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Daycare

January

Vancouver Status of Women 2029 W. Fourth Ave. 736-3746-7-8 Volume IV No. 29



day care... one year later

The NDP party plank of free 24 hour day care for all children who need it has apparently been abandoned. However, within the past year some progress towards meeting the need for day care has been made. In Vancouver alone thirteen new day care centres have been opened. There are now a total of eight centres which accept children under three. Provincial seed money has been made available to community members who want to set up day care centres. The new subsidy system is much more comprehensive and realistic given the high cost of living. The provincial government's Day Care Information Centre is going full blast and organizers from that Centre are now available to help community groups set up day care.

This kind of progress relative to what went on in the past is impressive, but let's not be lulled into a false sense of security. There's still a long way to go. 1. Only about 6% of the children of working mothers in Vancouver have access to licensed, supervised group day care--to say nothing of all the children of non-working mothers who need day care for a multiplicity of reasons. Without going overboard

opening of new day care centres. For example, an elementary school about the merits of supervised day care, at least there is potentially a greater measure of protection afforded children than in someone's clandestine cellar operation. 2. The quality of most existing day care centres is questionable. 3. The bulk of the under three centres were set up by articulate university educated people accustomed to dealing with bureaucracies and winning over the immense obstacles set in their paths. Children of other parents too often lose out. 4. An appalling number of parents still don't know about the subsidy system. Little concerted effort has been made to make non-English speaking parents aware of what's available. 5. The busy signal for hours on end is the usual response of the Day Care Information Centre. When you finally get through, you often are given another number to phone, and the process is repeated. 6. There are too few day care organizers. Day care consumers are justifiably angry that they had no role in the hiring of these organizers. 7. Ridiculous licensing requirements and sometimes just the whims of the inspectors hang up the

agreed to provide free space, utilities, equipment, janitorial services and a fenced playground for after-school day care. This facility was not approved because the principal refused to provide an additional fence to fence off participants in the after-school program from other children who might be playing on the grounds after school. This even though these children presumably played together during regular school hours. 8. Civil Services janitors make over \$650 per month. Day care personnel charged with are children are lucky to make \$200 less. 9. Women who do family day care in their homes are paid no more than \$75.00 per child per month for a maximum 10 hour day. This means that even if a women is licensed for the maximum of 5 children she makes less than the minimum wage, in fact only \$1.75 per hour for the care of 5 children. Wear and tear on the house and furniture, increased utilities and food are not compensated for in any way.

And these are just a handful of the most pressing problems with day care. There is a tendency among people who don't have children or whose children are grown or even those who have

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why we need what we need

In our society ideology rather than reality determines the provision of services. Nowhere is the truth of this axiom more apparent than in the area of day care. Here, the prevailing ideology is that "Mother's place is in the home" and that, consequently, "day care is nothing more than an unfortunate episode, an episode that cannot be justified except in very special circumstances." This kind of attitude allows both government and private sectors to shirk responsibility for the provision of day care services and yet remain morally unassailable.

Because the twin ideologies of "Mother's place, in the home" and "Day care, an evil to be avoided" constitutes a major stumbling block to the provision of day care services which are anything more than merely adequate and sometimes not even that, we need to carefully examine the premises upon which such an ideology is predicated. Too much emphasis has been placed on what we need and not enough on why we need what we need. This becomes apparent from the hesitancy and halfheartedness of government and private sectors to provide the kind of day care services children need. Such reticence could not be justified if any real understanding prevailed.

The concept that "Mother's place is in the home" is based on three major assumptions: Mother can afford—in purely financial terms, of course—to stay in the home. Family

stability is such as to guarantee the continuance of that home. Finally, there is something sacrosanct about the mother-child relationship which enables the child to gain more from that single relationship than from any other kind of interaction.

Can mother afford to remain at home? Increasingly, unemployment and inflation make this for women a pipe dream. The 35% of all mothers who do in fact work, the bulk of these from economic necessity, prove the point. The popular stereotypes of women working for second incomes to provide luxuries like color TVs and mink coats is just one more myth that needs to be exploded, a myth so pervasive that even mothers who work from necessity still believe that their contribution is of secondary importance.

Can mother afford to remain at home? Only if she is privy to above average income, prepared for a bare existence on welfare or reconciled to the sacrifice of what most Canadians take for granted. Comparison of statistics on average family income in Canada and the cost of living leave little room for doubt.

Family stability is increasingly tenuous. The contemporary Canadian marriage is a gamble where the odds are not very appealing. The legions of single parents, the widowed, the separated, and divorced attest to the precariousness of mother's place in the home.

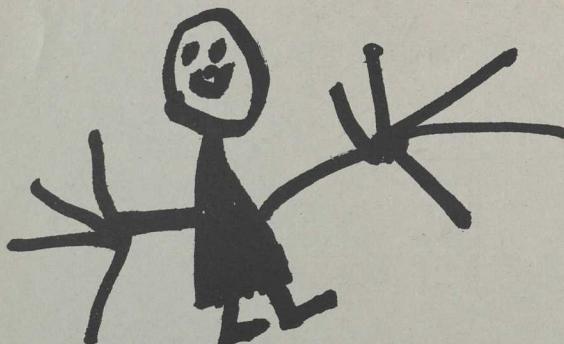
The instability of modern marriage and the economic realities of life in Canada cannot be wished away. Failure to provide adequate day care facilities will not change the reality to conform with the ideology that marriage should last forever and that every man's income should be adequate to meet his family's needs.

However, to concentrate solely on provisions of day care services as a means of dealing with economic reality falls into the trap of perceiving day care merely as a necessary evil and is at best cowardly because day care can be so much more.

Cowardice lies in failing to meet the needs of children because of the fear of not being able to face pressures exerted by a public not yet ready for reality. Where children are concerned half-measures aren't good enough.

In order to support the suggestion that day care can be a good in and of itself, an examination of the kind of relationships which prevail when mother can afford to stay home with her child is imperative. To do this both rhetoric and rose-colored glasses must be discarded. Otherwise, what ought to become confused with what is. As a consequence, clues to reality go ignored because clues conflicting with a value system which says things should be otherwise are threatening.

The specialness of the mother-child relationship cannot be denied, but the idea that the mere physiological process of birth automatically endows a woman with all the special skills and abilities necessary to child care is naive. Moreover, socialization is not something which transpires in a vacuum. The performance of even the finest mother is influenced by factors beyond her control. What these factors are needs to be made apparent.



The Newsletter is published monthly by the Vancouver Status of Women. Its objective is to provide an open channel of communication between the members of the organization and to promote understanding about the changing position of women in society. The Newsletter is dedicated to a philosophy consistent with the women's movement.

Publication Date: The first week of each month.
Copy Deadline: The 15th of the previous month.
Registration: The Newsletter is provided as a service to members of VSW in good standing. Membership is acquired by an annual donation. In determining your donation we ask you to balance your own financial position and the fact that the Newsletter costs approximately \$3.00 a year per person to print and mail. Publishing costs require that membership donations be prepaid and up to date. Other donations to meet publishing costs gratefully received. **Cost per single issue:** 25¢.

Editorial Committee: Susan Germaine, Kathy Sopko, Janice Booth, Jo Lazenby, Ruth Calder, Eloah Giacomelli, Sue Bridge, Coreen Lindquist, Monica Mui.

Graphics: Kathy Sopko and Monica Mui.

The Newsletter is produced by volunteer labour and printed by College Printers.

Submissions: The newsletter welcomes submissions from members and will consider those from non-members. All submissions, including letters to the editorial committee, must be accompanied by the writer's name and address. Pseudonyms will be used where requested. Where necessary, the editorial committee will edit for brevity, clarity and taste.

Correspondence: Send to: The Vancouver Status of Women, 2029 W. 4th Avenue, Vancouver 9, B.C. Telephone: 736-3746.

Confining the child with the mother in the home has implications for the child:

(1) The child becomes dependent on the mother, sometimes even to the point of fearing the father. If anything happens to the mother, the child is threatened indeed. The mobility of young couples which divorces families from each other accentuates the situation because geography prevents relatives from playing a mitigating role. A highly mobile, isolated, busy mother may have few friends or little time to devote to them for friends to compensate.

(2) The child learns to perceive others as threatening because exposure to strangers becomes an alien experience. No basis for trusting strangers is established rather than the opposite. Mistrust finds expression in such phenomena as "making strange" and prolonged tears when the child is left with a babysitter.

(3) The physical structures of modern living arrangements provide limited access to the outdoors. Safety precludes anything but supervised outdoor play which a busy mother may not have time to provide.

(4) The child is at the complete mercy of the mother. There is no provision for outside intervention unless the situation has reached a crises, and then it is too late. A not surprising fact, yet one that is easy to overlook, is that those most likely to engage in child abuse are those who spend the most time with children. In our society mothers bear the greatest responsibility for child care, and mothers bear the responsibility for more than fifty percent of all reported cases of child abuse. Mothers succumb to pressure engendered by having to play simultaneously such roles as "Fastidious Homemaker", "Always Available Wife" and "Long Suffering Mother".

Usually, the position of the child in the home is not dire, but potential does exist for the child to become scapegoat to the mother's frustrations. The potential for psychic maiming is enormous and is not trivial merely because such damage is not visible.

(5) The mother may not be equipped to provide exposure to alternative ways of living. The child emerges with a very restricted world view. Indoctrination in ways of living which are no longer valid in a changing world such as conspicuous consumption, aggression appropriate to pioneer days and rigid sex role stereotyping is a pernicious social influence.

(6) Demographic changes mean smaller nuclear families and neighborhoods bereft of children of the same age. The fascination of children with other children is evident. The loneliness of children deprived of other children is inescapable. What parent has confronted with the plaintive "Where's nobody for me to play with"? Children need other children just like adults need other adults. The most conscientious adult playmate cannot totally fill the gap of the absence of other children.

(7) An adjunct to loneliness is boredom. Adults with their albeit idealized memories of an active childhood "when we made our own fun" get annoyed by children who whine "what can I do today? I've got

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nothing to do". What adults ignore is that twenty years ago the higher birth rate meant there was more likely someone to have fun with and that physical structures and a simpler society were much more conducive to outdoor play.

(8) The child is divorced from father and his world as well as the world of men in general unless father has both the inclination to engage actively in child care as well as the kind of employment which permits him to assume this role.

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(9) The range of toys and access to creative experiences of the average home simply cannot compete with the equipment of the average day care centre. Moreover, the child without playmates or siblings of an age or much access to the outdoors may need more of both.

(10) The busy mother burdened by domestic responsibilities may have little time to give undivided attention to the child. Heresy it may be, but the average mother spends only 20 minutes per day actually giving time to her child. Are 20 minutes per day of undivided attention all that a child requires?

(11) The child isolated in the home has few opportunities to learn to share or to participate in a group, few opportunities to cooperate with others or to learn skills of group interaction.

(12) The potential of each child may not be developed by the mother. The mother's subjectivity may render her unable to ferret out her child's capabilities, capitalize on talents or compensate for liabilities in the same way that a sensitive, objective, experienced, trained professional may be.¹ After all, every mother begins as an amateur with vested interests, and all amateurs begin with the disadvantages of inexperience. Experience as an babysitter is not analogous to being a full-time mother.

(13) Immigrant children find themselves retarded in their assimilation of English, and therefore, handicapped in school if they must wait till age five to begin learning.

(14) The wishes of the child are not taken into consideration. Children are naturally conservative and, consequently will prefer to stay home if this is all they have ever known. However, how many children given exposure to an excellent day care centre would opt to stay home? Is the dependency of children on their mothers something that is carefully nurtured by women because society permits them no other role and the consequences of no longer being needed are personally disastrous? If the needs of children are paramount, why not ask them what they want?

(15) Day care provides an opportunity to detect problems early in the child's development. Too often these problems aren't detected until the child enters school.

1. The terms "trained" and "professionals" are used here with reservation as the conventional definitions are not intended. "Trained" is used in this sense to apply to anyone who has had experiences academic or otherwise which culminated in proficiency in enabling children to fulfill their fullest potential. A "professional" is anyone who demonstrates this capacity irrespective of paper qualifications.

TRANSITION HOUSE OPENS

4828-30 Victoria Drive, Vancouver, is the address of Vancouver's first Transition House which opened in time for Christmas.

The house is open 24 hours, 7 days a week with two staff members present on each shift to help the women and children.

The purpose of the house is to provide support for women with children in crisis in the form of shelter, food, referral to social agencies such as Children's Aid Society, Family Services, Welfare, Manpower, Legal Aid, etc. The philosophy of the staff and committee is to help women in crisis to re-establish their lives and become independent people.

Money for the house is guaranteed through the Children's Aid Society until March 31st when C.A.S. will be taken over by the Vancouver Resource Board, which will hopefully honour the C.A.S. Transition House contract.

Volunteer workers are greatly needed to help in all areas of the running of the House. Anyone interested in helping please call Pam Smith at the Status of Women office: 736-3746. Happy New Year!

--Janice Booth

DAY CARE IS OKAY, STUDY SHOWS

A research project of the University of Kentucky has exploded the myth that working mothers who leave their children in day care centres are depriving them.

According to an American Press report carried in the Vancouver Sun, December 5, Dr. Richard Winett said the study revealed that children who attend day care centres do not differ socially or mentally from children who are cared for by their mothers at home. Children, he said, are not harmed by outside child care arrangements although family relationships do tend to change. One result is that fathers of day care children tend to become more involved with the children.



Jimmy

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extend the family.....

A friend of mine who, incidentally, raised five normal children, once said to me, "Sometimes my children can't stand me and the feeling is mutual. At those times I feel they should be able to go and stay with someone else for a while, for the good of us all."

What my friend was envisaging was a loose extension of the nuclear family. She felt that just as her children didn't 'own' her, neither did she 'own' them and if they, for any reason, didn't happen to be getting along with her they should be able to go and stay with someone they did get along with. She was serious.

Scandalous? In fact, the basic idea is not new, although the dilemma--of her children not having anyone else to go to--is.

In days not too long ago where mother and father and grandparents and sometimes even aunts and uncles and cousins shared family responsibilities, children had a much better deal. They had the benefit of several adult models--rather than one all of the time and another part-time--and peers. Mothering wasn't regarded as the exclusive responsibility of mother. There were usually always other adults from whom a child took guidance and direction and to whom the child looked for example.

That structure, with the rare exception, no longer exists and now children grow up in families where, at best, they can relate to only two adults--one fulltime and the other part time. As the trend towards family breakdown becomes more common, the situation frequently is that there is only one dominating adult influence for the first six years of a child's life.

This, we have been led to believe by the Ladies Home Journal philosophy, is well and good. It fulfills both woman's function and child's need. Children need their mothers all the time. If mother isn't there all of the time, if she "farms" out her children to someone else's care, they will grow up thwarted delinquents. Right?

Of course not. In fact, for all of this supposed family bliss, child delinquency and alienation is on the increase. It would be wrong, however, to blame mothers for this trend. The mitigating factors are probably many and it's very possible that one of those is that fathers have been in the picture less than any other time, barring wartime. We are also just now beginning to discover that mothers have been frustrated by the situation, seeing it through only because they thought it was for the good of the children. All of that stifled frustration may have something to do with it. But if our children are not actually turning into alienated youth, are they as well-adjusted and self-reliant after six years of private tutoring as they might be?

Well, that's difficult to determine. But I think we might reconsider the romantic notion that mother is best and only mother with the occasional help from dad. I think we have been so caught up in this notion that we're not good parents unless we take full responsibility for the upbringing of our children that we have not seen what may well be the reality of the situation: that a one-to-one relationship can be pretty stifling over a period of time; that in restricting a child's contact with other adults and depriving him/her of other good and alternative adult models, we tend to recreate self-images rather than individuals.

I am not suggesting that we do away with parents--only that we create more options for our children by providing more adult models--more than mother and father.

But it's a little late to be hauling the relatives back into the family home.

Day care--good day care--can fill that gap. Day care that is warm, sensitive and loving, that involves parents as much as possible, that offers both female and male models, can, I think, be an enriching experience for a child. It would require a change in attitude that placing children in day care centres is an act of abandonment by the parents.

I am, of course, suggesting a more communal or community, if you like, approach to child raising and a social responsibility for it rather than a strictly parental one.

Recently an otherwise intelligent father asked me what kind of mothers would willingly leave their children in day care centres when they don't have to (meaning they don't have to work). It reminded me again of the stigma against day care--a stigma that says if you "farm" your kids into day care you obviously don't love them very much. I think we need to look at day care with a new, positive vision.

--S.G.

the child care centre: two portraits

A Community Model: Parents & Professionals Share

This article was written with the assistance of Nancy Teng, Co-ordinator for the Day Care Council at the University of British Columbia, and Monica Mitchell, Assistant Supervisor of Tillicum Day care. Statistical data was drawn from the "Report to the Social Services Committee" (submitted Nov. 13/73).

I approached the Day Care complex at the University of British Columbia with the intention of finding out how this service has been set up, while other centres in Greater Vancouver have not been as successful in their efforts.

The initial problems associated with establishing day care centres appear to be twofold: finding a suitable location for a centre, and financing this project.

If these two major hurdles can be overcome there is the further problem of making this service an indispensable part of the community.

From my observations of the UBC Day Care program, many preconceived notions about the answers to these problems were shattered. I expected to find the strong support of the university as the initial stepping-stone for its success, and this was true in part. The intense need for a day care on campus was undoubtedly the motivating force.

My enquiry revealed a strong but simple organization within each day care centre, and a policy of direct parent participation. To simplify this report I examined in detail one day care centre called Tillicum, which has a very similar program to the seven other centres on campus. Each day care tries to preserve its identity.

Tillicum is the third centre for children between the ages of three to five years to be established at UBC since 1967. It is situated in the Acadian Camp complex and is described as a parent co-op. One year ago, after much effort, several foundations, including some faculties at the university and a gift from the graduating class made it possible to set up Tillicum. The university administration provides space, and rent for the building is free. The provincial government gave Tillicum grant money to buy equipment and toys, and for renovating the centre to meet provincial licensing requirements. Parent's renovated the building as much as possible, cutting down labor costs.

Parents Twenty children are now enrolled in Tillicum, and are supervised by 2 full-time staff. The centre is structured to involve parents in all aspects of Tillicum - admissions, communication, finance, etc. Tillicum functions autonomously now, and had the advantage of being provided with



space by the university, free of charge. Parents pay dues for their children according to a provincial government fee schedule, which depends upon the number of people in a family & the income.

One role of a "Co-ordinator for the University Day Care Council" is to provide more effective liaison with the centres. Nancy Teng, who holds this position of Co-ordinator, assists the centres in admission procedures. She has also recently drawn up a substitute list of trained day care supervisors, who are willing to work on short notice.

In order to register a child in Tillicum Day Care, one of the parents must have a direct association with the university, such as being on faculty, staff, or a student. The day care centres on campus are open only to this well-defined community. Like all day care centres in operation now, there is a long waiting list for registering children and although there is a turnover in April and September, there are still disappointments.

Of the twenty children at Tillicum, 25% are from single parent families, which is higher than the "Report to

Social Services Committee" show in their statistics. (They indicate from 5 - 9% of the population with children in this area come from single-parent families). Having this day care service allows the single parent to feel secure in knowing that their child is being well taken care of while they are working or pursuing an educational goal.

While I was visiting Tillicum to talk with Monica Mitchell, an assistant supervisor who works on a full-time basis, the atmosphere changed from moment to moment. Children played in all areas of the centre, with toys, wooden imagination boxes piled and stacked on parts of the floor. They ran after one another, and took part in an infinite variety of magical adventures children can think up. Monica commented, in between soothing children and keeping an eye on twenty little people, that no emphasis is put on "masculine-feminine" roles - children of both sexes play house and take part in cooperative games.

I observed another, smaller room where the children could go if they were tired, or wanted to listen to music on the record player, or a story. That sounded like a logical idea to me.

Supervising with Monica during the interval I visited Tillicum was a parent. One of the stipulations of admitting your child to Tillicum is a commitment to supervise for 2½ hours per week. This particular parent really involved himself with the children, playing the piano encouraging them to sing along, talking quietly with them, smiling and hugging them. It is easy to see the emotional involvement that would come with supervising the children. The scheduled time is not so demanding that it would significantly interfere with working or studying time. The children appeared to be excited about the presence of this man, although it was not apparent to me just exactly whose child was his, he gave so much attention to them all.

Monica showed me the playground just outside the door, where the children play on nice days. It had plenty of space and challenged the imagination. Apparently each centre has built its own playground separately, one with a tree-house, another with a big sand area. Once a month each child accompanies Monica or another supervisor to a branch of the Vancouver Public Library for a field trip.

The success of this type of day

care program seems to stem from three areas. A strong organizational structure where parents are able to modify the programs and plan future projects through their representation on the Day Care Council. The parent participation program allows parents to see the kind of service that their child is involved in and exposes the children to many new faces and personalities. Lastly, the day care service is available to a well-defined community. As the necessity for day care has become apparent through its success and demand for even further facilities, the university administration has offered more of its support to the programs.

And, of course, the most important of all are the beneficial effects on the children. They see that their parents care about a program that is important to them. They do not lose contact with their parents, and see more children to play with and stimulate them. Mothers or fathers who wish to choose work or school for reasons of independence, necessity, etc., now have an alternative offered to them in the form of a day care service that does not isolate them from their child.

Susan Bridge

The Private Home Situation: Loving and Warm

The following interview took place with a Day Care Teacher, who received her certificate from the University of British Columbia Day Care Program, and who now works in a day care centre in Vancouver.

How did the day care centre that you work for come about and what is the building like?

"It is a private home of a woman who has a great love for children and a grown-up daughter of her own. She felt a great importance and saw the need of day care centres for both child and mother. She tried opening her home as a day care centre but ran into many problems with the government because of finicky requirements. After trying again and again she finally received permission to run a day care centre with a government subsidy after remodeling her home to suit government specifications.

How many children and teachers do you have?

"There are twelve children, aged three years to five years. They arrive about eight in the morning and stay until about four in the evening, depending upon the parents. One teacher is there in the morning four hours with the children (but stays on to do bookkeeping, ordering of supplies, going to the library for books and buying toys).

The other teacher carries on until all the children have left. Two adults (with no previous experience) were sent from Welfare to help four each day. I don't understand how the government can afford to keep so many people on welfare but won't give such a necessary situation as day care enough funds to run properly. Some of the other places I have worked had to close down because they couldn't afford to run just from government funds. One house-cleaning woman is supposed to be hired to clean once a week (government regulation) but due to insufficient funds from the government we can't afford it, and the other teacher and I have to do the cleaning everyday when the children have gone. The two helpers don't want to stay and clean because they don't get paid for working overtime. I can't imagine only cleaning once a week, not with twelve children. I like to set a good example of having things clean and tidy; after all we're their mothers all day long."

How much do you get paid an hour?

"\$3.00 per hour, but they can't afford to pay me overtime. I don't mind though. I love all the children and I feel that I am doing an important service to society and to the mothers and fathers of the children."

That brings us to another point. Do any of the children come from broken homes?

"Yes, almost all of them. Some of them are affected by it, some aren't; it depends on the child's personality and environment. This

is one of the very important reasons day care should be more plentiful. A child needs to adjust to this big change in life and the day care helps fulfill this requirement. Qualified teachers can be watchful to developments in the child that should be talked over with the parent. We are building up a library of excellent books about child development for the parents to come and browse through and we help with the selection depending on the problems of the child.

Most important of all the child feels welcome and normal in the day care centre; they learn to get along with each other and respect one another. A lot of the problems a child brings in to the centre when he starts, such as aggressiveness, fighting or withdrawal seem to disappear after a few weeks. That statement stands for all the children no matter what their homelife. The day care centre is so wonderful for mothers who want to develop themselves, have a career, go to university or whatever; they know they'll have so much more love to give their children instead of just frustration caused by being tied to the house twenty-four hours a day. I'm speaking from experience, I have two grown daughters and I feel I could have prepared them for school and life itself much better, if they could have been in day care. They both found 1st grade difficult due to being tied to my apron strings for five years. But so many years ago society seemed to point a finger at mothers who couldn't take care of their children all day long year after year. Now people and opinions are changing and I think we will all benefit from it."

Could you give me a run down of your average day?

"Well, they all arrive around 8:00 a.m. They start right in playing, painting, etc., whatever the child wants to do. Later on we all go for a walk or play in the yard. Lunch time comes very quickly; they all have a lunch brought from home. We all put out placemats and set out the lunches and sit down to eat. I then read them a story and show the pictures around. They lie down on mats to have a nap for an hour. In the afternoon they play outside or inside depending on the weather. They have a snack and talk about different things or have a show and tell. Then they start their playing. The parents arrive to take them home. We indicate that conversations with the parents and us are always welcome."

Is there anything else you feel you would like to add?

"Yes, that all the children love to be with us, and take home their paintings and crafts they have made during the day. The parents are pleased and I think we all benefit from our day care centre."

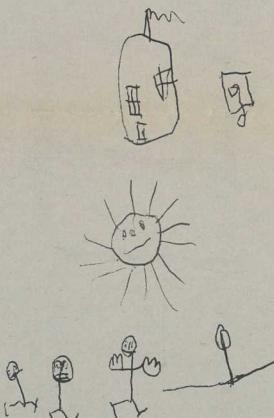
Postscript

I started out to compare a couple of day care centres in Vancouver but after interviewing a mother from the east end whose three year old boy goes to a day care centre in their vicinity, and others, I realized the day care centres were quite similar.

I did speak to one mother who lives in a high rise apartment with only parents and children living there and they seemed to have an excellent arrangement. They have a very large playroom which is open to all children from ages 1 to 5, two days a week for two hours. Each mother takes her turn looking after the children for that time period. Everyone gives 50¢ a year for new toys. They are all very pleased with this arrangement.

Coreen Lindquist.

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A YEAR LATER...from p.1

found a satisfactory solution for their own day care problems to dismiss day care as an issue that doesn't effect them. This view is shortsighted. We are all eventually dependent on the services of those younger than us and on the services of other people's children. The question is if we choose to ignore children's needs now what can we expect from them in the future?

Roberta

notices

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

A six week group program on Interpersonal Communication Skills emphasizing self-awareness will meet weekly for 1 1/2 to 2 hours beginning at 7 PM on Monday evenings at the VSW downstairs office. To register call Helen Stoltz at 228-0530 or Eileen Hendry at 733-0991. The course begins January 21, 1974 and will be limited to 10 women.

WOMEN'S STUDIES COURSE AT VCC

The interdisciplinary course, "Perspectives on Women" (Psych 195) is offered for college credit at Vancouver City College (Langara) and for transfer credit to SFU. The course includes Seminars related to four disciplines; psychology, sociology, anthropology and literature. Presentations by women active in the movement in B.C., films and panel discussions are included. Register January 2, 3, 4 at the college. 324-5511. The class meets Monday and Wednesday from 6:45 to 8:15.

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

There will be a meeting on Thursday, January 10th at 8 pm in the VSW office for all those interested in working on specific projects in the areas of education and research. The new LIP grant makes provision for a wide range of activities concerned with children's education in general and sex-role development in particular. We shall outline the nature of these projects in detail at this meeting. If you have ideas for research into any area involving the status of women, we shall be eager to talk about them at this time.

Please call Ruth, Nadine or Sheila at the office for any additional information.

WOMAN ALIVE

The T.V. group has set a tentative schedule for the spring and is beginning work on programmes. If anyone is interested in any aspect of these, please call Glinda at the office.

Transportation: Would anyone have a car and time to help transport T.V. equipment for Woman Alive? Contact Glinda.

There will be a session (workshop) on parliamentary procedure, specifically to inform women (and men) about the workings of administrations, etc. The purpose - to give women more confidence to apply for administrative positions in teaching or in any area of work, e.g., politics. The workshop will be held on Wednesday, January 23, at 8 pm in the BCTF Auditorium, 2325 Burrard St. and will be conducted by Bob Buzzo, General Sec'y. of the BCTF. All are welcome. No entry fee. For further info, call Linda Shuto at the BCTF.

women and welfare

We start out with the stark fact that 60% of welfare recipients in this province are women - in welfare idiom, they have the sterile title of 'female heads of families'.

To balance this tragically large percentage of women as recipients, one would expect to find a respectable number of women in responsible positions in the upper echelons of the welfare system. It probably comes as no surprise to anyone that, in fact, males play the dominant role in decision-making, and that the result of this dominance is a sexist welfare system.

Reading through the staff list for the Victoria side of the welfare monolith, the pattern repeats itself ad nauseam: Minister - male, Secretary - female; Deputy Minister - male, Secretary - female; Assistant Deputy - male, Secretary - female; Director of Programmes - male, Secretary - female; Director of Operations - male, Secretary - female; Dept. Comptroller - male, Secretary - female.

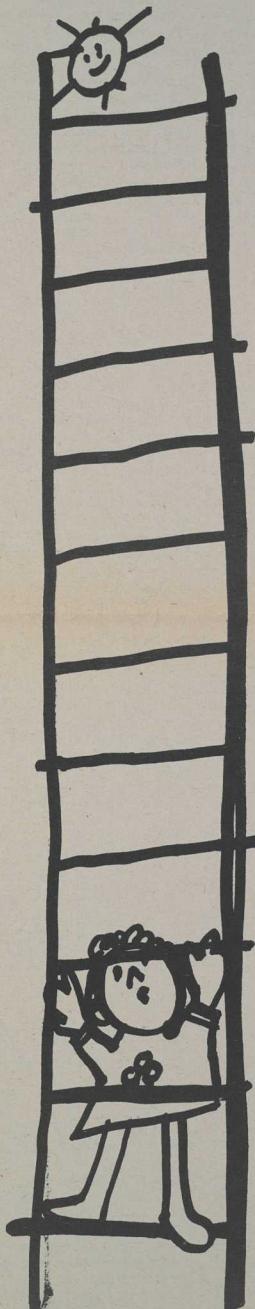
Exclusive of the minister and his male executive assistants, all of whom have been appointed since August 30th, 1972, there are about 31 senior positions in general administration and various divisions, not including regional staff. Of these, only seven are held by women. These seven include key positions in Adoption, Children-In-Care, Day Care and the like. With one or two exceptions, the 'anatomy is destiny' syndrome applies - the Victoria side of the welfare department resembles nothing so much as a grotesque playhouse, with the male making the major decisions on finance and programming, while the female of the species attends to the children and keeps his life, and his paperwork, ordered and serene.

Moving out from Victoria and into the nine regional districts of the province, we find that eight of the nine regional directors are male - and just to ensure that the Victoria pattern is not disturbed, all secretaries listed are female. From the latest staff list that I have, I discover that in the provincial welfare offices, 33 supervisors are male, 8 are female. In the 12 municipalities which have set up their own social service departments, there are 12 administrators, all of them male. Here in Vancouver, all senior positions in the office at 1530 West 8th, with the exception of the training coordinator are held by - you guessed it, males!

With this preponderance of males, however well-intentioned most of them are, it comes as no surprise that the female welfare recipient finishes a poor second in her running battle with welfare regulations.

Recently the provincial government distributed a handbook on welfare regulations prepared and published by Dunskey Advertising. Let us just glance at one or two regulations as they affect women.

First of all, the regulations state, "In all marriages, the head of the family must be eligible if the family is to receive social assistance. In common law relationships, the common law husband is considered the head of the family...The husband or head of the family should apply."



K6

What this bit of puffery really means is that wherever there is a man in the picture, he shall be considered the head of the family. For families in receipt of social assistance, it is the man who must apply and it is the man to whom the cheque will be issued - although, as a matter of fact, the woman may be the real strength in the family, with the husband an alcoholic, a psychotic or just plain irrelevant in the family structure. The male is automatically head of the family until proven, often by painful experience, to be otherwise.

More than this, women on welfare who wish to establish any kind of relationship with a man, whether it is one of 'living in' or simply one of 'going out' face loss of the only financial security they have - their social assistance cheque. At the present time, if a man moves in with a woman on social assistance, he must assume total support for her and her children. I know any number of cases where a woman, in order for her and her children to have a loving male in the home, has dropped social assistance and gone to work, often at the minimum wage, although all her instincts tell her that her children need her at home. She is working, not from choice but from a bitter necessity.

I know other women, many of them, who are hiding the fact of a living in relationship with a man. They are forever on the brink of a nervous breakdown because they know that on the basis of present regulations, they are guilty of fraud. I know other women who have a going out relationship with a male - and are subjected to constant scrutiny by workers who appear to be convinced that if a man takes a female recipient to a movie, it follows as the day the night that he is slipping her money on the side, presumably for services rendered.

We pay lip service to the dictum that low income people must organize themselves into a pressure group. This is pie-in-the-sky talk. It is pie-in-the-sky talk largely because 60% of welfare recipients are women, many of whom want nothing more than to fade into the woodwork - they have something to hide. It is, as often as not, something as innocuous as a weekly phone call from a male, but this can be enough to make their life one long harassment. Thanks to welfare regulations, that weekly phone call can threaten the very bread on their tables.

A group of welfare mothers, rejecting the principle that a woman's body is a fixed commodity in the welfare table of eligibility suggested a simple enough solution to the minister. The regulations, they feel, should read, "In all marriages, the head of the family may be the husband or wife, whichever is the most convenient. In non-marriage situations, the head of the family shall be deemed to be the parent of the children involved and the other party shall be deemed to be a boarder." It goes without saying that where a living in relationship is not involved, everybody including welfare workers should consider the course of true love off-limits. Male recipients do not normally receive harassment about their friendships with the opposite sex, female recipients ask only equal treatment.

Another regulation reads harmlessly enough: "If you are separated, you will be required to make application for a maintenance order...through family court." In fact, time after time, women are told by the welfare department, "Lay a charge or starve."

Let me give one example - it is typical of many hundred across the province. Laura, mother of five, deaf, Grade 4 education, developed a living in relationship with Don, who was already supporting five children from a legal marriage. After living with Laura for over two years and supporting her family, Don separated from her. The separation was amicable. By this time, Laura had given birth to his son. On applying for social assistance, Laura was told that she must lay a complaint for support for Don's child or she would be refused assistance. Cornered, she laid the charge and thereby became the villain of the charade. Don retaliated by ceasing to visit the children, who loved him, and by threatening to remove the furniture which was his, and which he had left for the family. Laura was reduced to going from one agency to another for free legal advice, trailing her small children behind her. It would have been a simple enough matter for the department to lay the complaint but Laura, when she requested this, was told that regulations required her to do this little job herself.

The department cannot weasel out by saying that about 50% of its social workers are women or that, here in Vancouver, most of the supervisors are women. The bleak fact remains that policy is decided by men and, where women administer that policy, they do very much as they are told or they very soon become another digit in the ranks of the unemployed.

The Real Poverty Report said it first: "To be poor in our society is to suffer the most outrageous kinds of violence perpetrated by human beings on other human beings." In the pecking order that is our welfare system, if you are a female recipient, the violence is beyond words.

- Bridget A. Moran

manpower

WESTERN CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS MEET WITH MANPOWER MINISTER

On December 13, Pat Thom, Western Conference Committee Chairperson, Betsy Mac Donald, a pre-employment training course instructor at Vancouver City College, and I, Alice James met with Mr. Andras and three of his advisors. We presented him with a brief on behalf of the Western Conference - Opportunities for Women which was co-sponsored by the Vancouver Status of Women. The brief charged the Department of Manpower with assisting employers to exploit women. It pointed out that counselling, training and placement practices perpetuate women's second class status and called for restructuring the department to recognize the fact that because women still have the chief responsibility for child care that women's lives follow different patterns from men's.

During the two hour meeting, Mr. Andras told us about his plans for restructuring his department and took note of our suggestions for ensuring it would be more relevant to women's needs. He also told us of his plans for retraining all Canada Manpower counselors to be more sensitive to the needs of female clients. We expressed our doubts as to whether this would be adequate. As a result he committed his department to establishing a special experimental counselling service for women in the Vancouver Canada Manpower Centre as soon as the open job listing system in that centre was completed. We were favourably impressed with the open exchange of information, the willingness of both the Minister and his advisors to listen to our suggestions and their sincerity in wishing to improve their services. There is also evidence that Mr. Andras

recognizes that the change in attitude on the part of Manpower employees will not come about easily in that he invites and expects criticism from women for some time to come.

Alice James

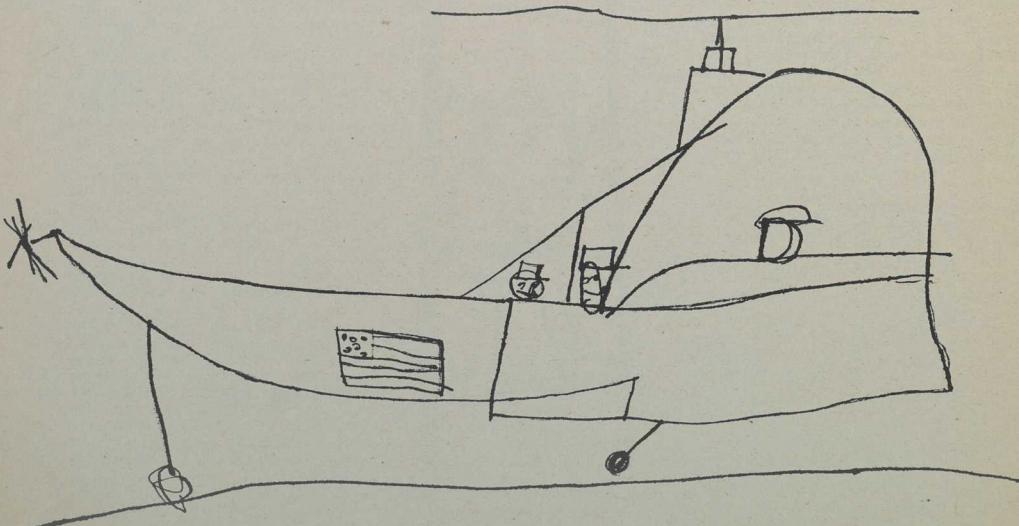
loans

WOMAN REFUSED CANADA STUDENT LOAN

This fall, Ms. Jacqueline Vale was refused a Student Loan, even though her application information clearly showed that expenses would well exceed family income. Her appeal was also lost.

As Mrs. Lee, Financial Aid Officer at Vancouver City College would not supply us with a copy of the criteria governing the Canada Student Loans Plan, we requested it from Mr. J.H. Falk, Student Services Officer, Dept. of Education. Again, we were refused.

We feel that such criteria should be readily available to the public. The criteria for eligibility should also be re-examined - eligibility is computed on basis of family income - i.e. income of parent or spouse. Thus, the individual is dependent upon the benevolence of her parent or spouse. Eligibility should be determined according to the resources of the applicant.



letters

NEWSLETTER:

Keep up the good work - your newsletters are vital and stimulating.

Remark made by lawyer for the respondent in a recent divorce case: "We are here to decide not what is fair, but what is the law!"

Pending my own divorce, I was brutally assaulted and then raped by "my husband". As you say, the fact that he was at the time still legally my husband, completely vindicated the action. It was a most terrifying experience - I was attending a convention at the time, and on returning to my hotel room (which was in darkness) the bathroom door opened and I was attacked before I even understood what was happening (so much for hotel security that he managed to get a key somehow). I really thought I was being murdered and although I screamed at the top of my lungs no one so much as came to knock at the door. I lost consciousness and was apparently dragged under the cold shower to revive me. I crawled out and collapsed on the tile floor of the bathroom, aware of his watching me. I thought - "if I feign dead, he will go away" After an eternity I was carried to the bed and raped. As in your article, I felt completely numb, apart from an overwhelming urge to vomit. For 34 hours I lay in a stupor - a friend also attending the convention (a woman) supplied me with ice-packs and weak tea but I was in such a state of shock that I believe I slept most of the time. When I finally emerged 2 days later, I could tell from the glances and whispers of hotel staff, that they were certainly aware of "something" that had happened. I cannot believe that with all the commotion nothing was heard.

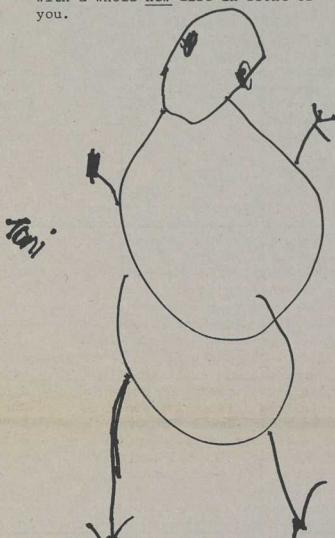
People just don't want to get involved. Regrettably I have two children by this "man" and I must face him every time he fetches the children. On every occasion I am reduced to a state of uncontrollable trembling, accompanied by a racing pulse and extreme irritation with the children.

The incident took place a year ago and I wonder if I will ever get over it - particularly as his regular appearance to see the children is a regular reminder? I sometimes think that he enjoys the fact. It is certainly true that there are men who derive pleasure from "using" women and in other ways "degrading" them. In my particular case, the factor that really enraged him was that I should actually take the children and leave him: leave the comforts of a "home" to start afresh without any financial support from him. There must be countless women who - rather than step out on their own - decide to martyr themselves to the devil they know. Their husbands feel that they have "got them where they want them".

I was fortunate in being able to support myself and children, but I am sure that if this were not the

case I would sooner leave the children with their father who is able to support them; than be reduced to a shell of a human being, by remaining with him.

To all women in difficult family circumstances I would say "Courage. Nothing is worse than living a life of humiliation. The hardest part is making the decision to leave - to walk away, knowing that you are on your own. After that the peace of mind and body comes as such a blessed relief, you wonder why you didn't do it before. You experience a sense of being reborn. You rediscover yourself and find to your surprise that you are still whole, still a person with feelings, still attractive to others, still useful - with a whole new life in front of you.



Just a line to tell you that I think the Newsletter is a commendable and useful effort. Keep it up.

I was delighted to read that the proposed B.C. bill in regard to community of property was scuttled as a result of representations from women.

I think you should be shouting loud and clear for what the Royal Commission on the Status of Women recommended. Go back to our report and read the section beginning page 239. The Partnership of Acquests such as Quebec has, as one of its three matrimonial arrangements, is the one we recommended (page 245). I think the Murdoch versus Murdoch case should make a great many complacent women realize that the provincial laws, in the nine common law provinces, in regard to marriage property are archaic.

Do you know about the Women's Kit that has been prepared by the Ontario Institute for Study and Education? It is designed for teachers who want to make girls aware of their potential and the options that are open to them. The address is 252 Bloor Street. Even if you are in B.C. you might be able to get an example of what they have done. I'm told it is excellent. A progressive guidance counsellor here has presented it to the English teachers in her school with the hope of action

Sincerely,
Florence Bird

NEWSLETTER:

11

No female need endure physical or sexual assault by a male, because mean are desperately vulnerable to attack.

Any child can paralyze a grown man by ONE determined blow of her tiny fist on his penis. He will double up in agony with an overwhelming urge to vomit.

After 5 or 10 minutes, he MAY feel like moving, but he will be unable to chase after her and incapable of renewing the sexual assault.

I asked a man, "How about a hard blow from the fist of a grown woman?" He shuddered and said, "I can't even bear to think of it!"

This is the reason men do not believe in rape. They know how incredibly vulnerable they are, and are certain that women know this fact too. Certainly, enough is said about "not hitting below the belt" for us to put 2 and 2 together.

Remember, if attached by a man, concentrate on landing ONE solid blow on his penis. One blow and it's game over for him.

Now, if you're stunned by the shock of the attack and he gets you down, you still have one certain defense. No man can penetrate a woman if she concentrates all her muscles inward to close the vagina. All the pelvic muscles, the strongest in the body, come into play and exert 50 - 55 lbs. of pressure at least. (You can experiment with this movement while urinating to develop control and strength). That development will stun him and then you land your one solid blow on the penis and escape. Don't be squeamish. Anyone who attacks a person smaller & weaker than himself is a coward and a brute. Let the punishment fit the crime! Teach your daughter too the certain defense against male assault.

Name Withheld by Request.

Ed. Note:

A few misconceptions on the part of the writer should be cleared up.

A blow to the penis will not hurt a man although a blow in that direction may hit the scrotum and that will hurt. It's a somewhat risky venture, however, as you must be sure the blow is well aimed and hard enough to cause him to double over in pain. A glancing blow doing no real damage will probably infuriate him to the point where your life could be in immediate danger.

A man intent on rape can penetrate a woman no matter how hard she concentrates her vaginal muscles inward. In fact, doing so will probably result in the victim suffering more pain, bruising and tearing. Again, you also risk further inciting the rapist's anger.

Some men do believe in rape; that's why it's our fastest growing crime.

happy new year!

january

			1	2	3	4	5
					TRANSITION HOUSE OPENS!		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
	5:30 - WESTERN CONFERENCE MEETING <i>W.P.A.</i>		7:30 - SPEAKERS WORKSHOP - 8:00 ORIENTATION	8:00 - EDUCATION & RESEARCH GRP MEETS			
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
		7:30 - GENERAL MEETING DAYCARE PANEL Y.W.C.A.			NEWSLETTER DEADLINE		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
	7-9 PM - COMMUNICATION SKILLS		7:30 - EXECUTIVE MEETS - UPSTAIRS 8:00 - ORIENTATION - DOWNSTAIRS				
27	28	29	30	31			
	7-9 PM COMMUNICA- TION SKILLS						

