

- Executive
 - Constitutional Changes
 - Nominating Committee
- 1976?
- = send flowers ~~to~~
- Anne Croll to phone me Wed., - call Peter, Melinda, Jo - Anne & Bev Kelly.

The Ottawa Carleton Day Care Association is a non-profit agency representing 21 day care centers and the parents and teachers involved in these centers, in the Region of Ottawa-Carleton. The member centers provide approximately 1000 group care spaces and approximately 400 family home day care spaces. O.C.D.C.A. attempts to deal with the many problems that the day care community experiences by expressing the concerns of parents, teachers and administrators to all levels of government and the community at large. O.C.D.C.A. is thus submitting this brief to the Federal Government outlining the critical situation that thousands of parents and children find themselves when they are in need of day care.

Accessibility

Although day care in the Region had experienced a rapid growth in the early part of this decade there has been a freeze on expansion for the past 12 months. The expansion of day care was not an artificially created phenomena but was a process which was responding to the genuine needs of the community. This need was created by the steady increase of the percentage of women with small children entering the labour force. For Ontario the participation rate of these women is from 35% to 40%. In the past, many of these women could have relied on the extended family for child care arrangements. This is no longer the case with approximately 50% of pre-schoolers (0-6) and 71% of full time school children (0-13) cared for outside the home by non-family members. Expansion was indeed

necessary to meet the needs of these children. However, to date, only a very small proportion of children who need day care are receiving care that in any way guarantees their health and development.

Day care is now a service to the children of low and high income family groupings. In Ottawa alone 78% of all spaces are occupied by the children of subsidized parents. The reason for this is quite clear. Middle income families that are not eligible for subsidy cannot afford the fees. In Ottawa, the average per diem rate for pre-school care will be approximately \$12 in 1977. For an infant this fee can range as high as \$20 - \$22 per day. These fees translate into astronomical day care bills. The reason this situation has developed finds its roots in the fundamental philosophy upon which day care legislation is based. Funding criteria is based on the economic needs of parents and not on the rights and needs of children to and for an environment that guarantees their optimal growth, health and development.

Problem of Commitment

The major problem with the funding of day care under the Canada Assistance Plan is that it is seen to be a support mechanism for only families deemed in need. There is no universal commitment by the federal government to the care children are receiving in their pre-school years. The restricting of funding criteria to the economic situation of parents has effectively eliminated children of

middle income families from day care. Middle income families simply cannot afford the service and thus must find alternate baby sitting arrangements. These arrangements are not licensed therefore there is no guarantee of the safety of the home or whether or not the child's physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs are being met. There is no effective control of the number of children any one person can care for.

Conclusion

There is a tremendous gap between what we know and what governments are prepared to commit themselves to. The argument of whether day care is good or bad has long been put to rest with numerous studies demonstrating the benefits of the service. The fact that women with children are entering the labour force in increasing numbers is undisputed. The view that if the mother works children should be in care arrangements that guarantee some level of service goes unquestioned. Even with these factors day care in Canada serves only a small portion of the children, primarily low income single-parent families. There is a desperate need to expand and improve existing day care.

Solution

We can't underestimate the significance the federal legislation plays. It is the federal legislation that sets the parameters of the funding structure of the entire country. If the federal government^{ment} established a structure that did not did not rely entirely on the concept of the economic

needs of parents but on the needs and rights of children in modern society perhaps a more accessible service could be developed.

There are no cheap solutions to the problem. Day care costs cannot be reduced. In fact if the day care community is to attract qualified and committed ~~women~~^{people} of both sexes the cost must rise above current levels. Family home day care is not a ~~cheap~~^{exp} alternative as it is comparable in cost to preschool group care. and its cost ~~too~~ will rise as care givers receive remuneration above present levels which can be considered little more than an honorarium for services rendered.

Funds must be available to put a ceiling on day care fees charged to all families. There must be a public commitment to an accessible community-based day care service. If this commitment is not forthcoming the future is not bright. Day care will become more and more a ghetto for low income children. Unless salaries increase with subsequent increase in cost, day care will have increasingly more trouble attracting and keeping qualified workers. Faced with inflationary pressures and lack of middle income children many centers will close. The development and growth of children of middle income parents will continue to be ignored and in the end we all lose as children have the uncanny habit of growing up to be adults who carry with them their childhood experiences.