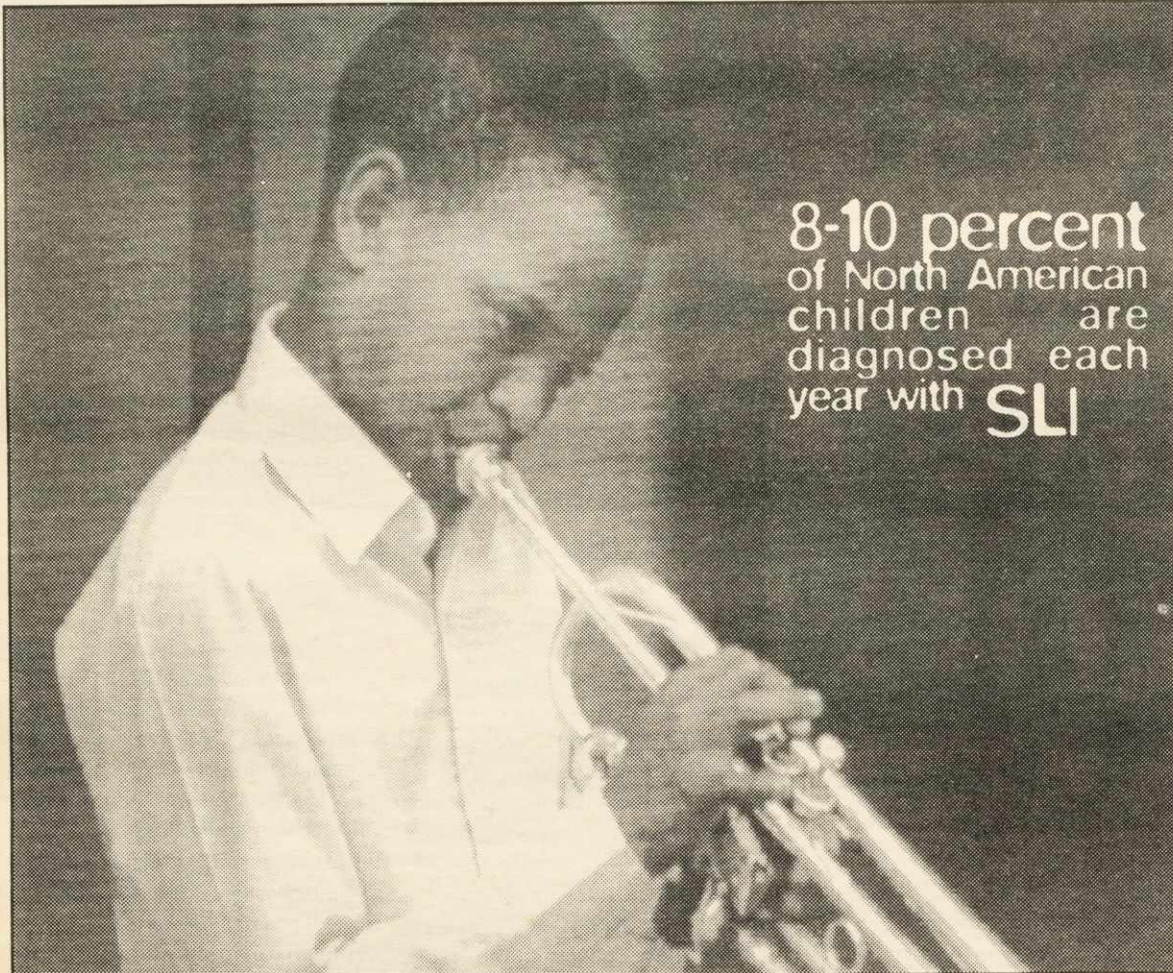


# Dal researcher on cutting edge of hearing research



8-10 percent of North American children are diagnosed each year with SLI

BY ANDREW OLAND

Dr. Dennis Phillips gets in your head.

He and his team of researchers are studying hearing. But rather than study the ear, they focus on the brain.

One of the main themes of his research is devoted to working out how precisely the nervous system can keep track of a sound's properties, and trying to understand what the factors are that influence that precision.

A significant number of children are affected by problems involving difficulties with hearing perception. Dr. Phillips notes that 8-10 percent of North American children are diagnosed each year with Specific Language Impairment (SLI).

These children have a selective delay in language development. One theory says what is really wrong is not a language problem, but that the child's brain can't keep pace with the sounds of speech.

Dr. Phillips' research tries to work out exactly what processes the brain uses so that it keeps accurate track of how sounds change with time.

Some recent studies show that if SLI children practice extensively on the kinds of processes that Dr. Phillips studies, then their hearing abilities improve dramatically, and because of that, so do their language skills.

There is no medical treatment required — the brains of SLI children learn to hear properly

using this technique much the same way that people learn things like typing or riding a bike.

The second big issue that Dr. Phillips studies is the ability of listeners to locate sounds. He says people need to be able to know where sounds are coming from.

"We've known for a very long time what properties of sound tell us which direction something is coming from — what is less certain is how the brain analyses those properties and gets a sense of location from them," said Phillips.

Dr. Phillips' research has made a big splash in the scientific community. He was the first to make a big deal out of his research topics, and now eleven labs are working on them.

He has been working for five years on this research project, and expects it to continue throughout his career, as there are always many more questions that arise with each question answered.

Dr. Phillips is an example of the high quality of the researchers and faculty attracted to Dal's Psychology department. He joined the faculty in 1985 because there were teaching and research jobs here, and because he thinks Dal's Psychology department is one of the best in Canada. He has high praise for Dal's "fabulous" Psychology department and also Dal's "very good" Neuroscience community.

Dr. Phillips' work and praise is proof that Dal is on the cutting edge of Psychology research, at the national — and maybe even the international — level.

## Quebec women's group organizes Y2K march to take on the world

BY SABINE FRIESINGER

MONTREAL (CUP) — Make way for the mother-ship march against the poverty and violence that affects so many women around the world.

Women from every continent are already preparing for the World March of Women in 2000, which is being spearheaded by a Quebec-based women's rights group.

According to the president of the Federation des Femmes du Quebec, Franse David, the march aims to assert women's strength, solidarity and power to change the world for the better.

"Together we will organize it, together we will carry it through," David said.

The project was born out of the success of the women's "Bread and Roses" March Against Poverty in 1995.

With the World March of Women, organizers intend to force

governments, decision-makers and individuals around the world to change and improve women's status and quality of life.

More than 100 countries have already signed up for the march.

In the context of globalization, the Quebec women's federation — the largest in the province — saw a need to make the connection between the local and the global in order for the women's movement to be successful.

Actions will be co-ordinated on a local level in various regions of the world, and will then be incorporated into a larger world action, the World March of Women in 2000.

March organizers realize women around the world have a long road to travel before they can reach their goals of equality, social justice and peace.

"If we look around us we can see that it's clearly not the 1930s," said Alexa Conradi, assistant co-ordinator of the Quebec march.

"But the level of despair that women have to face is still very high."

Women are still among the poorest and most disadvantaged groups in the world.

"There are too many women living on the edge of society where their basic needs cannot be met," Conradi said.

"That is why we have to start marching right now," adds David.

The march will also address the issue of violence against women.

"Regardless of our ethnic background, violence and poverty is what brings us women together," Conradi said.

While in some countries single moms carry the burden of raising children, in others rape is used as a war tactic and in others still, women are deprived of basic human rights. These are just some of the reasons world action is needed, Conradi said.

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## Women's Day Strong

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International Women's Day was first established on March 19, 1911, in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. More than a million men and women attended rallies that day to demand women be given the right to vote, hold public office, work and receive vocational training.

Less than a week later, the Triangle Fire in New York City killed nearly 150 working women. The disaster led to a significant shift in U.S. labour legislation, and the fire became an integral part of the day's remembrance in later years.

Since then, International Women's Day has become a truly international affair, as enhanced technologies and global

connections bring us closer to women's circumstances in Third-World countries.

Throughout the ebbs and flows of the women's movement, the day has become a mainstay in the struggle for women's rights and continues to play an important role in reaffirming that women have not yet achieved true equality in any country in the world.