

# GOOD DAY CARE!

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LOUIS LESYANSKI

The first good news about the Advisory Council on Day Care progress report was that Ms. Birch was furious with it.

And indeed, she had every right to be. The 12-page document flatly rejected some parts of her June 4th proposals, called others into question and insinuated

that most of her regulations were without a research base.

Stephen Lewis, Provincial NDP leader, told a Daycare Reform Action Alliance group that Ms. Birch's regulations are "as good as dead" as a result of the report.

Other sources have been less confident.

Some feared that the report might lead to a squeeze on the Advisory Council or perhaps a repudiation of their report by the government.

But some of these fears have in turn been allayed by Community and Social Services Minister Rene Brunelle, who is responsible for implementing the regu-



lations, when he came out in support of the preliminary points of the report.

These points are:

1. There is a necessity for research and analysis to be undertaken.
2. The Daycare Community needs to be assured that the Government does not intend to change from its present policy to one of financing daycare *only* at the stated minimum levels.
3. . . . present regulations with regard to staff/child ratios remain in effect until alternative methods of establishing staff complements can be explored more fully. Mr. Brunelle has replied in the affirmative to all of these.

The body of the report is largely an amplification of these concerns, but several supplementary points are made that cut quite deeply into the June 4th regulations, especially in the area of ratios.

1. It states that "there is no research available on ratios "of which we are aware" and emphasizes the need for research in this area - indirectly inditing Ms. Birch for her arbitrary figures. It later refers to "the current literature on child development" which "emphasizes the necessity for the constancy and warmth of adult relationship during this period" and goes on to say that "there is undoubtedly a limit to the number of children any one staff member can provide with this important nurturing."
2. It questions the money-saving aspects of the new ratios since:
  - 1) Reductions could occur only in larger centres where one or more staff members could be cut to meet a ratio.
  - 2) More children would not be served since physical setting controls the capacity of the program.
  - 3) There is no guarantee that parents would save anything from reduced costs. More important in this respect, it states that: "attaching dollar figures to these calculations tends to cloud the real issue which is the number of staff needed to give proper care to the children in the program." A statement that can be contrasted with Ms. Birch's pre-occupation with figures and money.
3. It has, if anything put more teeth in the fire regulations. In a detailed appendix it outlines fire precautions and suggestions to improve the regulations in that area. Included is the strengthening of



LOUIS LESYNSKI

the regulation preventing a daycare from being located above the second (under six years) or third (over six) floor. Whereas before permission from the director of the Day Nurseries Branch was enough to circumvent this, additional approval from the provincial fire marshall and the local fire authorities would now be required.

This seems to be diametrically opposed to Ms. Birch's statement which calls for more flexible regulations stating "I think it is obvious that which storey the centre is on is only peripherally related to its real fire safety."

The report does not concern itself with staff qualifications and mentions that there is probably room for catering services (vs. kitchens) in the present regulations.

And apart from the fire regulations there are no specific recommendations for change. It is suggested that the ratios will be determined by a "formula approach, whereby the purposes of the program, number and ages of children served, number of "contact hours" needed for each child to achieve program goals, physical facilities of the building, etc., could be combined to produce actual staff requirements for any individual program."

The tone of the report is quite clear - it reflects a deep concern for child welfare and an interest in a *rational* approach to that end. Its interest in research into ratios, "needs" and salaries as well as "analysis of current literature and documentation" is obviously needed, particularly if it is directed towards a more comprehensive "good daycare" policy.

But even with Mr. Brunelle's reassurances it must be remembered that advisory councils are rarely listened to. The key to how the Daycare Reform Action Alliance should react to the report may be contained in the report itself - where it notes that one reason to question the proposed staff/child ratios is that:

"There is a great deal of *opposition* to the suggested new ratios from many segments of the community."

It becomes obvious that the strength of the advisory council derives from the strength of this opposition.



# WHAT IS THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT DOING TO DAY CARE ?

Actually, what is the Ontario Government doing, period. Or, it's time we took a long, hard look at the priorities of the Conservative government and how they affect us, because this legislation isn't really just "Margaret Birch's", and the Tories didn't think this up on a rainy afternoon when they had a scunner out for four-year-olds. In other words, it's part of a larger picture that we can't ignore while fighting the specific amendments to the Day Nurseries' Act.

There has been a certain amount of resistance to scrutinizing what I call the "inter-connectedness" of things, so perhaps I should provide a concrete illustration. We can take the wages of daycare workers as an example.

Now, Ms. Birch didn't actually deal with this in her statement. However, she does maintain that most parents can afford to pay for their children's daycare. At present, "most parents" (51 per cent, in fact) have a family income of \$10,000.00 a year, or less. Most are also unsubsidized. Daycare fees for one child will eat up 20 per cent of their income — a fair chunk — and it's important to realize that fees are this *low* only because daycare staff make an average of \$6,000.00 a year.

Daycare staff should, of course, be making much more money — they work a long, exhausting day and most are committed well beyond the call of duty. However, it's an easy mathematical exercise to figure out that higher staff salaries equal higher daycare fees. So, we have a conflict — on the one hand, parents quite justifiably balking at increased daycare costs, and on the other, daycare workers desperately in need of higher salaries. And we also have a Provincial government controlling 80 per cent of the subsidy dollars and blandly maintaining that most parents can afford the cost of daycare. Some people think that this is merely Conservative myopia; I feel that it's a deliberate ploy.

The Province insists that its tax base simply will not support widespread access to social services such as daycare. However, it's ignoring two very important aspects:

1. During World War II, when women were needed to replace men in the work force, affordable, accessible child care became a government priority. The service was funded on a federal-provincial cost-sharing basis.
2. Since the mid-sixties, the proportion

of taxes paid by the corporations has fallen steadily, while the individual's share has gone up. Eric Kierans, an economist and one-time cabinet minister maintains that, threats of depression notwithstanding, this will be the most profitable business year since the Korean War.

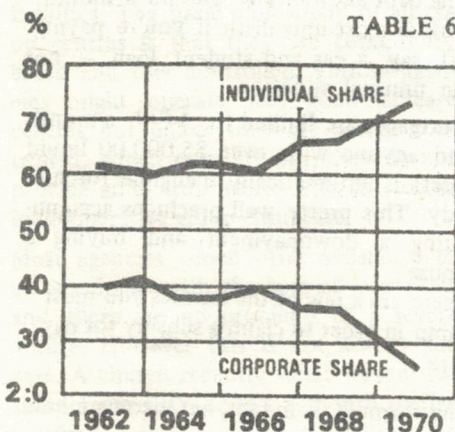
Number 1 shows us that the government chooses its priorities out of its own needs — not ours. With an unemployment rate of 3.6 per cent, it's crucial that Ontario keep a large section of the population out of the workforce — at home or in school to give the most visible alternatives.

Number 2 shows us that there's an alternative to soaking individual taxpayers — tax the corporations. We should remember that corporations are yelping now, not because they're going bankrupt, but because their holy profits are threatened. That's what the rise in the Consumer Price Index is all about.

We must also realize that governments don't suddenly spring from a vacuum. There's an alternative to dealing with a government that tailors its social service and education policies to fit an economic structure over which we, the "consumers" of these services have no control. Change the government.

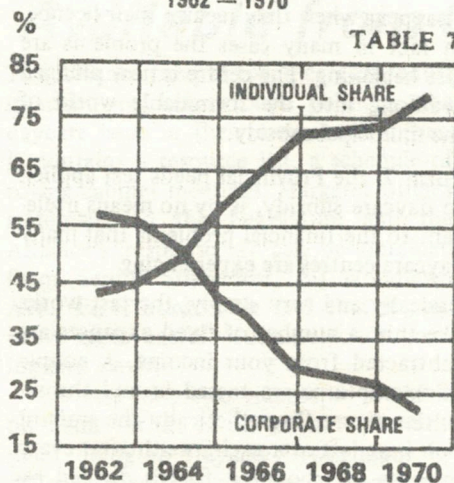
CORPORATE AND INDIVIDUAL SHARE OF FEDERAL INCOME TAX REVENUE, 1962 — 1970

TABLE 6



CORPORATE AND INDIVIDUAL SHARE OF ALL PROVINCIAL INCOME TAX REVENUE, 1962 — 1970

TABLE 7



Source: *Taxation Statistics, 1970*. D.B.S., 1971, pp. 164-165. Calculated on a National Accounts accrual basis. Includes Ontario and Quebec.

This newsletter was written, edited and produced by Maryann Kelly, Julie Mathien, Pat Redican, Mike Redican, Pat Schulz and Margaret Young.

It is a joint effort of the Daycare Reform Action Alliance and the Group for Daycare Reform.

The Alliance can be contacted through 80 Woodlawn Ave., E., Toronto. The Group for Daycare Reform can be reached through Maryann Kelly at 961-8469.



# HARD TIMES

Co-operative daycare is in trouble! As everyone involved in the fight for access to quality daycare knows, the co-ops are not alone in this situation but in examining the plight of community based and user controlled daycare some of the most basic injustices of provincial daycare spending and administration are keenly illustrated.

It will come as no surprise that the central problem of co-ops is money. It costs money, lots of money, to start and then operate a daycare centre and money is one thing of which co-ops are short.

Up until the development of the Daycare Expansion Programme by the Day Nurseries Branch, co-ops were not eligible for total capital funding from the provincial government. Groups wishing to start a daycare centre were forced to raise the money on their own, an almost impossible task for a relatively small community group with no assets.

With the advent of the Daycare Expansion Programme a new era was to have dawned for co-ops. At least this is what the provincial government would have us believe. Co-ops are now eligible to receive provincial capital funding. However in reality the situation is somewhat different. At present, fifty per cent of the applications under the Programme are being rejected which would leave at least half of the co-op groups in the same financial bind as in pre-Daycare Expansion Programme days. The only other source of provincial capital funding is provided under Bill 160 but it will provide only eighty per cent of the capital and the group must raise the other twenty per cent on its own.

If the co-op manages to beat the almost insurmountable odds and raise the necessary capital to start a centre, they must still survive the chaotic bureaucratic jumble of application, inspection and certification by everything from the fire depart-

ment to the municipal by-laws to the Day Nurseries Branch in order to obtain their licence. Their financial problems during this period are often compounded by a tricky little bureaucratic business involving the Day Nurseries Branch and the municipality. The Day Nurseries Branch won't grant a licence to a centre unless it is already in operation and the municipality won't enter into a subsidy agreement with a centre unless it has a licence. If for any reason the granting of a licence becomes tied up in the red tape of the Day Nurseries Branch, which is very common, a centre must operate for a period of time with no money. It seems that centres have only a couple of choices here. They can choose not to pay their staff for a period of time, which may be as long as six or seven weeks, and thereby risk losing them which would force the centre to close down or they can try to float a bank loan thereby increasing the centre's financial insecurity. Of course it might prove difficult to find a Bank Manager willing to approve a loan for a centre in this situation.

Many centres find it impossible to stay alive during this period but those who do soon discover that their problems do not disappear when they receive their licence. In fact in many cases the problems are just beginning. The centre is now plunged headlong into the formidable world of the municipal subsidy.

Form 7, the Provincial needs test applied to daycare subsidy, is by no means irrelevant to the financial problems that many daycare centres are experiencing.

Basically and *very* simply, the test works like this: a number of fixed expenses are subtracted from your income. A couple of exemptions are tossed in and the resulting figure (hypothetically the amount you have left over each month after every expense is accounted for) is divided by the number of daycare days in a month

(21 for 1 child, 42 for 2 etc.). The outcome here is the amount you are able to pay each day for daycare. Metro Toronto (or your own municipality if you don't live in Toronto) picks up the difference between what you can pay and what the centre charges. As an example, if your needs test shows that you can pay \$3.00 a day, and the centre charges \$8.00, Metro contributes \$5.00 a day towards your child's daycare. This contribution is administered through Metro Toronto, but is part of a cost-sharing plan with the Provincial and Federal Governments.

Now, if you ignore the indignity of having to mope down to the welfare office twice a year to have a complete stranger pore over the ups and downs of your financial situation, this test may seem sensible and not terribly unfair. Income minus expenses minus exemptions and fork over the rest for daycare.

The main problem is that most of the expenses and the exemption are fixed and, in general, unrealistic.

You're allowed \$9.00 a month for household expenses paper towels and the like.

The debt allowance is \$50.00 a month. This is most unrealistic if you're paying off, say, a car and student loan — not an unusual situation.

Mortgages are limited to \$300 a month and anyone with over \$5,000.00 liquid assets is automatically ineligible for subsidy. This pretty well precludes accumulating a downpayment and buying a house.

These are a few of the hurdles you must jump in order to claim a subsidy for daycare.

The formula is, in fact, net income minus what the department of Social Services thinks your expenses should be minus an exemption that's a fixed percentage. The



answer, for many, turns out to be a fee that they can afford on paper, but not in reality because they spend more on food than they're allowed or have a large, and perhaps quite legitimate, debt. Exceptions are made, but they're done on a seemingly arbitrary basis and your success seems to depend on the amount you push and/or break down in the office. To complicate matters, some caseworkers are sympathetic, some aren't.

As in most subsidized social services, the problems affect a large number of middle income (usually double income) families — those who don't qualify for subsidy but can't afford the fees without some financial hardship. A tough situation, especially when most working families do so to *avoid* hardship.

In the co-op centres it is more often than not the staff which bears the brunt of the bind. There are co-op centres in this city where staff are paid as little as \$76.00 per week for a full forty hours work and it is the rare co-op where staff are well paid. No one involved in co-ops want to exploit the work of these people however the centre is forced to choose between raising fees to pay the staff well and placing daycare over the financial reach of most non-subsidized parents. It's clearly a very painful bind for everyone involved.

In order to keep costs at a reasonable level co-ops are often put in the position where they must rely on the good will of an agency such as a church, a university or a social service institution like the YMCA. They must acquire space at a low rent and at the same time ensure that the agency involved does not want control of the centre in exchange for offering its facilities. The basic philosophy of all co-op centres is that they are community based and user controlled. Various agencies might operate very good daycare centres but unless they are parent controlled, which most are not, they do not provide an alternative to those interested in co-operative group child care.

Most agencies which offer assistance to co-ops do so with the best of intentions and there are no problems of a severe nature. However this is not always the case. A church recently raised its rent for space from fifty dollars a month to five hundred dollars a month with almost no warning and even in these inflationary times that's a little hard to swallow.

Another centre operating in a church has been under three month notice to vacate the building for over eight years. Obviously this creates a very tenuous situation because there is always the chance that next time they give notice they really mean it. The West End Parents Association, a co-op centre, is currently locked in a battle with the West Toronto YMCA over who will control the centre which has been operating in the Y building under parent control for some time. The centre has been placed under threat of eviction and that is no mean threat with

available space for daycare being as short as it is in this city.

As we all know daycare centres in Toronto, and indeed in all of Ontario are few and far between. We cannot therefore allow existing centres to fold and new groups to be refused provincial financial assistance. Unless there is an immediate change in the amount of monies made available by the province and a fairer subsidy plan developed it seems likely that co-operative daycare is in danger of never becoming a viable alternative. We cannot afford to let this happen.



## Available from the Alliance....

The Alliance has put together a kit that is intended to help groups publicize the daycare issue in their own communities. It contains a resource list, a schedule of roving cabinet meetings, Margaret Birch's statement to the Legislature and the Alliance's response. It can be obtained from Sandy Stienecker, 80 Woodlawn Ave., E., Toronto. We feel that it may prove quite useful with an election coming into view.

We also have two videotapes available on loan. "What is the Ontario Government doing to Daycare?" was made by Alliance members and deals specifically with last summer's proposed amendments. It is about 25 minutes long and available on 1/2 inch tape.

The second is a videotape of a pro-

gramme that appeared on "The Rogers Report" last summer. It examines the June 4th amendments and daycare in general. This tape lasts about half an hour and is available in both 1/2 and 3/4 inch widths. Mail requests to Daycare Reform Action Alliance, 80 Woodlawn Ave., E., Toronto.

"Good Daycare" buttons can be ordered from Marjorie Horeis, Victoria Daycare Services, 539 Jarvis St., Toronto. Cost: 25¢ each.

"Good Daycare" bumper stickers are available from the A.E.C.E.O., 55 Charles St., E., Toronto. They're also 25¢ each.

The A.E.C.E.O. also has "What is the Ontario Government Doing to Daycare?" on a 3/4 inch tape.



# what do we do now?

This past year has been a good one for day care in spite of the attempts of the Ontario government. For years day care has been in a state of crisis across Canada but the day care community, for a whole variety of reasons, has failed to get together in a grass roots militant body, organized to fight for more centres, better quality, lower parent costs and higher pay for staffs. This past year in Ontario that situation changed. The Ontario Government's proposals to drastically cut the quality of care brought the day care community together all across the province. Their protest actions are reported elsewhere in this paper.

While those activities have been inspiring and more broadly supported than we had even hoped they have so far failed to convince the provincial government to withdraw the proposals. And even if they were withdrawn day care would still be totally inadequate. What kind of campaign is required to change this situation?

In many ways what we did this past year was to organize the converted into action; that is we got the day care staff and parents who were most easily convinced of the fallacy of Ms. Birch's proposals out to meetings and demonstrations. We haven't yet succeeded in educating even all of the staffs and parents to the necessity to get involved in the campaign.

The Day Care Reform Action Alliance is now taking a videotape on the changes in regulations around to all centres. The tape is shown at meetings of parents and staff, provokes a discussion of the situation and provides an opportunity to discuss ways to get involved in the campaign. The Toronto group will be holding a series of public meetings on day care issues such as private home day care, universal access, and unionization of day care workers, partly to clarify our own views on these questions and partly as a public education campaign.

But clearly, the day care community has to look for allies in this struggle, and many potential allies exist. First, in the education field where similar cutbacks in quality have taken place. The videotape or speakers can present the problems to teachers and parents in local schools. The teachers' federations should be approached for support along with trade

unions. This is a second logical area of support. Since day care is a particular problem for working families in terms of accessibility, quality, and cost, the unions should be particularly concerned. We can logically expect to get the most mileage from those in which large numbers of women are employed. Again the teachers' federation, the newly-formed nurses' unions, public employees in CUPE, any clerical workers locals, and perhaps the garment industry locals. We've already found that the NDP, closely tied to the unions, is very sympathetic to our position.

Other organizations which have already indicated their opposition to the amendments are the Association for Early Childhood Education and officials in the Children's Aid Society. So, we can considerably broaden the opposition to the proposals and begin to draw these groups into our activities.

Most of the action around the province has not been co-ordinated. Areas outside of Toronto have participated in Toronto actions but almost entirely on their own initiative. That's been very encouraging, but what is really required is provincial-wide co-ordination. One of the suggestions at a recent meeting of the Day-care Reform Action Alliance was for a province-wide Day Care Day in which actions would be carried out in each community across the province. Good for publicity and really encouraging to know that each community is not alone in its actions. Petitions could be circulated, municipal councils approached, MP's invited to meetings, demonstrations held.

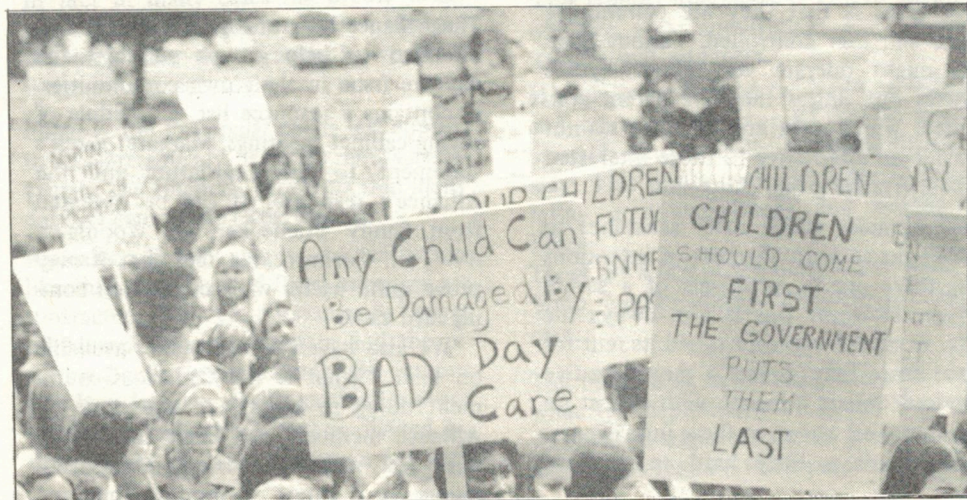
This would also serve as a good dress rehearsal for the kind of work we must

do around the provincial election this year.

One of the reasons the Conservative government has failed to respond is probably because they hoped there would be a flurry of organizing and then it would die out. That can't be allowed to happen. Secondly, their day care policy is not some inexplicable accident caused by a lack of communication. Meeting the needs of people in this society is not the name of their game. Children, old people, women trying to raise children on their own, very low paid workers, don't count with the Conservative government and can only make gains when they organize.

But issues like this can be won. Two examples that come to mind of protest movements that succeeded in achieving some of their ends are the Stop Spadina organization, and the Women's Liberation Movement. In those cases by petitioning, meeting, demonstrating, sitting in, electing government officials, intervening in existing political parties, these groups have won some of their objectives.

That's what we have to look forward to. And while it is a long fight, first for the withdrawal of the Birch proposals and then for affordable, quality day care for every child who needs it, it sure is a fight for worthwhile goals. And it sure beats our previous situation of being told there is no space, that the salaries will be poor, that the cost will be exorbitant and of having no way to fight the situation. At least we can now stop feeling frustrated and powerless and start feeling angry and determined. I'll see you at the next demonstration.





# daycare news

Daycare is an issue on which the Ontario Government has been meeting with increasingly hostile opposition over its proposed reductions in child/staff ratios. So it stands to reason that one of the last things it needs is this same issue being raised right in its own backyard. That is just what the Queens Park Daycare Committee is doing.

Formed three years ago by a group of employees (mostly women) who had felt, or were expecting to feel, the need for daycare facilities in the Queens Park area and using such tactics as large general meetings, a petition campaign, radio interviews, and meetings with a variety of ministers, officials, and organizations, the committee has pressed for daycare facilities for all civil service employees who require them. The result of this campaign has been a large degree of support from fellow employees and the general public, a full endorsement of their campaign by their union, the Civil Service Association of Ontario and various of its locals, plus the unofficial encouragement of many high level officials and three cabinet ministers.

But it was the appearance of Ethel McLellan on the scene in November of 1973 that marked a whole new stage in the fight for daycare at Queens Park. When Ms. McLellan, the executive coordinator of women's programs, came forward to say she would undertake the finding of a ministry to sponsor the proposals to the Management Board (the body with the final say on any programme instituted in the civil service), the campaign changed from one of getting the problem recognized by the powers that be, to one of both trying to keep informed and maintaining public interest as the proposals were submerged in the muddy depths of government bureaucracy.

By last July it had gone before the board and been immediately referred to a task force headed by Ms. McLellan to establish need, cost, feasibility etc. The task force's report asked that an infant centre be created with facilities for 43 children at an operating cost of \$10.50 per day. It

was rumoured (the report was 'confidential') that the initial cost for setting up

the centre could be as high as \$500,000.

On receiving this report the Management Board referred the proposals to the Civil Service Commission (in charge of personnel) who set up yet another task force to study the proposals. This task force reported back January 21 and the C.S.C. chairman Stuart Clarkson has promised that a decision will be forthcoming soon. That is where it now stands.

If approved by the C.S.C. the proposals still must go back to the Management Board and even if it passes them the fight is far from over. Such questions as: how much will it cost — will the parents be eligible for subsidy?; who will run it — the parents themselves, an agency, a crown corporation?; and where will it be located? are all of major importance and have yet to be answered. To ensure that these issues are resolved in a manner which is in the best interests of the people who will use the centre it will mean more work on the committee's part. Yet even if the report was passed and these problems worked out to everyone's satisfaction the struggle would not end here. The daycare needs of all Queen's Park employees will not be met by just an infant centre. Full daycare is their goal and the battle will continue until it is achieved.

To the novice in governmental bureaucracy the situation might well look hopeless, bogged down in 'ifs', 'buts', and promises but Jan Depoe chairwoman of the committee and one of its founders, is not about to give up. She points to the growing public support their cause has won in the last year and sees the appointment of Elma Roberts of the Day Nurseries Branch as an advisor for civil servants seeking daycare in their own communities as a sign that the government is now taking their movement seriously. The president of her union local, she says that if the proposed centre is not set up, provision of daycare facilities could be a central issue in negotiations on the next contract which unfortunately, is not till '76.

Graduate students and staff at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education are well on the way to setting up a daycare centre in the OISE building at Bloor St., West in Toronto.

The centre will enroll no more than 45 children and will have a small infant section as well as a programme for over-2's.

## OUT OF TOWN NEWS

### OTTAWA:

Members of three different Ottawa daycare groups appeared as a delegation before the Ontario cabinet which is currently holding sessions in different provincial towns and cities.

Their submission dealt with the June 7th amendments to the Day Nurseries' Act and the roadblocks it put in the way of the development of good daycare in Ontario.

### REGINA:

The Saskatchewan government has recently passed a bill specifying that only parent-controlled daycare centres will be permitted in future.

We'll have more details as soon as we've received our copy of the legislation.

### HALIFAX:

Early this winter, daycare parents in Halifax were shocked at a steep and, they felt, unwarranted rise in their fees.

On December 3rd, 400 people attended a public meeting protesting the increase. Members of the government were invited but did not attend.

In response the entire meeting decided to visit Premier Reagan at the provincial legislature the next day. The crowd filled up the lobby, juice and cookies were served and everyone joined in a rousing chorus of "If you're angry and you know it, stamp your feet".

The Premier was shaken and refused to engage in what he termed a "howling match". However, fees went down substantially the next week.



THE DAYCARE REFORM ACTION ALLIANCE presents:

# Educationals on Daycare

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discussions on contraversial questions; examinations of areas of daycare in which people are generally ignorant

with a panel of well informed speakers; questions and discussion groups afterwards

Here is your chance to become well informed!

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The first educational is on Feb. 13 on Family Home Daycare and will be at St. Paul's Church, 121 Avenue Rd.

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The following educationals are:

Free Daycare/ Subsidization March 6

Alternative Types Of Daycare March 27

(24 hr. daycare, industrial daycare, nursery schools)

Universal Daycare April 17

Unionization in Daycare May 8

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at 252 Bloor St. West, room 204, near the St. George Subway Station

**7:30 pm**