

Retarded children benefit from Newman project

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is a report on a project carried out by the campus Newman Community last year with retarded children. The writer, a member of the group involved in the project, wished to remain anonymous.

so-called normal member of society"). We also learned more of the children's history from the group home parents. Most had been institutional hospitals previously. Some were not mentally retarded at all but had severe emotional problems that had been both diagnosed and treated incorrectly!

Saturday morning outings over these weeks included playing hockey, skating and games in the gym plus attendance at a basketball game. On Tuesday evenings, an organized evening of card games and dancing for the older children, followed by refreshments was held at the Fredericton Kinsmen Centre. After each week, a reflection period by our helpers enabled us to understand the children's behavior better in the light of their past history, and our relationship with them.

To learn more about Norman House itself, we talked with the house parents and also with two members of its board of directors. Firstly, this board consists of about twenty people, also sub-divided into two committees: one handling finances and the other, admissions. The board chairman runs the meetings and is also in charge of public relations. The director has as her duties the formation of the operational budget of the home and children's allowances as well as reports to the government on such matters. Most importantly, the group home parents give the daily

care to the children in a truly family atmosphere.

The board was instrumental in the creation of Norman House two years ago. Some of its many committee tasks were selecting a house for purchase, choosing suitable house parents, working out a budget and setting criteria for admissions. Since then it has maintained a low profile, though it may be necessary from time to time for it to act on the latter two responsibilities.

In general, our second goal of gaining an overview of mental health structures and services was not satisfactorily accomplished. Much published information from the Departments of Health and Social Services was obtained and presented at meetings but not thoroughly discussed. Therefore, only a mention of some of the institutions available to the mentally handicapped will be made. There are many of these, depending upon the needs of the 1 percent of new Brunswickers who are mentally retarded.

A Junior Rehabilitation Centre in the province examines the health of some children entering the first grade. Doctors there check for symptoms of vitamin and bone deficiencies, screen for PKU's (waste products in urine which in high concentrations can cause brain damage) and give IQ tests. It is puzzling why this is done so late in a child's life.

Special schools for those children between 10 and 15 years and having

IQ's from 50 to 70, and workshops for those older mildly retarded adolescents, and adults are provided. Family living environments for children include foster, natural parent and group homes. (There are eight group homes for mentally retarded in N.B.) The institution providing assessment, observation and treatment programs for children up to 16 years of age with mental and/or physical handicaps is the William F. Roberts Hospital School.

For those over 16 (and considered 'trainable' for a trade) the Mirimichi Rehabilitation Centre provides social and vocational training so that they can contribute as adults to society. Finally, for those very severely retarded and senile (aged) patients, the Jordan Memorial Home in River Glade provides care and where possible rehabilitation.

The above mentioned are the more important government services provided for such individuals. Perhaps in the future, an assessment of their effectiveness based on care-relationships with those mentally handicapped can be made.

A common conclusion from our experiences with these children was that we learned of our own feelings toward them. At first we felt a bit condescending in 'helping' such wounded people but later came to realize that they had much to share with us and soon their handicap was forgotten.

For the immediate future, the

Newman Community plans to continue its program of recreational activities with the Norman House children. We also hope to hold educational seminars, one of which will be on Mental Retardation, bringing in outside speakers. Finally, encouragement of more family and student participation will be urged. This is one way to try to live the Social Gospel and it is fun as well.

Anyone interested in working with retarded children is invited to contact any member of the Campus Ministry team for more details. (SUB, Room 33).

APPENDIX

Here are some problems in New Brunswick today worth considering by students:

1. Lack of contact with foreign students (example is Jack Mbiza episode)
2. College students compelled to drink for entertainment at social functions.
3. Lack of contact and animosities between native and non-native students at STU.
4. Assembly line education where we become non-critical members of the status quo.
5. Lack of concern about housing.
6. Inept penal system in York County. (mirrors all of Western Society)
7. Fallacy of Training School rehabilitation.

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