NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO DAY CARE NEWS

October 1990

DAY CARE NEWS is a forum for the sharing of information between day care groups throughout the region, as well as providing information about what's happening on the federal and provincial scenes, both in terms of governmental policy/legislation and advocacy groups' activities.

We hope that this newsletter will combat some of the isolation that day care workers and advocates feel and that through the sharing of resources, ideas and action plans, we can develop strategies to ensure the growth and strengthening of quality day care in our region.

We welcome submissions to this newsletter from every day care centre and committee throughout Northwestern Ontario. Please send articles, news clippings, letters, etc. to Box 144, Thunder Bay, Ontario P7C 4V5.

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A NEW GOVERNMENT LEADS CHILD CARE INTO THE 90'S

On September 6 the people of Ontario made history by electing a New Democratic Party Government. This historic moment means new challenges for the Child Care Community.

For the first time the elected government has a party policy that reflects what child care advocates have been saying. Advocates have long said that Children in Ontario deserve a child care system that ensures they have access to universally-accessible and comprehensive child care where there are no barriers due to cost, age, hours, geography, culture, language, disability or other special needs.

The compatibility of the NDP's policy statements and what advocates have been saying means that we may see a light at the end of the tunnel;it gives us a great deal of optimism.

This does not mean that we can stop lobbying or informing people about child care. What it means is that child care advocates must be even clearer in what they want. There is a government in Ontario that will now listen. They believe in a comprehensive child care system and campaigned on that issue in the 1987 campaign.

They will want to implement a comprehensive system, not just band-aids. Members of the child care community must present to the government exactly what they want. Do we want child care in the school system? Do we want a Ministry of the Young Child? How do we want child care funded? Presently the child care system is under the Ministry of Community and Social Services, do we want it to remain there? These are just a few questions that we must come to consensus on. Your first opportunity to have input into the new government will be on November 7 and 8 in Toronto. The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care is holding their Fall Forum and Lobby with the M.P.P.'s at this time.(see Fall Forum and Lobby later in this newsletter)
The 'U-TURN' proposal will be presented to the Forum for participants input. This document will also be available at N.W.O.R.D.C.C. office by October 25, 1990. If you would like a copy please call 807-345-8803.(please leave your name and address on the machine)

ZANANA AKANDE, NEW MINISTER OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The new Minister of Community and Social Services has been described as an educator, a community activist, an outspoken advocate for children, women, the poor, and the homeless and a democratic socialist. Years of activism to effect social justice for all prepare her for her new role.

The Minister is well-known and respected throughout Ontario as a gifted speaker, workshop leader and presenter at educational conferences, programs, meetings of professional womens' groups and community organizations. She has also taught at the University of Toronto, York University and prior to being elected was Principal, the George Syme a Community School in the City of York (Toronto Area).

Her many community activities have included serving on the Ministry of Community and Social Services Advisory Committee on Childrens' Services. She now represents the riding of St. Andrew-St. Patrick.

Please welcome the Minister to her new responsibilities and remind her that child care deserves special attention by writing to her:
The Honourable Zanana Akande
Minister of Community and Social Services
Hepburn Block
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A TE9

STAFF SHORTAGES IN NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

One of the major difficulties in the remote regions of the province is obtaining qualified staff and keeping them. This problem has recently become acute in the Northwest. From 1986 to the present the turnover in Supervisors in the region has been 50% in Native Child Care Centres and 72% in the small regional communities. Several have turned over two or three times during this time period. Child care centres located outside the Thunder Bay area find it difficult to attract ECE graduates for teach positions. Some reasons for the shortages of qualified staff are:

1) The threat of closure (1983-1986) took it's toll and some workers sought other jobs or went back to university;
2) The uncertainty of the future of day care in their community may have discouraged students from taking ECE;
3) Some workers who graduated in the late 70's and early 80's are now raising children of their own and staying home for a few years;
4) Low wages;
5) A greater degree of professional self esteem is available in other fields; and
6) High worker mobility in Northwestern Ontario, therefore leaving community because of spouse's employment.

Recently the Native Communities in Northwestern Ontario expressed interest in the concept of Confederation College delivering an Early Childhood Education Program directly to their reserves.

As a result of these inquiries, the college held a series of Native Early Childhood Education Conferences to gain the Native Community's perspective on the provision of E.C. E. training. Conferences were held in Sioux Lookout, Kenora, and Thunder Bay. These Conferences produced a great deal of information on:

-how much interest communities have for E.C.E. training on reserves,
-which communities may be interested,
-program models on how to deliver training,
-issues related to the delivery of training on reserves,
-recommendations on how the college should proceed in a number of areas related to delivery, curriculum, support for learners, and other areas as identified by participants.

As a result of these conferences and the recommendations in the report of the conferences, the expectations and enthusiasm for an on-site pilot project has been created. Seven Native communities expressed and interest in becoming possible pilot project sites for September of 1990. Unfortunately, no funding was made available this September. Is this another case of receiving input from the community and then shelving the information? Seven Native Communities would like the answer to this question.

Many child care advocates feel that one of the solutions to the staffing shortage should be that Early Childhood Educators in Ontario should receive a Pay Equity Grant directly from the Government of Ontario. This could be done through Proxy Comparisons with municipal governments for a Regional Wage Adjustment, of through Proxy Comparisons with the Provincial Government for an Average Wage Adjustment.

A recent study showed that higher paid ECE provided higher quality care ie) wages have a direct correlation with quality care services, Therefore Pay Equity Grants would serve to consolidate the existing Child Care System. Existing Child Care Programs would be strengthened. High turnover rates would stabilize--an average ECE only stays in the field for three years. A higher wage will keep qualified staff in the field longer. Stable staffing is another indicator of Quality Child Care. Higher wages would attract those ECE who have left the field, back into the field, thereby alleviating trained staff shortages. Pay Equity could be a solution.

The growth of child care in the Northwest is in a precarious state. Service delivery to many communities has been non-existent. Of the 171 communities in Northwestern Ontario, only 20 provide child care services, with 6 additional communities having nursery school opportunities for children. The child care community in Northwestern Ontario must communicate our concerns regarding the availability and the staffing of child care centres in Northwestern Ontario to our M.P.P.s. Now is the time to meet with the M.P.P.s, to ensure that they understand and remember the special circumstances of child care in Northwestern Ontario.

THREE CABINET MINISTERS FROM NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

As of September 6, we welcome and congratulate the new M.P.P. from Port Arthur Riding, The Honourable Shelley Wark-Martyn, who is the new Minister of Revenue. Congratulations also to those returning to office:

Lyn McLeod, M.P.P. for Fort William Riding,
Frank Miklash, M.P.P. for Kenora Riding,
Gilles Pouliot, M.P.P. for Lake Nipigon and the new Minister of Mines, with responsibility for Francophone Affairs, and
Howard Hampton, M.P.P. for Rainy River and the new Attorney General.

As you will note Northwestern Ontario has a very strong voice in the Cabinet. It is important that we keep in touch with our M.P.P.'s. The three Cabinet Ministers will have extremely

heavy agendas. While they may be more favourable to a comprehensive child care program, they will also be busy with other things. It is up to us to ensure that child care is not forgotten. Some things that you can do are to write and congratulate all the members. This can be done creatively with the children helping or with a letter from your day care. You should also remember to invite them to visit your centre.

DRYDEN DAY CARE NEWS: by Lynn Carlson

Karen Sourtzis, Day Care Supervisor has returned from a one years leave of absence. Karen has since married Spuro Sourtzis on October 6, 1990, in Thunder Bay. Congratulations Karen!

A contract was signed between architect (Osburn, Cotnam and Belair) and Horst Lang Construction Ltd., clearing the way for the work to begin on a new Resource Building in Dryden. The new Centre will include a Day Care Centre for 48 preschoolers, an integrated Nursery School Program that serves approximately 60 children and a Toy Library/Resource Centre. Expected completion date is June 1991. Future plans are to integrate the Day Care Program and to offer a Home Day Care Service to meet the needs of infants and school age children.

Currently the Centre's enrolment capacity is 45. To improve the quality of the program and to ensure that the needs of the individual child and his/her family are met, the schedule has been divided into two separate programs. This makes for a much calmer day as for any large group activity such as lunch, outdoor play etc. is not 24 children. Three full time Early Childhood Educators work with each group.

QUALITY CHILD CARE PROVIDES ENRICHED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

By Teresa Legowski

Although I had some trepidations, my daughter was eager to begin Junior Kindergarten. She had been participating in a child care program on a part time basis, which had a Waldorf philosophical slant. Of course, to me, this is a quality program: child and play centred, emphasizing the seasonal nature of the world and full of lyrical stories, "natural" toys and an importance placed on crafts. The staff child ratios is one to five.

Before I decided on a junior kindergarten program I asked a teacher friend of mine if she could recommend a particular JK teacher and she did. It turned out that the school where this teacher worked was in the area where my daughter would go to school, so I considered this lucky. Entering the junior kindergarten program showed a world of difference when I compared

it to my daughter's child care experience: activity centres designed to handle twenty children so that one teacher could manage, each centre play oriented but designed to limit the number of children participating at each, programming geared to the lowest common denominator, requests for parent volunteers to help, much less individual attention, more cut and paste and less craft type activities. Welcome to the elementary school system!

I have had the opportunity to speak with my daughter's teacher on several occasions now and I admire her experience and rapport with the children and their parents. She is an excellent teacher. But she readily admits that although play is the best way by which children learn, that JK and SK are the only programs in the elementary system in which it is offered, all be it in a very structured environment. She admits that to organize a play centred learning environment for children takes a lot of time and commitment from a teacher. Such a task is a heavy responsibility for just one teacher.

So, for me it comes down to two things: Quality education is based on the teacher/child ratio and a play centred learning environment. Both these are favourable in child care centres. Child care centres offer quality education for children in an enriched environment. So my daughter goes half days to JK and three half days a week to child care because I do not want her to lose that enriched learning experience. Just as an example, my daughter took a piece of scrap material, some thread and a needle (which I helped her thread) and sewed a very simple skirt for herself. She is four years old and learned how to do this at her child care centre.

I feel sad when I see that other children have not had this opportunity, simply because these quality child care programs are not universally accessible. I feel frustrated that my daughter attends a quality program for a half day and a mediocre program for the other half. As a parent, I want to see quality child care programming across the board for all children. I want to see one government Ministry responsible for all children so that this double standard can be eliminated and that all children will have the same opportunities. I firmly believe that the standards for child care by far excel the standards for the same aged children in the elementary school system, and that these are the standards that should be implemented and enforced (over-ruling local Boards of Education), if child care does eventually become an extension of the school system.

FALL FORUM AND LOBBY OF M.P.P.S, NOVEMBER 7 AND 8 IN TORONTO

Individuals attending this Forum and Lobby will have the opportunity to have input and hear what others have to say about the 'U-Turn' proposal that is being recommended by the executive of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. This proposal would turn the funding for child care on its head. Rather than it being a user-fee system, propped up with Government subsidies of various forms, as it is now, it would become primarily a Government-funded service and the recovery of costs would be separately administered. This is an exciting concept and needs vast circulation and discussion in the next few weeks. The resulting paper will be presented to the new Government as the direction that we, in the child care movement, would like to see the new Government take.

The U-Turn paper is the major focus of the Forum but, workshops on the following topic areas will also be offered.

1) The Child Care Network as a Lobby Group
2) The Computerization Project
3) Child Care Review: The CCR: A new method for child care program evaluation
4) Child Care Overdue: Billing the province for funding long overdue. How does it work? How can your child care program participate?
5) Child Care Staffing Caucus: A strategy session for child care staff.
6) Activities and Projects of the New Network. What's in it for you? How to use the new services to help your program: accounting; insurance; manuals;; training programs and more.
7) The Annual Child Care Cycle: An Overview for Boards of Directors and Child Care Administrators.
8) Pay Equity of the Art of Achieving the Impossible: A Balance Sheet for child care staff.
9) The future of Child Care Under The New Democrats.

On November the 8th a Lobby of M.P.P.s will take place at Queen's Park. For those of you who have not taken part in a lobby, this is an opportunity to meet other child care advocates from across the province and with 2 or 3 others meet with an M.P.P. or Cabinet Minister. This is a great learning experience.

If you would like to attend the Forum and Lobby or want a copy of the 'U-Turn' proposal, please call the N.W.O.R.D.C.C. office (807-475-5243). There are some subsidies available for the Lobby and Forum in Toronto.

UPCOMING EVENTS

If you have an upcoming event please let us know. We will try to let you know about conferences etc. in advance. It is a good idea, to keep this information so that at budget time your centre will know the type of things that are offered throughout the year and can budget appropriately. We try to negotiate travel subsidies in our budgets, so the cost to your organization is not as great. Please let us know about upcoming events.

1990

November 7 and 8--Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care Annual Fall Forum and Lobby
Toronto

1991

January 18, School age Workshop, "Meeting Their Needs"9a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Airlane Hotel, Thunder Bay
Sponsored by the Association for Early Childhood Education
Cost $50 Contact Debbie Dubeau 344-2465.

January 19, Next meeting N.W.O.R.D.C.C. Council in Thunder Bay

March 1 & 2 tentative date for our Spring Forum

March 22, Infant Care Workshop 9a.m. to 3:30p.m. Airlane Hotel, Thunder Bay, Sponsored by the Association for Early Childhood Education
Cost $50 Contact Debbie Dubeau 344-2465.

April or May, Spring Conference-Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

September 25, 26, 27,-Thunder Bay--The conference hotel will be the Valhalla Inn.

Although the conference is Private home Day Care, plans are to ensure workshops and sessions for all persons involved in child care are available. For example: administration, native and francophone, centre base re: infants, toddlers, pre-school age will be some of the key areas addressed.

If you have any suggestion or ideas, pleas forward them to Sandra Livingston,
Children's Services Co-Ordinator
86 S. Cumberland St.,
Thunder Bay, Ont.,
P7B 6G7,
telephone 625-2183.

October Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care-Fall Forum and Lobby

1991 MEMBERSHIP

At the 1988 Forum a membership structure for the Northwestern Ontario Regional Day Care Committee was approved. Memberships are now available. Membership categories are:

Category A: Municipal Councils/Indian Band Council; Day Care Centres; Professional Organizations; Regional Associations; Labour Unions.
Fee: $50.00

Category B: Parent Groups, Voluntary Community Organizations.
Fee: $25.00

Category C: Individuals.
Fee: $5.00

To join, please complete this application form, detach and return to: N.W.O.R.D.C.C.
P.O. Box 144
Thunder Bay, Ont.
P7C 4V5

1991 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I believe in the purpose of The Northwestern Ontario Regional Day Care Committee and I wish to become a member.

_____
Signature

Name:_____

Address:_____

Postal Code:_____

Phone Number:_____Fee Enclosed_____

Category: A____ B_____ C_____

Thank you for your support.