

SUMMARY OF ACTION DAYCARE POSITION

for National Conference

Action Daycare recently produced a position paper on universal access to daycare for the coming National Conference on daycare. Given the length of their paper (25 pages) the Steering Cttee. decided to produce a brief overview for this mailing. The full position paper will be available at the next meeting for \$2.00

The Steering Cttee. response to the Action Daycare paper is attached in the form of a letter to Schultz and Sue Collier, the authors of the paper. It is our hope that our comments will be included in the final version of the paper.

SUMMARY

The position paper is divided into 3 major sections:

- What Kind of Daycare Do We Want?
- What Kind of Daycare Do We Have Now In Canada?
- How Do We Get High Quality, Universally Accessible Daycare?

1. What Kind of Daycare Do We Want?

The paper identifies 3 interlocking needs;

- children need good daycare
- women need good daycare
- society needs good daycare

To meet these interlocking needs, the daycare system in Canada must have following characteristics;

- widely available- in rural, urban and suburban locations in every province, wide variety of types to be available
- financially accessible to all - this inevitably means large government subsidy
- universally of high quality- good facilities, programming, sanitation, low staff-child ratios and trained staff. Minimum standards

2. What Kind of Daycare Do We Have Now In Canada?

The 3 characteristics identified in the first section are examined on a national level. A broad overview is provided by presenting statistics from all provinces. This is a by necessity, quite general.

Availability- Present licensed spaces serve only 3% of children aged 0-9
" " " " " 8% " " " " in need of care.

- Presently available spaces, 80% for 2-5 yr. olds, 8% for infants, and 15% for school age children
- Areas highlighted for concern: needs of school-age children; hours and days of operations of most centres; integration of handicapped children, wide variations existing in quantity, quality, location, government standards, working conditions, etc; various forms of sponsorship (commercial, family daycare, community boards, parent co-op, public, etc.)

Financial availability- "Good daycare is already financially accessible only to fairly affluent and to those poor enough to qualify for a big subsidy. This situation is getting worse, rather than better" (p. 8)
-in 1979 governments at all levels spent \$95 million on daycare

Financial availability cont'd.

explanation
of
CAP funding

- \$40 million through Canada Assistance Plan (CAP)
- \$55 million through lost revenue in child care expense tax credit
- * - The problems with government funding are related to the inadequacies of the basic funding mechanisms (CAP and child care tax credit)
- The federal government, through Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) shares the cost of daycare service despite its being under provincial jurisdiction.
- The federal government cost-share 50% of provincial expenditure for daycare for those families considered to be "in need" or "likely to be in need". This program is for welfare or low-income families who need subsidy to go to work or school. This has meant that daycare has remained a welfare, custodial, service
- This federal cost-sharing applies only to the costs of individual families (ie. fees), it does not apply to operating costs such as start-up costs, capital costs, maintenance, etc. These costs are left to provincial initiative and 100% financial responsibility.
- Maintenance grants (per diem fee paid by gov't. directly to a centre) have been initiated in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Quebec
- Some funds are made available to parents through Income Tax Act (Child Care Tax Credit) and UIC.

Quality of Care - This discussion includes a look at working conditions and salaries of daycare staff (national average, 800-850 dollars a month). The need for improved working conditions to reduce staff turnover is identified as important aspect of providing quality.

- Inconsistency and lack of enforcement of regulations are highlighted
- The fact that 90% of all children in the 0-9 age group are in informal arrangements - quality may be good or bad. The study done by Laura Johnson The Kin Trade states that most of this informal care is only "adequate custodial-type care".

3. How Do We Get High Quality, Universally Accessible Daycare?

The paper examines 3 strategies that are emerging in the national daycare movement

1. Amend Income Tax Act to give larger childcare expense deductions.

- This strategy is not supported by Action Daycare
- Tax deductions are shown to be of most benefit to higher earning women, while those on minimum wage or low-income do not benefit from tax deductions
- Tax deductions now discriminate against men, only allowing single fathers with custody papers to use the grant, while any mother can.
- Private babysitters do not want to claim income, so receipts are difficult to get
- Tax Credit, as opposed to tax deductions, will encourage the growth of a private daycare system. Dollars spent through a tax credit will not be publicly accountable. A brief discussion follows on corporate daycare. (see letter to authors for comment on this point).

2. Establish a publicly funded, not-for profit daycare system, incorporating a variety of services in neighbourhood daycare resource centres.

- This option is supported and elaborated by Action Daycare
- "The daycare movements best strategy is to fight for complete public funding of not-for-profit programs."

2. Establish a publicly funded, not-for profit daycare system, ... cont'd.

-There are 2 key elements to the Action Daycare proposal - a new National Child Care and Education Act and Neighbourhood Resource Centre (Hub Model)
 -National ChildCare and Education Act - The federal government should remove daycare for CAP and establish a new National ChildCare and Education Act by which the federal government would pay 50% of all operating, capital and other associated costs of various types of appropriate childcare in each province contingent upon-

National
Childcare and
Education
Act

- i) Childcare facilities meeting national standards of quality (minimum standards)
- ii) Childcare being universally available. Suggested definition of universally available is that facilities must be provided whenever 20 families in a certain radius can demonstrate a need for care.

The initiative for establishing centres and programs could still come from a variety of places, ensuring a variety of services to meet particular needs.

-In areas of large enough population, governments should encourage the development of neighbourhood resources centres which aim to provide a comprehensive approach to daycare which would broaden and enrich the program possibilities and would co-ordinate present programs which are scattered and isolated. (see attached diagram)

neighbourhood
Resource
Centres

-The advantages of such a system would be childrens changing needs can be accommodated without disruptive relocation' parent involvement at the local level can be maximized; cost-efficiency would be achieved by centralization of presently duplicated tasks; planned daycare system would lend prestige to the service, the standard of care would be easier to monitor; and the development of each child could be recorded and consistent support developed.

-The major disadvantage is the cost. Estimated cost is \$3.5 billion a year. This represents only 1% of Canada GNP, but governments will not be open to it at this time. Still reflects the correct perspective.

3. Reform CANADA ASSISTANCE PLAN

-This proposal is advocated by those who think the call for publicly-funded universally accessible care is unattainable. It is not supported by Action Daycare.

-Those defending this position argue for changes in the framework of CAP
 -define all children as "likely to be in need"
 and the funding mechanisms of CAP

-federal gov't. cover 50% of all costs, start-up, capital and maintenance in not-for profit care, even if fee-paying children benefit.

-raise maximum income level, reduce amount paid by partial fee-payers
 -federal gov't. pay 75% of costs of infant care

-This proposal is rejected by Action Daycare because it tries to reform CAP to be something it was not intended to be. Cap was not set up to establish a federal daycare system, rather to help individual low-income Canadians.

CONCLUSION (quoted directly from the paper in its entirety)

With the current funding mechanisms and conservative government attitudes in all provinces, our day care system will continue to deteriorate, We urge all day care activists across the country to examine carefully the proposals in this paper and to move forward at the time of this important national daycare conference to create the first real National Day Care Campaign in this country, based on a call for universally accessible, non-compulsory, publicly-funded day care for all our children who want or need it.

