication and commitment will have to continue for perhaps another five or ten years to bring

about expansion and to put day care services in the state they should be in.

The push to expand day care services came about as a result of the huge influx of mothers into the work force along with changing ideas about women and the value of group care. In 1974, a major crisis threatened day care in Ontario when Margaret Birch, a cabinet minister, proposed changes in provincial regulations which would have drastically reduced the quality of care given to pre-school children. In response to the Birch proposals, a large group of people and agencies met to discuss their concerns about the proposals. While there were differences among them, they were minor and the group agreed to join together to work on defeating the Birch proposals under the name Day care Reform Action Alliance.

What followed was a series of media contacts, pickets, rallies, marches, preparation and submission of briefs to the provincial legislature, and contacts with MPP's. This public protest by the Alliance and other groups and the examinations carried out by the government appointed Day Care Advisory Council into which the Day Care Alliance had input, had a significant influence on the final decision to not implement the Birch proposals. The crisis was over but many problems remained.

There is the problem of the large number of children who need day care but are unable to obtain it. There is the problem of parents being unable to obtain subsidy. Another issue is that of provincial spending ceilings and the way they aggravate these problems. There is the problem of parent co-operatives which are unable to secure funds to set up their own day care centre. Another question is that of unionization of staff and whether franchising of day care is detrimental to standards of day care service. Underlying these problems is the moral question of priorities -- should parents' and children's rights come last?

The Day Care Alliance with the support and involvement of parents and staff is working on dealing with these problems, a difficult task in a period of spending restraints by government. It may in fact be true that this endeavour is "almost a religion with a very low dropout rate". Five years from now we may look around and again see many of the same people. It is a long slow process and a great deal of work and commitment are necessary but the stakes are high. As we chanted in the demonstrations against the Birch proposals:

Children should come first,
The government puts them last.
Our children are the future,
The government's in the past.

Credit: Garth Scheuer



OutWestDaycare

NEWS FROM VANCOUVER

Day care problems, specifically lack of funding and low wages, are not limited to Ontario. In Vancouver, day care centers, although not officially cut back in funds, had not received any increased funding from the government since the spring of 1974. Therefore, workers did not receive any wage increase for two years.

In March 1976, day care workers from eight centers held a one-day strike and public rally in support of their efforts to negotiate better contracts and in order to put pressure on the government for increased funding.

The workers, not content with their low wages (which average \$500-\$600 per month), have rightfully begun to unionize.

But like many in Ontario, day care centers are often run by non-profit societies or organizations that have no money and no access to funds. The British Columbia Social Credit government, which has control over the funds, has refused to negotiate.

The strike was held in order to pressure the real cause of inadequate funding - the B.C. government. The workers were sensitive to the hardships caused to parents and children by the strike and shut down the centers for one day only.

The demonstration by 200 workers and parents had immediate results, but it was a small victory indeed. Two days later, the government announced a cost per child fee increase of \$20 monthly, and the right of centers to raise their fees higher if

they choose. This means that parents who had full subsidy in the past may now find their fees increased higher than the amount the government will pay.

Any significant wage increase will most likely be paid directly by parents through increased fees.

The Vancouver people who are fighting for higher wages and better conditions feel that in doing so they are also fighting to ensure better conditions for the children they care for. They too recognize that good quality childcare is a right for children and their parents, but that quality day care will not be realized until there is adequate funding.

We must all continue to fight for this basic right.

New Video Available

DAY CARE WHO NEEDS IT?

The film and video done in conjunction with the National Film Board, Sheridan College Media Centre, and the Day Care Reform Action Alliance, is now finished. It deals with the questions of need,

organization, operation, and government role in day care in the province.

We suggest this film be used as an educational tool to promote discussions which should be led by someone familiar with the Ontario day care scene.

Video available for purchase or order from:

Kathleen Gallagher,
Early Childhood Education Department
Centennial College, Toronto, Ont.
Purchase: \$30.00. Rental: \$5.00.

Film will be available for rental and purchase from the National Film Board after October 15, 1976.

Daycare Burns

condemned buildings and such in the wild hope that something would materialize that met the requirements of the Building, Health, and Fire Departments, and was zoned properly.

Finally, taking the advice of the area Day Nurseries supervisor, the centre made arrangements to move in temporarily with an already licensed day care that had extra space. Unfortunately, this proposed move -- to Vaughan Road and St. Clair Avenue -- would have taken the Avenue Road day care too far away to be convenient to all the parents. (And also, oddly enough, into an area already well saturated with existing day care centres.)

was economically unfeasible for the day care to continue as arranged. (In fact, it would have been courting bankruptcy.) It was decided to maintain the corporate structure of the day care and an executive board was elected. The children, including the four receiving subsidy from the Child Care Unit of Metro Social Services, were placed in other centres.

At some time in the future, perhaps in the rebuilt Church of the Messiah, the Avenue Road Day Nursery will rise again -- to wrangle with the problems of sprinkler systems, bank loans, provincial grants, and per diem rates. Until then, address all enquiries to:

Jenny Stimac, co-ordinator -- 652-1699

This magazine was written, edited and produced by Evelyn McKee, Kathy Gallagher, Heather Richardson, Susan Muckenfuss, Pat Schulz, Julie Mathien, Ernie Atalick, Irene Kyle, Jenny Stimac.



If you would like copies of this issue, or of our last issue, please contact the Alliance at 15 Birch Ave., Toronto, or at P.O. Box 571, Station P, Toronto.

At a hastily-called last-minute meeting on Monday, August 30, it was decided that it

INFANT DAYCARE

Although most of us agree with the idea of group care for two, three and four year old children, many of us have some difficulty accepting the idea of day care for infants. On some level, we've all integrated the values of this society and thus feel that babies need a one-to-one relationship for some length of time. Many women suffer considerable economic difficulty in order to stay at home for at least three to six months with a new baby. Those who must use day care immediately often feel varying degrees of guilt even though they 'know' group care is good for infants.

We in day care are often reluctant to voice our concerns and questions about babies and group care because we feel disloyal, old-fashioned, or not committed enough to the ideal of group socialization of young children.

Although this is only a short article on a long subject, let's look at some of the questions and doubt:

1. Will the strength of attachment or the love bond between a child and his/her primary caregiver be diluted if the child is in group care?

Bettye M. Caldwell et. al. dealt directly with this issue in the Syracuse, N.Y. infant study program, a specially designed infant day care centre which served as a 'laboratory' to test the hypothesis that "an appropriate environment can be programmed which will offset any developmental detriment associated with maternal separation and possibly add a degree of environmental enrichment frequently not available...."(1) The result of this study showed there were "no significant differences"(2) between child-mother attachment patterns shown by a sample of home-reared children and these day care infants. Most of the good current research on that confusing 'Bowlby-maternal deprivation syndrome' indicates just that -- "no significant difference". Further reading on this subject of attachment and separation is suggested below.

2. A second common concern is that infants interacting with others in group care will be constantly sick.

Obviously a child in group care will be



Credit: Paul Campbell

exposed to more illness than his/her home-reared counterpart. The Caldwell Syracuse study indicates a slight increase in upper respiratory infections in the first few months of day care in young infants; however, these differences tapered off after a few months. Keep in mind that at whatever age children first enter group situations, they always get more low-grade infections until they are used to it.

A second important area is that of prevention of illness. Good preventative health techniques must be used in good day care.

Another common doubt about infants in day care is that children won't interact with each other until they are 3 or 4 years old. Anyone working with young children knows that the old ideas of "solitary" and "parallel" play are somewhat too narrow. When so socialized, children help and play with each other at early ages. "Children in China" by Ruth Sidel cites interesting examples of early interaction as do countless of our own observations.

Much of our own thought is based on assumptions that mothers and babies belong together; one person can offer perfect love and stimulation, etc. Much research done by people like Caldwell, Rutter, etc. seems to indicate that group care is certainly just as good and often better for babies as the 'nuclear family'. Researchers should now stop being defensive and start to really work on planning optimal group care situations for infants.

We in day care must pull out all our feelings, ideas, hopes and doubts about group care, air them and discuss them. We must reject some of these and accept many of the new facts. Infant day care is still a new and exciting field. The quality of that care is crucial ... and it will only be good if people in the field push hard to make it so. To push we must believe, so let's open the doors, and let some thinking and arguing in.

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