

You may ask why I chose this title for my talk today. I did so not simply to be provocative, nor because I wished to assume the always annoying stance of devil's advocate. Rather I did so out of some wish to confront the complex realities which face us today in day care services, in most other social services, in our economy, and in our relationships one with another.

Just over a year ago I came to the startling conclusion that we need something like 600,000 day care places in Canada for children under six. We can equate this number roughly with the number of working mothers with children under six. There are other ways of computing similarly horrendous figures for children needing day care services. We can talk of the 500,000 single parent families, 400,000 led by mothers, and 100,000 led by fathers. We can extend our focus and talk of before school, lunch-time, and after-school programs.

I chose to concentrate on the under six age group. My initial conclusions on day care were published in my Council's journal *Canadian Welfare* for November/December 1974.¹ Perhaps not surprisingly, the figure of 600,000 was seized on by the press, radio and television. It is interesting how large figures smacking of disaster or catastrophe always do make news. If I had talked solely of young children of working mothers, that would almost certainly have not been so newsworthy. But nonetheless this is what we are mainly dealing with when we talk about day care services, and we are talking about a worthwhile life for children and parents both today and tomorrow.

1 H. Philip Hepworth, "600,000 Children: Report of a Survey of Day Care Needs in Canada," in *Canadian Welfare* (Ottawa: The Canadian Council on Social Development, 1974) pp.10-13.

In fairness to the media, they did present my conclusions pretty accurately and pretty fully. Moreover the only negative editorial comment I saw was in a paper from northern Ontario, which disapproved both of parents neglecting their duties, and of the enormous cost of universal day care services. One radio interviewer, a woman, somewhat despairingly, I thought, asked what effect studies like my own had when the day care situation never seemed to improve. My response which sounded like a lame excuse even to me was that we had to keep on working to improve things.

Nonetheless developments in the day care field during International Women's Year do not give real grounds for optimism. A survey² published by Health and Welfare Canada this last summer reported a doubling of full day care places between March 1973 and March 1974 from 26,811 to 55,181 (including 4,185 family day care spaces), but as a summer student of mine commented "twice nothing is nothing." The situation is in fact reminiscent of the Mad Hatter's Tea-Party where when Alice is offered more tea by the March Hare, she replies in an offended tone "I've had nothing yet, so I can't take more" whereupon the Hatter reproves her saying "You mean you can't take less, it's very easy to take more than nothing."³

Which I would suggest is precisely where we are today with day care services in Canada. Now it is not my purpose to decry the efforts of people across this country who have worked hard to develop and to deliver day care services. But at the present time I would suggest to you the case,

2 Canada. Health and Welfare Canada, Status of Day Care in Canada (1974) (Ottawa, 1975).

3 Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland.

and the need for, day care services, have not become an irresistible force in political terms. Rather the case against extensive day care services on both economic and on human - some would say sentimental - grounds continues to be strongly felt - moreover this reactionary position is so strong, that often arguments for it seem not to have to be made.

But all this time we have this figure of 600,000 children, whose mothers are working, and for whom some provision, no matter however makeshift has to be made.

Even the supporters of the "mother should stay at home" school would presumably acknowledge that children without their mothers in the daytime should have something, somebody in their place, and logically this substitute should be an adequate surrogate parent figure or replacement. But because parents, even working parents, are in the main caring people, they do make a wide variety of alternative care arrangements. We scarcely need to be told this, but it is borne out by the surveys of working women and their day care arrangements carried out in 1967 and 1973. Because working parents do make these arrangements, the demand for publicly provided day care is consequently muted. Moreover the sheer variety of these arrangements defies easy identification, so that it is next to impossible to say whether these arrangements are adequate.

One way round this is a legal requirement that the day care arrangement be registered and subject to inspection. This is the course adopted by France; there the mother reports the arrangement she makes to the local social services office. At the same time the person providing the day care service

has to be licensed to give such service. You may say such a procedure is unduly bureaucratic and in any case unenforceable. My response is:

(1) there is a public interest in the welfare of children - this is the whole point of child welfare legislation, (2) we are already moving towards supervised family day care arrangements, (3) registration and supervision would help us quantify the extent of these arrangements - and from a tactical point of view I think we need this evidence, (4) we could isolate good provision from poor provision in those that are registered, and make a presumption that those that are not registered are suspect.

Why do we need to adopt this approach? Quite apart from the value of knowing how well children are being cared for, we do need to get a coherent picture of the need for day care services. Parents are not unionized; as a group they are not easily organized; they do not form a natural pressure group. The concessions that small groups of single parents or poor people win are worth winning, but may not affect the long-term situation. Nor is the abandoning of children on the steps of City Hall a good bargaining ploy, since it serves to demonstrate what people opposed to day care have always felt, that working mothers do not really care about the welfare of their children, a gross slander if ever there was one.

What we need is striking evidence that day care services are needed. In times of war, we have a clear external excuse; women are needed in the labor force, day care services are a question of clear national priority. When we explore other possible areas where propaganda can be made for day care we find no such easy solutions.

If we take another institution similar to day care, the kibbutzim in Israel, all manner of political, economic religious, cultural and educational arguments have been made justifying why children should be brought up in some relative isolation from their parents. Now you may say that there never have been many kibbutzim and that in any case their regimes have been modified over time, but nonetheless the idea of these institutions has proved sufficiently strong to cut across previous patterns of parental and social behavior.

When we look at countries such as Russia and China the political, economic and cultural circumstances have been sufficient to establish early childhood education on group lines from the age of 2 or 3. The same is true in France.

I think we can learn from the experience of these countries a little better what we want for ourselves. We learn that organized provision for virtually all children over 2 or 3 can be made. We know also that the staffing ratios in such countries are poor, that arrangements are on orthodox public school classroom lines with relatively large groups of children to adult staff. We know however that such provision is politically and culturally sanctioned, and that mothers go out to work partly for economic reasons, and partly because they are expected to do so. We must also presume that children are not thought to suffer serious emotional or educational deficits through such arrangements - this is not to say however that some reservations are not being felt.

The common feature in most countries is that very large scale day care provision is not made for children under $2\frac{1}{2}$ years, this is not to say that some infant and family day care arrangements are not made, but rather that these are not a major objective of social planning in these other countries. In Russia there has in fact been a swing away from providing for the under 3 group in favor of the 3-7 age group. At the same time there is some renewed emphasis on the importance of the parent-child relationship.⁴

My own feeling is that recent interest in infant and family day care services in Canada has served only to widen and make more confused the whole question of day care services. It has also made the campaign for vastly improved and extended day care services that much harder. It has raised the very real fear that very young children will suffer serious emotional loss.

I would suggest to you though that the bulk of demand and need for day care lies with the older children, that is those over $2\frac{1}{2}$ or 3, and that this is where the main campaign for universal services should lie.

In other words we should not weaken the cause of day care by opening it to attack where it is most vulnerable, the area of care of babies and infants.

It is at this point that I get back to my theme of more day care services, but not more regardless. I suggest to you that the battleground

⁴ Bernice Madison, "Social Services for Families and Children in the Soviet Union Since 1967," Child Welfare, Vol. LIII, No.7, July 1974.

for improved day care services has to be chosen carefully, at a point where a number of known facts converge.

Perhaps I can recite a few:

- (1) Most mothers take some time out from their careers to have their babies, and by inclination prefer to be close to them when they are very young.
- (2) Separation from the mother figure is likely to be less harmful as the child grows older.
- (3) The process of growing up may be positively aided by introduction to and participation in group activities with other children from the age of 2 or 3 onwards.

These facts or factors should not be viewed as absolutes, but they do offer some guidance as to strategy.

At the same time as we are wanting vastly improved and extended day care services, we are saying that we want good quality services. My main argument against more day care services regardless lies in this area of quality. A trade-off between quality and quantity is, in my view, unethical and fraught with dangers; this is one reason why I view the reported increases in provision with some scepticism. We do not have the control mechanisms to ensure that good quality care is being given; this is partly due to the way we organize our affairs at provincial and municipal levels, partly to the haphazard way day care centres come into existence, and partly to the understandable dislike of outside regulation and supervision. We are of course wanting to have our cake and eat it.

Now the constraints on the growth of day care services are very real ones. They involve not only questions of attitudes, but also real questions of physical and financial resources, of trained staff, and of the large number of children to be accommodated.

But it is because of the existence of these constraints that we should distrust short-cut routes to more day care services.

I suggest to you that we have to address these realities pretty frankly and pretty honestly. If we want what amounts to universal services available on demand, then we have to make some compromises. I suggest to you, though, that we cannot afford to compromise in the area of quality. We have to be pretty sure that children are not worse off receiving day care services, than if they were in some other situation; this to me is a basic minimum requirement, and we then have to build on this.

The key problems in the way of providing universal services are: (1) resources and (2) organizational arrangements. Resources are almost by definition always either scarce or limited. But equally important in my view is the way resources are to be made available in the first place, and how they are to be administered in the second.

It is because of these organizational problems that the most important compromise that could be made at the moment is some reconciliation of viewpoints between the "carers" and the "educators."

Why this reconciliation is urgently necessary is because, when we talk about large numbers of children under six receiving services outside

their own homes, we are talking about the kindergarten classes in the public school system, where over 300,000 are attending mostly on a half day basis.⁵

I am fully aware of the fears expressed by day care practitioners about such a link with the public school system, and I think many of these fears are justified. One of the resolutions passed at the last Annual Meeting of the CCSD reads as follows:

That the CCSD support a community based multi-discipline approach to day care for pre-school children which is not served by even the consideration of placing day care under the public educational system authority.

It may be as well to ask where some of these fears about the educational system are justified. I have suggested already that even those countries with very comprehensive provision for children under 6 or 7 tend to draw the line at $2\frac{1}{2}$ or 3. While there is some provision for children under this age, we can safely say that this is the exception. We can conclude that there is fairly common agreement that group care arrangements are not ideal for very young children, that they are not likely to facilitate proper emotional development, and may even disturb or hinder it; that socialization activities are of less importance for children under $2\frac{1}{2}$ than for slightly older children, and that educationally structured learning opportunities are much less appropriate for children under $2\frac{1}{2}$ or 3 than for their slightly older peers.

5 H. Philip Hepworth, Personal Social Services in Canada: A Review, Vol. 2: Day Care Services for Children (Ottawa: CCSD, 1975).

I submit to you though that these negative factors of group care relating to very young children diminish in importance as the child grows older, and that in fact they may become instead positive factors. While individual rates of development differ among children there is a continuum of development along which some factors recede in importance and some grow in importance. I know that I am stating the obvious, but the implication is that equally we should be seeking to recognize these developmental factors in our service systems, and should be seeking to eliminate or at least reduce the discontinuities between systems.

Day care services in my view have to straddle the transition period in a child's life between the one to one dependency relationship with parents or parent substitutes, and the relative independence of school life.

I know that to many day care personnel public school systems appear forbidding, impersonal, concerned with formal education, discipline etc., and that public school teachers do not by definition have a substitute parent role. As I said earlier I share these fears. Even within the public school set-up the transition from kindergarten classes to Grade 1 appears from my first hand observation this fall quite unnecessarily abrupt, and I think discontinuous.

I would argue however that we do not do anything about humanizing the public school system if we seek to isolate day care provision from it. Rather we simply create another bureaucratic box, and in the present case of day care services not a very big one, and shudder when we consign our graduates to the tender mercies of the public school system.

My main reason for laboring this point is that I see the best chance of creating the major day care provision we need through and in the public school system. The evidence is already staring us in the face that the bulk of provision for children under six away from home is in the public school sector.

I do not think that such an organizational development need alter the location of present day care services; these should remain where they are as community based, community related facilities. Moreover parent participation in centres would and should remain as great as ever. Hopefully this would spill over into the school system.

I know some of you may say that day care services are too fragile a system to be sacrificed to the monolithic public school systems, that day care services should not be expected to act as a fifth column and try to humanize the school system.

I think, however, that whether we like it or not, we have to recognize the present realities of provision, and where the opportunities lie. I suggest to you also that most other countries have adopted or are adopting this route.

Canada is, of course, not alone in facing this difficult dilemma. The same situation applies in the United States. The situation is slightly different in the United Kingdom, where compulsory schooling starts in any case at five, and government policy is to provide nursery schools from the age of three; at the same time the social services departments operate day nurseries for children recognized as in social need, while the bulk of

other provision is in parent-run playgroups not unlike many of our day care centres.

The other major discontinuity in service provision lies between the child welfare services, and the day care sector. The sheer multiplicity of auspices under which day care is provided makes a neat organizational tie-up between child welfare and day care services difficult to visualize. Nonetheless, the same provincial ministries and departments are involved, and it is only at the regional or local level that things become unstuck.

We seem never to be quite able to translate talk about prevention into actual services. While many children under the surveillance of the child welfare authorities are receiving day care services, it is rarely the case that day care is a preventive resource that child welfare people can call on whenever it is needed.

In fact the other main option we can take in providing more day care services is the more restricted one of a preventive social service. This is not entirely an either/or situation, since we could have social services provision up to about the age of three or four, and education taking over there. While organizational arrangements differ across Canada, it is I think true to say that nowhere is there a close tie-up between child welfare and day care services, and this in my view is a tragedy.

Our expectations of day care services are therefore manifold. The bulk of day care provision to date has had social service functions

intertwined with some economic functions; - the typical situation is clearly the child of a single parent, who goes out to work. I think though that day care practitioners themselves have recognized that social service functions rapidly develop into educational functions; in other words what is initially a custodial setting - by this I mean a place of safety, security and some comfort - is also a learning situation, and as a consequence the educational functions become a natural part of the day care setting. This is why I see the opportunity for greater continuity between day care services and formal education beginning in Grade 1.

We may say that resources are limited, and that we should provide day care services only for those children who need them as a social service. While I think that there are many, many children, who need day care as a social service, I do think also that our present services have gone beyond the simple social service function. Consequently we are not providing day care services according to a set of purely social service criteria. If we expand our services to include only children who need and would benefit from them on social service grounds, then we will preserve in our day care system anomalies which have crept in during the last decade, when criteria other than simple social service have been adopted

I have tried thus far to suggest that there is:

- (1) a need for major expansion of day care services;
- (2) that these should be for the 3 to 5 year age group inclusively;
- (3) that the best hope for major expansion lies in some linkage with the public school system;

- (4) that the quality aspects of day care have to be preserved and even extended into the public school system;
- (5) that an alternative option is to expand day care services in a more modified way on social service grounds, and link child welfare services with them, and
- (6) that this last option is not wholly realistic because existing day care services already have economic and educational functions, which provide the justification for the more major expansion that I have suggested is desirable.

I think, however, that we should beware of any attempt to expand day care services indiscriminately, and that day care loses all purpose if it does not have high standards.

I suggested earlier that day care services have yet to make the major breakthrough that is required. I think in fact that as usual our institutions and our legislators are several stages behind the actual stage our society has reached. It has been suggested to me recently that demand for day care has fallen off, that places are going vacant. I personally would be a little surprised if in present economic conditions some women were not being forced out of the work force, and looking after their children in the daytime instead, and in addition if some people could no longer pay day care charges.

In order to verify whether women were leaving the work force I checked labor force statistics for July and September of this year. What I found was that in percentage terms female participation rates were higher than 1974 and 1973, 42.2 per cent this year, 41.3 per cent in July 1974, and 39.6 per cent in July 1973. The total number of women in the labor force and available for

work has in fact continued to grow, though in percentage terms a higher proportion of women may be unemployed, and may therefore take their children out of day care.⁶ By September 40.9 per cent of women were employed, as opposed to 39.4 per cent in September 1974. 6.4 per cent or 225,000 women were unemployed as opposed to 5.1 per cent or 170,000 in 1974. Significantly in my view 51.4 of women aged 25-34 were working in September as opposed to 46.0 per cent a year earlier, or 846,000 as opposed to 732,000, of whom 615,000 and 526,000 were married.

While there may be a perceived temporary lull in the expressed demand for day care places, in my view this is not likely to last. We have to be concerned with both actual and potential demand, and with future trends of demand. I suggested earlier that potential demand can to some extent be related to the number of children under 6 of working women. Nonetheless the figure of 600,000 only represents slightly more than one quarter of children under 6. Not only are female participation rates in the labor force rising generally, they have risen in recent years among women of childbearing age, among whom of course are mothers of children under 6. The signs then are that the need for day care services will grow.

I see few signs that alternative care arrangements, that is alternatives to day care services, for children will grow further than they already extend - they are extensive already, but there are limits to what flexitime can achieve for husbands and wives, and what relatives, neighbors and older children can do.

⁶ Canada. Statistics Canada, The Labour Force, Cat. 71-001 (Ottawa, July and September 1975). 47.3 per cent of women aged 14-24 were working in Sept. 1975 as opposed to 46.7 in September 1974, 51.4 per cent of women aged 25-34 as opposed to 46.0 per cent, 49.5 per cent of women aged 35-44 as opposed to 47.9, 44.6 per cent of women aged 45-54 as opposed to 43.5, and 15.9 per cent of women aged 55 and over as opposed to 16.7 per cent. 225,000 women were unemployed in September 1975 as opposed to 170,000 in September 1974.

One of the arguments of opponents of day care is that parents should carry out their parental responsibilities, or should not have children, if they are not prepared to look after them. I have suggested that much of the demand for day care services has a basis in economic and social necessity. The experience of other countries suggests that this will become more the case rather than less.

Some part of the demand may well come from parents who are not able to discharge their parental responsibilities properly, and may in fact recognize this to be the case. We should have some concern for these parents, especially mothers, who find themselves in this position.

Many of you present must have found yourself in the position of being unmarried, and urged to marry and have a family, or of being married for a few years, and by choice not yet having children, and of experiencing the relentless subtle innuendos that you must have children. This applies to men and women. As human beings, as a society we still lay great store by sexual potency and fertility. The pressure on people to have children is quite relentless, whether they think they will be good parents or not. It is not surprising that many of us do not make out as parents, even more so single parents struggling by themselves. A jingle in the newspaper summed it all up for me the other day, "the person who sleeps like a baby does not have a baby."

Individually and as a society we must still place the needs of children before our own; this is why even though the economic pie is limited we cannot afford to ignore the need for day care services in Canada today.

I have suggested the need for some organizational realignments in Canada between child welfare services on the one hand and education services

on the other hand. I think day care services lie uneasily between these two and have elements of both. Because day care services are in this organizational limbo, and because of a number of cultural and other factors, I feel these services lack the leverage which they require. In particular, supporters and users of day care services are not themselves an organized force. Membership of these groups tends to be transitory, because use of day care services tends to be brief. On the other hand the need for some out of school provision may last very much longer.

My advocacy of some realignment is based on an attempt to analyse the present situation. I personally feel that we should look to our education services to be very much more caring and very much more accountable. Education as a system is in my view out of kilter with the social and economic circumstances of today. Frankly I don't know how working parents can make adequate arrangements for their children before and after school, teachers' professional development days, and during school holidays.

In respect to resources, clearly we do need more for day care services. I suggest that at a time like this when the economic pie is not growing, we need to reorganize our social priorities. I would suggest that some redistribution from the traditional education sector to day care services is both possible and desirable.

In the first and last analysis we are dealing with children. They are our number one priority. We cannot build a stable society with equality between the sexes, if we neglect the needs of children. Even major expansion of day care services will leave untouched the major role still required of us as parents. Advocacy of the one does not mean abandonment of the other.