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GOOD DAYCARE

FALL '75



"Aha," you said, settling down, expecting, of course, that Toronto would lead the list with other major Ontario cities not far behind. After all, that's what we've always been told by various government types. "You don't know how fortunate you are in Ontario," they'd say. "Why, in other provinces. . ." And they'd trail off, leaving you with visions of kiddies in Saint John hitchhiking to Great Aunt Lucy's while momma and poppa trudge off to work in the opposite direction. (We've also been told that public transit is worse everywhere else.)

Over the weekend of October 18, 1975, the *Globe and Mail* Weekend Magazine published an article entitled "The Great Canadian Cities Game". Along with a board on which to pay the game (free), you got a whole boatload of statistics on how different major cities in Canada ranked in areas of social services, housing, income, population density, and the like. Right in there, among the figures on murder, rape, and the cost of a nutritious diet for a family of four, was a box labelled "DAYCARE CENTERS per 100,000 population".

COUNTING ON..

Imagine your surprise, outrage and, in many cases, glee, when you discover that not only is Toronto fourteenth out of twenty-one, but London, the highest-ranking Ontario city in this category, stands ninth. In fact, London is the only city in the top 50%.

"How can this be," you ask, "here in the Promised Land?" And then, "Why is this?" And then, "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition."

But wait — the chart gives the number of centres per 100,000 people. How big are these centres? What is the number of day care *spaces* per person in each province?

Armed with population statistics, the number of day care spaces per province and a calculator, we set out to discover just that.

Ontario, in fact, comes second with one day care space for every 220 people. First prize goes to Alberta, with one per 124. Newfoundland is at the bottom — one to 4,000. The entire list is as follows:

Province	Population	Day Care	Per Capita
Ontario	7,909,000	35,928	1 per 220
Newfoundland	541,000	135	1 per 4,000
Prince Edward Island	115,000	250	1 per 460
Nova Scotia	805,000	3,588	1 per 224
New Brunswick	652,000	program just started, no figures available yet	
Quebec	6,081,000	11,081	1 per 548
Manitoba	998,000	program just started, no figures available yet	
Saskatchewan	908,000	963	1 per 942
Alberta	1,613,000	12,947	1 per 124
British Columbia	2,315,000	9,100	1 per 254

However, let us not rest on our laurels. We're second best in a pretty shabby lot. Furthermore, the statistics can be stretched. In 1974, 0-9 year olds made up close to 17% of Ontario's population. If we meld this statistic with our information above, we find that we have one space for every 37 potential users of day care. In the same year over 30% of Ontario's women worked. Married women comprise over 40% of the female work force.

This is an admittedly rough picture but it gives us a glimpse of the level of day care service now provided versus the need. Although the situation is bleaker in Montreal, we still have a fight on our hands in Kitchener, London, Guelph, Sarnia, and New Liskeard.

And for those of you in Toronto who feel that your reputation has been besmirched on the pages of Weekend Magazine, never mind, your city has more movie theatres than any other urban area in Canada.

POLITICS OF DAYCARE

Many people view daycare as a "motherhood and apple pie" issue, i.e., an issue on which everyone agrees. When pressure groups attempt to use political methods to fight for more daycare the response is often hesitant and/or negative. Those who disagree argue that we simply need to communicate our needs to the government in a more effective manner. "If the government has enough money, they will surely respond to articulate documentation of the need for daycare," say the disclaimers. A reasonable approach is suggested.

The assumptions basic to this position are that daycare is a human need and that government bases its priorities and responses on that need.

Daycare is generally regarded as a human need. The number of women who must leave their homes to work in order to adequately support their families is growing. The Women's Bureau, in the federal Department of Labour, estimates that in 1971, there were 59,000 one-parent mothers in the Canadian labour force. For the same year, it estimates that there were 634,000 working mothers with 182,000 of these mothers having children under the age of 6.¹ These women obviously need to know that there are facilities which will adequately care for their children.

The children of these women need to be in situations which are safe, healthy, and which will provide opportunities for their personal development

The Royal Commission Report on the Status of Women emphatically stated the need for daycare facilities.²

Margaret Birch, in her statement to the legislature on June, 1974, even admitted that "changes in our society — especially the growing participation by women in the labour force — present us with a clear need for programs that will make daycare services more generally available."³ This statement has recently been substantiated by the Advisory Council on Daycare which was set up by Rene Brunelle, Minister of Community and Social Services.



Good Daycare: Part of the big picture

However, despite the overwhelming evidence and its own admission that daycare has not provided the money or the admission that daycare is needed by the people of Ontario, the government has not provided the money or the resources necessary to establish more than a token amount of the necessary daycare spaces.

In fact, the government's only attempt to deal with this pressing need was the "Birch proposals". The obvious intent of these proposals was to meet the need for daycare by stimulating private-profit making daycare at the expense of quality care. In addition, the \$15 million attached to these proposals met less than half of the *requests* for capital expansion.⁴

Despite its obvious inadequacy, this figure was projected through March, 1975. However, this allocation really represented government spending for a three year period. While \$15 million was committed during the July, 1974-March 1975 period, the money will be spent over a three year period.

It is interesting to note that in November, 1971 the Ontario government sponsored a special winter works program to develop municipal daycare centres throughout the province. This special program was allocated a \$10 million budget for its one year duration. Because the present budget amounts to \$15 million over a three year period, we can only deduce that the government has reduced its financial commitment to daycare expansion during a period of growing need. Obviously, human need is not the factor which determines government policy.

Since the government perceives the growing need for daycare, why doesn't it make a stable, long-term commitment to daycare expansion?

Historical action on the part of the government indicates that the necessities of the economic system are the factors which determine government policy.

The classic example of government response to the economic need of daycare is World War II. During this period it was necessary for women to take over the jobs vacated by men sent overseas to fight. In order to induce women to fill the vital production jobs, government established daycare facilities. During the war years, 19 day nurseries (full daycare for children, age 2-5), 22 daycare centres (hot noon meals and before and after school care) and numerous feeding stations were set up in the city of Toronto, for example.⁵

When the war was over the centres were scheduled to be close down. It was assumed by the government that women would leave their jobs and return to their homes since there were not enough jobs for all the men and women who needed them. However, in 1946 Toronto day nurseries had an average attendance of 463 children and a waiting list of 242 — a clear indication of need. Many women obviously could not, and many would not, give up their well-earned jobs.

Partially as a result of this, an organized resistance to the closing of the centres was organized. It succeeded in saving 13 of the 19 nurseries, but only 6 of the 22 daycare centres. At the time they were closed, these 22 centres were operating at full capacity, and the combined waiting list totalled 1000.⁶

It was probably not coincidental that at this time the administration of daycare was moved to the welfare department. Daycare was no longer a right, as it had been when the women were working in order to bolster the economy during the war, but for those in "special need". The introduction of a means test was, of course, a logical extension of this view.

From this historical example we can see that the present government in a period of high unemployment is not interested in encouraging women to participate in the work force, or even in providing support services for those who must work.

We can also see from this example that obtaining daycare for every child is not a matter of proving human need. The government is fully aware of the need and fully capable of providing it, as the example illustrates. The issue is a political one. The people of Ontario must insist that human needs be made a priority. Daycare must be provided as a right for all.

¹ Statistical estimates provided to the Canada Assistance Plan by the Women's Bureau, Canada Department of Labour;

² Royal Commission Report on the Status of Women, page 263-275;

³ Statement to the Legislature by the Honourable Margaret Birch, Provincial Secretary for Social Development Announcing Day Care Services for Children, June 4, 1974;

⁴ 110 applications were approved, 130 applications were not approved;

⁵ "After the War", Daycare for Everyone, Volume 1.#3, February, 1973.

⁶ Ibid.

DAYCARE WHERE PEOPLE CARE

This is the story of a day care centre that has overcome the problems. It's living proof that parents and day care workers can work together to make day care the pleasant experience it should be.

It's the story of the Halifax Children's Co-operative Day Care Centre, its kids, its employees and the parents. In many ways it can provide the blueprint for people throughout Canada who want to end the day care night mare...

Workers at the Children's Co-operative Day Care Centre belong to the CUPE local 1747, which signed its first collective agreement with the Board of Directors of the centre late last year.

The right of parents of children in the centre to share in its control is written right into the contract, and workers are joined by parents in deciding how the centre is to be run.

Martin Langille, an employee of the centre, and Recording Secretary for the local, says that the centre is "living proof that the myth that parents aren't interested in helping run day care is just not true. We have one of the better run centres in the city."

Langille says the decision to try to unionize day care workers came about a year and a half ago when it was realized that any improvements in the rather dismal day care situation in the province could only come about when organizations had some political clout. A Day Care Workers and Parents Organizing Committee was set up at that time to be a catalyst.

"We realized, however, that it would be difficult to organize parents, who have a rather ad hoc relationship with the day care centres, because they aren't always here," says Langille. "So the first core group would have to be the workers, since they are with the children all the time."

The four employees of the Children's Co-operative Day Care Centre joined with some 35 workers from St. Joseph's Day Care Centre, the largest in Nova Scotia, to form Local 1747 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees last June.

Claudia McGuire, a worker at the Children's Co-op, and past president of Local 1747, says unionization helps day care as a whole

"Through the collective bargaining process, we can influence the way the limited funds available for day care are to be spent, so it's better for us, for the kids and for day care."

The contract was written and negotiated by the workers themselves, and negotiated in only one session between the workers and the Board. There are several unique aspects to the agreement. Its preamble specifically promotes and encourages co-operation and mutual support between workers and parents. In addition, an appendix specifies that the union recognizes the rights of the parents involved with the centre to participate in all aspects of its operations, and in particular, their right to assist teachers in the daily program of activities with the children. It notes that parents are not covered by the terms of the agreement, nor can they exercise any individual supervisory function over any employee while they are assisting teachers in their work.

The workers have already benefitted from the contract, which provides for four weeks' vacation after a year's employment, including one week at Christmas. The centre pays them \$400 a month for a 32-hour week — not a high salary, but still more than is paid to many day care workers in Nova Scotia, who make minimum wages of \$2.20 an hour and work longer hours.

One interesting clause reads that "a pregnant employee shall receive an immediate leave of absence with full pay and accumulation of all benefits in the event that a known or suspected case of German Measles or any other disease or condition which could be harmful to pregnancy occurs in the day care centre, and shall extend until all danger from such disease or condition no longer exists." There are also provisions for payment of overtime, and generous clauses for sick leave, maternity leave, and general leave of absence. The agreement is compact, made so with the intention of using it to educate other day care workers.

The centre runs all year, and is open five days a week from 8:15 to 5:15. Parents and workers meet every two weeks, at obligatory meetings, to discuss the working of the centre. A regular schedule is set up for parents who volunteer time at the centre, or contribute in other ways, such as shopping or building equipment, and for the four paid employees who work four half days, and one full day a week.

The Nova Scotia government provides a subsidy of up to \$5.75 per child per day, based on a rate paid on a sliding scale by the parents (from a minimum of 25 cents a day to a maximum of \$125 per child per month for a family of four with a net income of \$9,000). This must pay for rent, wages, supplies and equipment in the centres, and is all day care has to work with unless grants can be found elsewhere. While the government has passed legislation permitting it to give capital cost funding, it has refused to implement it so far.

Langille points out that the Children's Co-operative Day Care Centre has already given rise to a number of people who had taken the lead in unions, coalitions for better day care and parent involvement in decision-making about issues which concern them. The Union was active with four other day care groups in a public demonstration of a coalition of some 400 parents, day care workers, and children last December in the province's legislature building. They demanded more equitable per diem rates, capital cost funding to be implemented where needed, and recognition of day care as a right for parents and children, and decent working conditions as a right for those who work in day care centres. One result has been a \$1,000 deduction on the amount of money on which fees of single parent families are computed. Other changes are slow in coming, but it seems likely that the steps made by the Children's Co-operative Day Care Centre will provide an incentive and an example to people rallying to change the state of day care in Nova Scotia and throughout Canada.

excerpts from an article by Pat Verge, *CUPE Journal*, Feb-March, Vol 12, No 2.

continued

The two advisory council reports have now combined with the massive community criticism of the Birch proposals, to reveal them as some of the most unfounded, regressive, arbitrary, and unconcerned changes in regulations the government has ever advanced. The government's tactics in trying to suppress this report, like their actions throughout this controversy, have been deplorable. It is clear that they are far more interested in maintaining power and maintaining the dominance of their anti-social service beliefs than they are in serving the people of Ontario.

This means that the government, even in the minority position it is in, will not stop trying to implement regressive policies. At the moment the advisory council, a government appointed body, subject to unilateral dismissal by the government, is one of our strongest potential allies — as we are theirs. We have reason to claim a victory over Ms. Birch...for a battle, not a war. It was the militant opposition of the daycare community as a whole that stopped the Birch proposals and made daycare one of the most sensitive issues in the province. It will be our continued, clearly demonstrated, opposition to such attitudes and our clearly demonstrated support for positive actions that will eventually win us GOOD DAYCARE FOR EVERYONE WHO NEEDS IT.

letters needed

With the change in Minister, it is possible that the Advisory Council may be disbanded.

In view of the reports of the Advisory Council, we feel that it is important to support their existence. Letters to both the chairperson, Anne Barstow and the new Minister of Community and Social Services, James Taylor, would help to ensure that this body will be allowed to continue its work.

Children's Storefront

The Children's Storefront, situated on Bathurst Street in the west end of Toronto, helps serve the needs of women who are at home, work part-time, or are providing family daycare. It is a parent-child centre where parents can meet with other parents and child development counsellors to discuss the difficult job of raising children.

Other services include toy lending, facilities in which children can play, articles on child development and information on other community services. Drop-off daycare can also be provided for up to three hours, after parents and child have visited centre.

A quote from the Day Care Information Handbook put out by the Saskatchewan Government: "The objective of the Saskatchewan Day Care Program is to promote the growth and development of non-profit, parent-controlled day care services for children, and to provide support to these services to ensure their availability to all families in Saskatchewan".

Daycare Expansion Shrinks

The total capital amount allotted to day care in 1975-76 is \$11,022,200. However, only a very small portion of this is what could be termed "spendable".

Here's the budget breakdown:

\$ 9,509,700 — committed to Day Care Expansion Program during '74-'75 for facilities to be built during '75-'76. This section is known as "carry-over".

\$ 950,000 — New capital money.

\$ 562,500 — Child Welfare — capital.

\$11,022,000 — Total

What's Happening

The \$9,509,700 represents money that has been committed in '74-'75 but will be spent in '75-'76.

As you will recall, the Day Care Expansion Program was supposed to last from July of 1974 to March of 1975. Mrs. Birch allocated 15 million dollars to this fund.

The allocation of 15 million dollars was supposed to have been spent during that time, with presumably new money forthcoming for '75-'76. Instead, the Ministry of Community and Social Services is spreading the 15 million dollars out over a period of approximately three years.

If money was committed in '74-'75 but not spent, it is put into later budgets, even though it is not, in fact, available in those years.

So, the \$9,509,700 is a non-figure.

The \$562,500 is general child welfare capital and may go to any number of projects, day care or otherwise.

The \$950,000 is the only portion of the capital budget absolutely committed for day care. This is not great deal of money when you consider that, under the Day Nurseries Act, municipalities, Indian bands, non-profit "approved" corporations and Associations for the Retarded are eligible to, and will indeed, apply for capital grants.

The Day Care Expansion Project

The Day Care Expansion Project is the 15 million dollar capital fund announced by the Province when they proposed the lost, but not lamented, changes in the Day Nurseries Act.

As of January, 1975, \$12,119,070 had been committed. To date, the program is closed — all money has been committed; no new applications are being accepted. All money, however, has not been spent and this is how the carry-over occurs.

It should also be noted that \$2,297,706 was lost through failure to spend this part of the allocation in '74-'75.

Advisory Council Comes Through In 2nd Report

The Birch proposals are dead.

If the news is slow in coming, blame the Conservative Government.

The Tories have seemed willing to do almost anything to destroy the quality of daycare in this province since Ms. Birch first brought down her suggestions in June 1974. This September they made a last ditch effort to repress the ever-spreading evidence of the opposition to the policy, and its effect on the government's popularity — by suppressing the report of the Advisory Council on Daycare.

Although the report had been submitted to Community and Social Services Minister Rene Brunelle in June, it had still not been released to the public in early September. The council's first report had been released three weeks after its submission; no one could explain what was holding this one up. Both the advisory council and the daycare community at large were alarmed and no-one was placated when the word spread that the election-embattled cabinet had decided not to release the report because of its controversial nature. In spite of repeated public challenges and a barrage of phone calls and letters to the government, the report was still not released until election day — when it could not hurt the Tories' already faltering election fortunes.

When the report came out it was clear the government had a right to be concerned. Their policy advanced a year earlier had been taken apart by the council they had appointed. And most important the report had pinpointed "a growing sense of dissatisfaction with the gap that seems to exist between local concerns and provincial decisions." In other words the Ontario Government's anti-daycare policy is being strongly felt and reacted to across the province.

In a government where advisory councils have traditionally waffled between indecision and outright support for the government's policies, the daycare council has taken a courageous stand. The report represents a strong slap in the face for the government and an assurance that, for the time being, our minority government will have no choice but to maintain the quality of daycare in the province.

The report covers several areas in detail:

1. The most important recommendation of the report — in response to the most regressive and contentious proposal of the Birch report — is that the present child staff ratios remain intact. Ms. Birch wanted to increase them by 25 to 100% but the report states that the present ratios have proved effective in practice and that "there is no evidence that a reduction in the number of programme staff would be

equally effective in producing quality daycare for children." As well it aims to clear up a major area of confusion in the present ratios by recommending that support staff — clerical, housekeeping, maintenance — be excluded when determining ratios.

2. It comes up decisively in favour of "trained and qualified" childcare workers. Another basic way in which the Birch proposals sought to undermine quality daycare was by removing the guidelines for staff qualification. The report moves strongly in the other direction. It reinforces the concept of a trained worker — one possessing "a) Thorough knowledge of the basic principles of child development...; b) an understanding of the application of this knowledge to the daily activities of children; c) adequate supervised practice in the application of a) and b)."



—Globe and Mail, Harry McLorinan

Empty chair beside Margaret Campbell was set aside for Margaret Birch at meeting.

It also urges that supervisors have more experience, volunteers not generally be included in determining staff complements and that legislation be introduced to clarify the present regulations.

3. It moves to strengthen the support given daycare through the Day Nurseries Branch by increasing both the number of Child Development Counsellors and the number of qualified staff in the central office. This identifies the central problem, the lack of support at a government level for the development and maintenance of quality daycare.

4. It considers at length the problems of private home daycare — recommending greater government control to insure quality and support for the homecare giver. It is absolutely necessary that homecare cease to be a cheap and chancy way of obtaining daycare. It has been the concern of many within the daycare movement that the government has pushed private home daycare as a cheap alternative to group care. It is cheap because it exploits the caregiver and there is no quality control. Private homecare should only be an alternative to groupcare for those who want it — not those who can't find daycare they can afford.

York: "ECE is Mickey Mouse"

Soon after the controversy over educational standards, for daycare staff had subsided, York region decided to set its own policy on qualifications for teachers in its municipal day nurseries. The policy will be a "positive statement" but the provincial Early Childhood Education (ECE) course will probably not be considered a "priority", according to Mayor Evelyn Buck.

Mayor Buck, who chairs the region's health and social services committee, said two weeks ago that there is "so damned much interference from provincial servants" that York had lost control over hiring of daycare staff.

She went on to say that the ECE program was "Mickey Mouse" course and said experienced staff trained outside of Canada should not be required to obtain ECE qualifications. "We think that fond and loving care is the most important thing you can give a child in a daycare centre," Mayor Buck added, after all, "there's nothing very complex about a small child."¹

Margaret Birch doesn't need to change to regulations of the Day Nurseries Act — Mayor Buck of Aurora is going to do it without any legislative changes.

The difference between a qualified and a certified teacher is certainly a real issue. It is true that people from other than disciplines other than early childhood development courses such as nurses or primary specialists could be considered qualified with some additional training. To say that anyone capable of "fond and loving care" is automatically capable of being a daycare worker, however, sounds vaguely familiar — echoes of June, 1974.

¹ The ERA, Newmarket, Aurora, Keswick, October 29, 1975

the next issue

In our next issue we hope to have articles:

- on the London daycare situation;
- on the militant actions to protect the status of daycare in Kitchener;
- on the role of the private-profit sector in Ontario daycare;
- reporting on the recent daycare legislation in Saskatchewan which forbids profit making centres;
- from The Ottawa Daycare Association;
- reporting on the status of the Queen's Park daycare centre;
- on industrial daycare;
- and much more! Send any contributions to the Alliance!

This newsletter was written and edited by Pat Schulz, Julie Mathien, Heather Richardson, Pat Redican, Sandy Stienecker, Cathy Gallagher, Pat Scarborough, Marlene Hayward and Evelyn McKee.

It was produced by The Daycare Reform Action Alliance.

If you would like copies of this issue, or of our last issue, please contact The Alliance at 15 Birch Ave., Toronto, or at P.O. Box 571, Station P, Toronto.

Available from the Alliance ...

The Alliance has two videotapes available on loan. "What is the Ontario Government doing to Daycare?" was made by Alliance members and deals specifically with proposed amendments which were made in the summer of 1974. It is about 25 minutes long and is available on ½ inch tape.

The second is a videotape of a programme that appeared on "The Rogers Report" in the summer of 1974. It examines the June 4th amendments and daycare in general. This tape lasts about half an hour and is available in both ½ and ¾ inch widths. This tape is owned by the Group for Daycare Reform and made available by them through the Alliance. Mail requests to Daycare Reform Action Alliance, 15 Birch Avenue, Toronto, Ontario.

A third videotape is presently being made by the National Film Board in co-operation with the Alliance and this should be available in 6 months.

We also have copies of a resource list, and of Margaret Birch's statement to the Legislature and the Alliance's response. These are available from Sandy Stienecker, 15 Birch Avenue, Toronto.

Copies of the 2nd progress report from the Advisory Council on Daycare are available from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Advisory Council on Daycare, 7th floor, S.W. 763, Hepburn Block, Queen's Park, Toronto.

"Good Daycare" buttons can be ordered from A.E.C.E.O., 25 Charles St. East, Toronto. Cost if 25¢ each.

Form 7

The Peel Day Care Action Committee has prepared a report on day care subsidization which contains an extremely useful analysis of the problems and inequities of the present system of subsidization and of Form 7's. The report contains comparisons of the variation in costs allowed to subsidized parents from area to area, recommendations for changes in policy and a discussion of the problems involved in charging parents who are ineligible for subsidy the full cost of care. *Daycare Subsidization Policies in Peel: A Preliminary Report*. Obtainable from Peel Community Services, 93 Dundas Street East, Mississauga, Ontario.

keeping us in our place

"A daycare worker is a role model. It has four hands, eyes in the back of its head, a calm demeanor in the face of crisis, a well-modulated voice, is kind, gentle, and fair at all times, has no inner hostility, and therefore never expresses anger."

Many students emerge from Early Childhood Education courses with this grand idea, and many quit after their enormous failure at being this ideal teacher. Worse still, many continue on with the rationalization of doing good, helping society and benefitting mankind as best they can. People like this help keep alive a system of daycare without quality as its top priority.

E.C.E. students are not aware of the pressure which they'll be subjected to while working in a daycare centre. Unprepared for the many demeaning tasks of a normal daycare worker, they suffer from a basic ignorance of their chosen field. When did they learn in classes, or by observing a demonstration school, how to guide, control and protect twenty children on their own? No training can provide them with this knowledge, and the experience can jade them forever. Students who do come into contact with fairly good daycare centres and teachers, often are shocked and disillusioned when they acquire a job which has none of the saving graces of the schools where they were placed. Colleges have demonstration schools on campus, but they give a false impression of general daycare facilities. They are especially built for daycare or nursery school with everything conducive to a calm, relaxing environment. Children's clothes cupboards placed in poorly-lit, narrow hallways, access to the playground by two or three flights of steps, mobile furniture and shelves that are packed away in the evenings — all belong to the knowledge of working graduates. Students are always placed in their demonstration school for some of their field practice and consequently the school always has a good adult-child ratio. This in no way prepares the students for the inadequate ratios which they'll eventually have to contend with.

Colleges and institutions try to help their students by discussing incidents in field practice, but much of the talk is focused on bad teaching methods and poor handling of situations. What criticism there is of the system is concentrated on the students adapting to the particular school and doing the best with what they can expect, but little training is given in ways and means to *change* the system in order to better it.

The history of daycare is grossly overlooked in courses. The idea of themselves as pioneers in a young profession is not presented, so they remain unaware of the hardships involved. The only government legislation which is studied is simply the Day Nurseries Act by which day care centres are supervised. It is pointed out bluntly that the restrictions of the act regarding ratios and staff qualifications are extremely minimal and poorly defined. The only restrictions which give centres hassles are those regarding fire safety and sanitation, as in any public building. Students are given no feeling of responsibility for the system and no idea of their own ability to *change* it.

Once out in the work field, experience becomes the teacher. They learn to cope. After living with twenty children for eight hours a day, they have little time for reviewing the situation. Timetables schedule every minute of the day. Finishing each routine in the allotted time space means that the rest of the programme runs smoothly. Inadequate staffing makes it imperative that children eat, sleep, and play to the same timetable. Piaget, Blatz, Bettelheim — all studied in child development courses — are not heeded when the needs of the individual child are subjected to the needs of the group as a whole. Child study is not in evidence when teachers are required to police a playground with inadequate staff. Their job is reduced to refereeing battles, distracting aggression and dealing with victims. Group control is achieved by a teacher with one basic fact, "I'm bigger than you are". Children must conform to the group or the system disintegrates. How quickly this is accomplished is evidenced by the widely-used discipline of "removal from the group". The socialization of the children is to conform to the centre's limitations. To see themselves in this demeaning role after the aspirations and promises of their future spiritual rewards, is hard to take. Personal integrity is eaten away as they find themselves becoming the very tools with which a system of bad day care is kept in good repair. Attempts on their part to bring the poor quality to the attention of administration are met with responses ranging from genuine concern, to sight changes, to "better cope", to indignation at their audacity, to possible firing.

The final and irrefutable excuse for any centre's inadequacies is — money. Money is the byword and the constant undertone in any day care centre. Equipment budgets are fixed each year and if all bikes are broken by the summer, then workers must cope with what they have or face taking from the indoor equipment budget — doing without good paint, paper, crayons, etc. Equipment may not seem too important until one realizes the aggression and hostility brought out in the children by the lack of a stimulating environment. Children with "behaviour problems" are, to a great extent, just plain bored. Substitution for absent staff is a real luxury in some centres, and has to be rationalized fully to the administration. This pressures many people to work when they are sick, knowing absenteeism leaves their fellow workers short-staffed.

Coping with the pressures placed upon them is not relieving or removing their force. Day care workers must reverse the pressure and begin the upward climb from their designated places in society.

metro daycare committee

In any discussion on improving daycare services in Ontario, the question soon arises — what level of government should we approach? Initially, the answer was clear for the Alliance. We were formed specifically to fight changes in provincial legislation. Because of the funding structure, it still makes sense to keep up the pressure on the province. However, a number of problems also exist at the municipal level. We've been trying to deal with the problems in Toronto as well.

This article doesn't provide answers or a plan for dealing with city governments. It does raise one of the problems we've had in the hope that we can share experiences across the province and together work out some techniques for intervention.

The municipal government role in daycare varies sharply across the province. Toronto operates about 30 centres and purchases services from many others by subsidizing those parents who can pass a means test. The system has a myriad of problems: not enough centres, lack of start up money for new centres, payments from the municipal government well in arrears of actual expenditures which causes frequent financial crises for centres, interviews for the means test that are time consuming and humiliating for parents, payments based on attendance of children, although costs remain stable even when children are absent, and so on.

About a year ago, a top civil servant in the Department of Social Services stated at one of our public meetings that he had no time for community consultation on any regular basis. But, in April of this year, at a meeting we attended to protest a new regulation, the Social Services and Housing Committee (composed of elected officials) instructed the civil servants to meet with us. Subsequently, there was debate over the on-going nature of the consultation and we received a permanent committee. The civil servants wanted small closed meetings; we compromised on a small committee which holds meetings open to all persons involved in daycare. The community people on the committee are from various interest groups: co-op centres, agency centres, profit-making centres and the Alliance. Provincial civil servants also attend. We've had 6 meetings in 6 months. Our purpose was to "discuss" daycare, and we've certainly

done that. However, that doesn't mean that we've had any impact whatsoever on the decisions that have been made. What happens is that we voice our opinions, the civil servants listen to them and then go off and make their decisions. Votes are not taken at the meetings, partly because it isn't clear who should vote. Should it be all members including municipal and provincial civil servants, or just community members? And what role should those community people who attend the meetings, but are not members, play?

Our frustrations grew until finally the community members started to meet together. Since some of us have never worked together before and represent some divergent interest groups, the development of a cohesive caucus is a slow process. The other problem is that the power of the civil servants is quite limited. We must consider when it is advisable to by-pass that structure and go beyond it, to the politicians who set it up, and to the community we represent.

What have we concretely achieved? We may have achieved a speed up in the payment system and a change in the calculation of per diem rates that will provide some relief for centres with periodic low enrollments. But, on the other hand, we fought for minimum guidelines in budget preparation and, in spite of our protests, were stuck with maximum guidelines, a step that may well make the situation worse.

The question is, can we change that committee from one which may or may not have some influence, to one that has a clear role in the decision making? That change has to occur, or our participation in the committee seems to be useless. It's a difficult problem, but one that must be dealt with effectively, if we're to expand day care in our local community.

OLD PROBLEMS WITH FEW NEW RESULTS

A municipal day-care centre operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week? This is what working parents in Thunder Bay are after.

There were among the findings of a 1974 child-care study sponsored by the Lakehead Planning Council whose investigation has indicated that existing child-care services in Thunder Bay "fall far short of meeting the needs of parents who are employed."

Findings from questionnaires distributed to employees of major businesses, agencies, schools, hospitals and government departments, disclosed that while 74 per cent of those who replied need their children cared for during the day from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., a significant number of others who do shift work would like their child cared for from 4 to 12 p.m., or 12 p.m. to 8 a.m.

According to Margaret Phillips of the Lakehead Social Planning Council, to date nothing has been done in regard to the preceding recommendations. This means that shift workers' needs are still not being met.

WHERE

In Ontario there are many now organized group of parents, day care workers, and other concerned people ready to fight for quality day care for all those who need or want it. Where do we go from here? How do we tap this energy?

After the government's reluctant release of the second Advisory Council Report, it seems likely that the amendments to the Day Nurseries Act — "the Birch Proposals" — do not have much hope of being implemented. That is assuming the government heeds its own council report! (and doesn't disband the group).

At this time we in the Day Care Reform Action Alliance feel it is safe and timely to change our focus and concentrate all our resources on the question of 'access' to day care. At present there are approximately 40,000 day care places in our province. There is need for at least 500,000. Obviously this is an area of major importance. The government is simply ignoring the needs of at least 450,000 families!

How do we build a good campaign based on the 'access' question?

First, we believe we must take advantage of the minority government situation to try and force the conservatives into action. This involves asking the opposition (N.D.P.) to support our demands that:

- a) day care be seen as a right of all those who need or want it;
- b) the government provide 100% capital funding for metro community, and co-operative day care centres;
- c) the government support a 10-year 'expansion program' to provide 50,000 new day care places a year;
- d) the government assume its responsibility for 'initiating' day care and helping groups set up centres;
- e) the N.D.P. use its research facilities to review and recommend changes in the provincial "Form 7" to allow a more equitable subsidy system.

We have written a brief elaborating on these demands which

NOW?

will be presented to the N.D.P. caucus in the next few weeks. The second step in our plans is to continue to build and broaden our organization by regular newsletter publication. We'll try to make these both informative and useful for all the day care community. These newsletters hopefully will help strengthen existing commitment to the fight for more good day care as well as winning and educating newcomers.

The third step is the drafting of a final policy paper based on last year's public discussion meetings. This statement will be more definitive than our previous "Meeting Ontario Day Care Needs". The areas to be covered are:

- I. Free Day Care (subsidy, etc.)
- II. Alternatives in Day Care (i.e. 24-hour, etc.)
- III. Unionization in Day Care.
- IV. Universal Day Care.

We are using the notes from the educationals as well as 'brainstorming'. Please contact us if you have any ideas to share. A more up to date position paper will help us solidify future demands.

Right now we are very excited about a video-tape we are involved in making on Day Care in Ontario. The film will be made in conjunction with the National Film Board (Challenge for Change), Sheridan College Media Centre and the Day Care Reform Action Alliance. The video will be divided into sections which can be shown independently or as a whole, and will show the need for all child care services, government response to the need, the main political issues as well as explaining the difficulties setting up day care throughout Ontario.

Saving the best for the last — if all goes well the video will be made into film by April. The video and or film will go far in helping to keep day care a 'hot political issue'.

In the next year we've got to force our government to respond to those in need of day care and to realize that access to quality day care is our right.

daycare reform
action alliance