

Good Daycare

Spring 1977



Equal opportunity for women really means little without supportive community services.

Each year, more and more women are entering the labor force by necessity or choice. Yet the inadequacies in the day care system severely limit the woman's freedom to make choices. What type of day care would provide optimum choice?

All day care programs should provide quality care. Women are often forced to leave their children in inadequate arrangements. The subsequent worry about these arrangements adversely affects the woman's functioning both at work and at home. Lack of quality care prevents the child from developing his/her full potential. Everyone benefits from quality day care.

cost. Middle income families who do not qualify for government subsidies have been especially discriminated against, and the failure to raise expense allowances on the means test with rising costs and wages means that now even low income families are having difficulty collecting subsidy. High day care costs make working an expensive proposition.

Immigrant women often choose to work night shifts and look after their children in the day time to avoid these costs. Deprived of sleep and normal family life, how can they adequately care for their children?

The hours that day care is available needs to be more flexible in order to be more accessible particularly for shift workers. There are several alternatives to the present 7.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. schedule. Group care centres could extend these hours or become integrated with super-

vised private home care programs. If the home care program is connected with the neighbouring group care centre, the needs of the community are better met with the two services working together. This is especially possible in large urban centres.

Women who have entered the work force have received little practical assistance or emotional support from the rest of society. Funds are poured into the celebration of a university's 150th anniversary yet few funds are available for the children of the university's students badly in need of adequate day care services. Where do our priorities lie?

What is our responsibility for the well being of working women and their families? Why can they not enjoy the freedom to choose?

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Dear Reader:

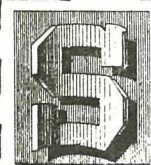
The people most directly concerned with the issue of daycare are, unfortunately, often too busy to be as active as they would like. Daycare staff are overworked and underpaid and, contrary to popular belief, have personal lives. Working mothers and single parents begin their "second shift" when the workday ends. But the demand for good, affordable daycare continues to be one of major importance for working parents and all those concerned with welfare and development of young children.

Recently, the Daycare Reform Action Alliance decided to concentrate its energies on bringing out the newsletter **Good Daycare**—making it a coherent tool for educating the community about the political issues involved in daycare. Each upcoming issue will center a specific aspect of the fight for good daycare for everyone.

Those who have been involved in past activities with the Alliance—such as the fight against the Margaret Birch proposals, or the proposed cutbacks of daycare funding in the Henderson report—will realize the importance of keeping informed as to what is happening in the daycare community. There will also be articles about current trends in early childhood education.

To make the newsletter the best it can be—we need your support. In the past we have been able to be fairly casual about subscriptions, sending out many complimentary issues. But as proposed cutbacks become real policy, everyone is finding it harder to make ends meet. We desperately need your money to keep the newsletter coming out.

Subscription rates will continue to be \$5.00 per year for 4 issues. Keep yourself informed by subscribing as soon as possible.



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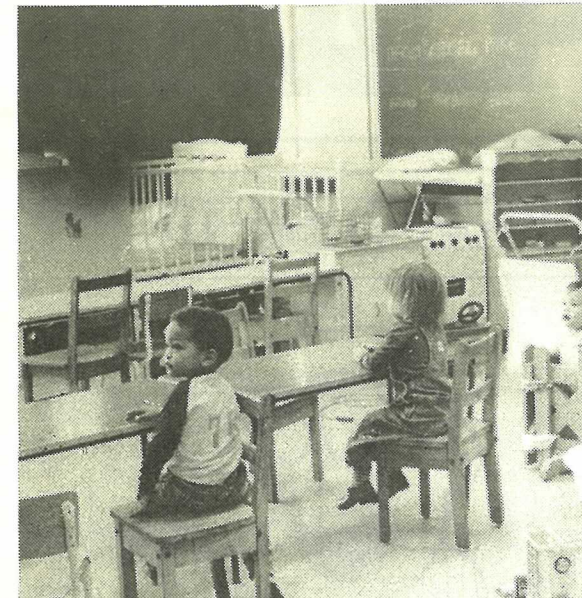
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This newsletter has been jointly produced by the Daycare Reform Action Alliance and the Women's Development Centre of the YWCA.

The Alliance is grateful for the financial support of the 'Y'.



Interview with a Mother

We interviewed a sole-support mother on her experiences with day care. She had just completed a course with Focus on Change which is a YWCA education program for sole-support mothers with low incomes. The academic upgrading group is done in co-operation with Canada Manpower and George Brown College.

Interviewer: Darlene, what has been your most recent experience with day care?

Darlene: I have just finished the academic upgrading program at Eastdale with Focus on Change, and there was day care provided for my younger children or I wouldn't have been able to do it.

Int: What are your children's ages?

Dar: I have a seven-year-old, a five-year-old, a two-and-one-half-year old, and an eighteen-month-old.

Int: What did you do before you participated in the Focus on Change academic upgrading program?

Dar: I was at home with my children. I had tried to find day care so I could get a job but I was unable to because it was too expensive [\$80.00 or \$90.00 a week] for the kind of money I would make, or when I was able to get a subsidy, the centre wouldn't accept the baby. Besides, my older children would have had to change schools to attend the day care, and I would have had to take them a long distance by transit every day. "Focus on Change" was my first chance to do anything. My doctor recommended that I get out and do something outside the house.

Int: What was the F.O.C. academic upgrading program like for you?

Dar: I feel so much more confident now and I know so much more. My daughter had such a good time in day care there. She keeps saying she wants to go back. She learned counting and recognizes letters

now. She was so happy there. I know she wouldn't have gotten that much stimulation in a private home.

Int: How were your other children cared for?
Dar: A friend watched my five year old afternoons [she's in school half-days], and I paid her \$6.00 a week. She did it as a favor to me, and now she's in the program herself. She also took the baby a lot when she was sick, and I couldn't take him to day care. I was leaving them with another friend until I learned they weren't being fed, and were not being treated nicely. Her older sister finally told me about this, or I wouldn't even have known.

Int: What has happened since you completed the upgrading program?

Dar: First, I spent seven weeks with no income, because I had to switch back to Mother's Allowance from Manpower, who were paying me a stipend while I was in the upgrading program.

Int: Are you the sole support of your family?

Dar: Yes, I am. The \$218.00 every two weeks had to cover everything, including child care and extras for lunches for my kids. Any surplus was supposed to be returned. I would like to give my kids the things they ask for sometimes. That's why I'd like to work, make a little extra money.

Int: What would you do if you had no problem getting affordable day care now?

Dar: I'd explore going back to school first. I could enter a trades program at George Brown College. I'd have to find an employer who would take me on as a kind of apprentice, and Manpower would pay me while I was at school. But it's not enough to cover the cost of day care.

Int: What are your plans for the immediate future?

Dar: I have a tutor—a volunteer from "Focus on Change" who still comes out. I really like her, and she's given me a lot of support. I'd like to take a test with Manpower in the Fall. If my grade level is good enough I might get into a re-training program. Joey will be two in November, and if he's trained, I can probably find a day care centre where I can get a subsidy, if there are spaces available. It seems every time one opens, it's full right away.

The workers from Manpower were discouraging the women in our group in most of their job ideas. At one point, we were discussing becoming garbage collectors; I don't know how I'd be but I'd try it, I think. I also like mechanical work, such as fixing machines. I've fixed my own washer three times.

Int: What problems do you see ahead for yourself?
Dar: Even if I get a job or into a Manpower program I know it will be hard. There is no sick leave. What do I do when my kids get sick? They deduct for absences and my money would be so tight—one day off, and we'd be out a day's groceries. Also the stipend doesn't cover day care costs. I'd have to hope to get a subsidy for day care. Then if I can't find a day care centre near here with space, my kids will have to change schools or be alone until I get home from work.

I have a friend who's getting less on her Manpower stipend than she did on Mother's Allowance, and she has more expenses! It's not going to be easy but I know I want to get some training and work at something I enjoy—I don't want to stay on Welfare.

I wonder if I would want to do that kind of thing for the rest of my life.

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DAY CARE WHO PAYS?



Although the government is involved in the funding of day care services, the costs are paid primarily by the parents through their day care fees, which average \$140. per month. At present, all three levels of government share in day care costs, both capital and operating, through a number of cost sharing variations.

Capital Costs

Only government and non-profit programs are eligible for government funding of capital costs. Profit-making centres are eligible for operating subsidies only. This funding is available for new construction and acquisition of land and/or a building or construction of an addition. In this case the province and the municipality or non-profit organization each pay 50%. For renovations and equipment the province pays 80% and the municipality or non-profit organization pays 20%.

Operating Costs

Parents who can't afford to pay the cost but who can prove their need for day care, can apply for government subsidization. Each child's subsidy, whether full or partial, is funded by all three levels of government: federal 50%, provincial 30%, and municipal 20%.

At the present time, the guidelines that determine who receives subsidized day care are specific in terms of both social and financial need. In fact, Canada Assistance Plan guidelines state:

"Because the Canada Assistance Plan is designed for Canadians who require financial assistance or who require Social Services to prevent, overcome or alleviate the causes and effects of poverty or child neglect it is not possible for the Federal Government to share in 'Universal' day care programs."

The "social needs" criteria for the most part means that only working and student parents get subsidy. Children may be referred by social agencies in situations of physical, emotional or intellectual deprivation. However the criteria also cover emergency day care to help deal with a family crisis.

Provinces may assess the financial ability of parents to pay day care fees by using a needs test or an income test. A needs test such as Ontario's Form 7 subtracts allowances for food, clothing, rent, heat, light, telephone and other cost-of-living elements from a family's net income. The amount of money subtracted for each item is the same as that allowed for families on welfare. The amount of money remaining after expenses is presumed to be available for day care fees.

If a province uses an income test, parents are allowed to earn up to the amount a family of the same size would receive if they were on welfare and still have their day care fees fully subsidized. At least fifty per cent of any income over this level (minus some work-related expenses) must go to meet the cost of day care. An income test

is more humane to administer, since all forms can be filled out a home by families and mailed to a central office and the forms are simpler and require no documentation of expenses. That however, is about the only advantage.

Problems

There are many problems with present method of day care funding. To receive assistance in paying day care fees, a family must be very poor. As day care costs rise (and quite legitimately so) the middle and lower-middle class family is increasingly being priced right out of the service, leaving it the preserve of the wealthy or the economically disadvantaged. And since the rich have never been large day care consumers, day care more and more serves as an institutional ghetto for the poor. (A more detailed examination of the failure of Form 7's to reflect real costs is contained in the article "Alice in Form 7 Wonderland.")

Subsidy money is administered on a per diem basis. This means that the center receives the subsidy each day the child is present. The per diem per child system of funding is unfair and does not cover the true costs. Centers must still pay for equipment, food and staffing while a child is absent.

The government has also tightened up on the administration and allocation of day care spaces. With fewer people eligible for subsidy many centers can't provide care for those who need it. This results in low

enrollment which in turn results in less money for food, equipment, and staff salaries. Some centers can't afford to offer their staff a raise this year. (for a more detailed look at the effect of government cutbacks on day care see the article "Cutbacks".)

Cutbacks have also meant that day care funding is decreasing. With all three levels of government sharing the costs it is all too easy for each level to lay the blame at the feet of the next level of government, thereby ignoring the cries of the day care community for expansion of services. The end result of inadequate funding is, of course, lower quality day care.

Proposed New Funding Method

In the Spring of this year, the Canadian Assistance Plan will be replaced by new legislation known as the Social Services Act. The new act promises some changes for day care funding. To begin with, there will be no "social needs" criteria. Day care subsidy will be based entirely on a family's income. The income test will not be tied to the provincial welfare levels as is now the case.

The federal government will continue to contribute to the cost of social services at the same rates as they have done in the past. Provinces, we are told, will have more leeway both in types of services that can be funded and the method used to disburse the funds. There are however upper limits on the "generosity" allowed under the new act. Provinces that exceed these

limits must pay all the costs above this maximum themselves.

We have not yet had any information on the details of the cost-sharing package that will be presented. We do know, however, that while maximum limits exist, minimum levels do not. Provinces may continue to choose a very low level of service or none at all. This last aspect is one of the main problems of the new legislation. There is no carrot (or stick) to encourage (or compel) unenthusiastic provinces to make a larger financial commitment to social services in general and day care in particular.

At present capital funds may be cost shared but only on the basis of the number of children who are projected to need subsidy. Provinces assume what they consider to be an unfair portion of capital costs and therefore, few include them as a consistent part of legislation. Federal start-up grants at 100% might possibly be the type of "carrot" that would lead provinces to initiate day care services more aggressively.

Although the elimination of social needs criteria as a condition of receiving subsidy is certainly a progressive move, it is doubtful that the income test will make a great deal of difference to the lower-middle or middle-class family struggling to pay day care fees without benefit of subsidy. In Ontario, one Deputy Minister was heard to mutter that "high-income" families making \$15,000. per year (approximately two factory salaries) certainly should not receive day care subsidy. If many other prov-

inces feel the same way, the prognosis is not good for an improved subsidy system.

If this limited commitment to the provision of day care is the rule, the major portion of the cost of day care (75%) will continue to be borne by parents. In order to keep costs down, day care staff will continue to subsidize the whole system with their low salaries. Worst of all, in the face of rising costs and inadequate subsidies, parents may withdraw their children from supervised day care. Many more children will then be receiving care of unknown quality, and centers may find it difficult to find parents sufficiently "poor" or "wealthy" to fill the resulting vacancies. Then, even though, only 22% of the children of working parents are now in supervised day care situations, the Government will say, "but there's no need for increased day care. We've heard that some centers have vacancies!"

Who Pays?

The children pay. The children who suffer from lack of quality care. Yet good quality day care is less expensive than welfare or crisis care. There is a solution to the problem of lack of funds that does not add to the tax burden of the individual wage earner. In the last decade the taxes paid by individuals have increased while those paid by corporations have decreased. Yet when individuals are freed to join the labor force it is business that benefits. By increasing corporate taxation the government will have the necessary funds to provide quality care for all those who need it.

Fools or Scoundrels?

Cutbacks have been in effect since November, 1975. The Provincial Government announced that there would be no capital funding for day care and that Municipalities could increase their social service budgets by only 5.5% in 1976. Cuts have left more than one day care centre bleeding and so far there are no bureaucratic band-aids in sight.

As a result of lack of capital funding, a number of proposed Metropolitan Toronto centres were shelved. New centres that would have received operating subsidies in the past, were faced with prospect of no aid and were unable to enroll subsidized children. This made it almost impossible for them to operate.

Not only were there no new centres on the horizon, but the 5.5% limit on social service budgets resulted in drastic cutbacks in the operating costs of the remaining established centres.

The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto applied this limit by freezing the number of subsidized day care spaces in each centre to the number of spaces each centre had as of Nov. 30, 1975. As a result of this decision, a day care centre with 15 subsidized spaces, as of November 30, could never take more than 15 subsidized children. In

the past a centre had no limit on subsidized spaces.

Problems arose when a centre had some unsubsidized spaces available and no parent that could pay full fee. Some centres had vacancies that couldn't be filled.

There was also a 10% limit on per diem rates. (per diem rate is the amount of money needed to care for one child for one day for full day care). Thus, centres which were trying to upgrade the quality of care given, had to lower their operational costs just to stay above water. In order to remain open some centres were forced to raise the fees of full-fee paying parents. Conflicts arose when it became evident that these parents were in fact subsidizing the already subsidized parents.

Other municipalities implemented the cuts in social services budgets in other ways. For example, in Hamilton-Wentworth, the Municipal Government instituted a flat per diem rate for all centres. This proved to be disastrous for many centres in that district, because they were already operating at a higher rate and therefore found themselves in serious financial trouble.

There is a consensus of opinion among day care people that in the past year Metro

Social Services has instituted certain belt-tightening administrative policies which have seriously affected the placing of subsidized children in day care. It is now no longer possible to place a child in a day care centre without all paper work being completed. An individual now must prove that any debt he has incurred is necessary and people who are self-employed are now asked to have auditors and bookkeepers report on their earnings.

These procedures have created a situation where a centre may have subsidy spaces available but be unable to fill them due to bureaucratic red tape. Right now in Toronto there are 800 vacant subsidized day care spaces which no one is rich or poor enough to fill. There are two reasons for this. As the cost of living rises the amounts allowed in the means test become more unreal. Secondly, when Metro Toronto set a limit on the number of subsidized spaces in each centre the resulting red tape made it impossible for them to cope administratively. Metro has since lifted the subsidy ceilings on individual centres but too late. In 1976 they underspent their budget allocation by one million dollars thereby "justifying" a similar reduction in 1977. Are they fools or are they scoundrels?

Alice in Form 7 Wonderland

You remember in our Spring 1976 issue of **Good Day Care** we summarized that part of the Peel County Report that dealt with allowable earnings and expenditures for applicants for subsidized day care. Would you believe, despite soaring costs for all parents, that not only have none of the deductions been raised—they have in some cases been tightened. Because allowable expenses are far below real costs, many parents who need subsidy are refused.

Here is a small example of the ceilings as they stand today. Keep in mind that the General Welfare Assistance allowance for food and clothing has recently been raised by 2% for the first time in two years.

A year ago, Hamilton accepted actual rent and mortgage payments—now they have ceilings of \$250, and their debt repayment has been reduced by \$50. In Waterloo both rent and mortgage are held to \$200, where before actual costs were allowed as

Item	10 TORONTO Gen. Wel. All.	WATERLOO G. W. A.	HAMILTON G. W. A.
Item 10 Food and Clothing			
Item 18 Rent	\$225. per month for one bedroom, \$25. each ad't'l. bedr'm.	\$200.	\$250.
Item 19 mortgage	\$300.	\$200.	\$250.
Item 21 Debt Payment	\$50.	\$100.	\$100.

deductions. In Toronto absolutely nothing has changed except the amount allowed for transportation due to the rise in T.T.C. fares—but don't take your child to the museum or the zoo on the weekend because there's no allowance for that.

Of interest to students

On March 25-27, Cambrian College in Sudbury hosted an Early Childhood Education Conference entitled "Power to the Little People." The Alliance was invited to attend and depending on response, would carry two or three two-hour workshops. I really looked forward, as our representative, to showing our video and discussing with the students their possible role in the political side of day care.

Four days before the conference however, I received a phone call from the coordinator of the conference and was told that because of the lack of response, our workshop had been cancelled. Needless to say, I was really disappointed but more than that, I was really concerned about this "lack of response". I stated this concern over the phone saying that I hoped the students really understood what they were getting into. Having the knowledge and



You've Come A Long Way Baby...But There's Still Far To Go.

As late as five years ago Jerome Kagan, a child developmentalist from Harvard and co-author of **Birth to Maturity** was saying that he thought that day care was **probably** bad for children. Now after completing a five year study comparing children reared exclusively at home and children attending day care, Kagan is convinced that there is "no evidence that children develop differently in day care" and "children in the first few years of life who attend good quality day care seem to develop exactly as they would at home—no better, no worse".*

Kagan's study defined **good day care** as having three components:

1. ratios basically the same as those in the Ontario Day Nurseries Act,
2. warm supportive staff who share values of children and their families, i.e. language, culture etc.

skills for working with preschoolers was wonderful, but if they didn't have a job to take it to, what then?

When will we wake up to the fact that day care is as much a political issue as any other government funded institution. How will we achieve accessible, good quality day care if we do not take a stand against a government that lists children as one of its lowest priorities?

Students, where are you?

SECOND ECE CONFERENCE REPORT—

The workshops at this year's student E.C.E. conference included art, literature, music, rhythmic movement, play therapy and technology for children. These two-hour workshops were well organized and proved to be very informative in their area. There were also various displays throughout the building during the day.

And now, from Harvard

3. environment that allows children to explore freely.

Both the control group of solely home reared and the day care children were tested in all areas of development including cognitive, vocabulary, social and attachment behaviour, aggression, and shyness, to find differences—there were none.

It's reassuring to have another study which proves day care doesn't harm kids because many of us still have feelings of concern or guilt. But isn't it about time we admitted that lots of research has shown day care doesn't hurt. (Caldwell, Hocken, Louney) and get off the defensive and start designing research to show day care **helps?**

Kagan's study is useful—but why didn't he use trained staff who might have been able to provide optimal environment for those kids?

The students were also treated to a guest speaker, Mr. Ron Ellis. He focussed his speech on "The Rights of Children" and delved into three main areas; the rights of a financially disadvantaged child, the rights of a single-parent child, and the rights of all children to receive preschool education. He stressed that he feels it is necessary for those who are planning a career in this area to become politically involved in it, since more money should be spent on children at a preschool level and preschool education, rather than being a luxury, should become part of the compulsory educational system. After the speech, the students prepared for a variety night, where all colleges were encouraged to participate in a skit or song of their own. This proves to be a very entertaining evening for all those concerned and there was no doubt among anyone present—adults can still possess the imagination that only a child is credited for possessing to the fullest.

William Fowler, at OISE in Toronto has just completed a study at Woodbine Metro Day Care Centre using just that—trained staff with a control group of solely home reared children. The day care infant and toddler group measures substantially **higher** for each developmental level as compared to the home reared group. The infants and toddlers in group care on the average therefore, learned more, were socially more adept, were physically more advanced, were speaking more and felt better about themselves than the home reared group. Good day care then is not only an equivalent alternative for raising children, but a better one. It seems we have the knowledge—but we have to spread the word—that day care helps.

*Jerome Kagan, from a speech sponsored by H.S.C. Child in City Project, January 13, 1977.



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ITEM: ELECTIONS

Just as we were about to go to press the Provincial Election was called for June 9th. We reproduce below some suggestions from the Ottawa-Carleton Day Care Association and the Ontario Work Group on why and how we should intervene in that election. We have deleted a portion which suggests private interviews and putting out fact sheets on the candidates responses after interviewing them because we expect it will be a little late for that by the time you receive this newsletter. It won't, however, be too late for the other suggestions. May we make one other point? You may be hesitating between voting NDP or Liberal. These questions may help you decide. The Conservatives have made their position crystal clear over the last two years. If you any doubts as to where they stand read the article on Cutbacks in this issue. **That is their policy.** Now here are the suggestions for making day care an issue in this election.

TO THOSE WHO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT DAY CARE IN ONTARIO:

On January 22, 1977 the "Ontario Work Group on Day Care" met to discuss the deteriorating situation in the day care community. The group is made up of operators, staff, and parents with children primarily in non-profit or privately run day care programs from across the province.

The group arrived at a consensus that the situation for parents, teachers and operators was reaching a crisis point and that positive policy changes must come from Queen's Park. To pressure for these changes it was felt that a provincial political strategy should be devised modelled after the municipal strategy used by the Ottawa-Carleton Day Care Association in the last municipal election. This strategy would focus about the upcoming provincial election and would hopefully expose the the positions of the three major political parties on three or four basic problems facing the day care community. The strategy would be non-partisan and would be based on a questionnaire type format in which provincial candidates would state their response to a number of questions.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

There are four basic areas of concern; fees to parents, salaries of staff, funding of day care programs themselves, and adequate consultation with the day care community if changes in the Day Nurseries Act are entertained. The following questions attempt to address these problems.

1. Do you think quality day care should be available to the some 400,000 children

of working parents in Ontario.

2. Fees in day care centres have eliminated most children of middle income parents from licensed care. Would you agree that the province set a ceiling on the amount a parent is required to pay for day care and assume the costs over and above this amount.

3. Do you think workers in day care centres and care-givers in family home day care arrangements are providing a valuable service to the community, and thus should be paid a decent salary.

4. Today the province funds two types of day care centres. Publicly run programs and programs run by private groups. Teachers in private centres earn up to 30% less than their counterparts in publicly run centres. Would you agree that staff who are being paid, in fact, from the same source, and are doing the same job, should receive equivalent salaries and benefits?

5. If the above issues are to be addressed the "Ontario Day Nurseries Act" and its funding provisions would certainly be modified. Do you agree that no changes should be entertained without full consultation with those who are active in the day care community and those who are actually involved in the provision of care to children?

Editors note: These questions can be asked at meetings held in day care centres and arranged by you or at all-candidates meetings elsewhere. Hot-line radio shows or letters-to-the-editors column may also be used.