

Day-care facilities expanding

by Emmi Duffy

The Halifax Women's Bureau report on day-care says facilities in Halifax are "a special privilege for a very small sector of the population."

The majority of the 684 children served by Halifax's 26 day-care centres come from professional and skilled families. There are presently nine full day and 17 part day centres, six of which are Head Start programs. The number of pre-school children accommodated by each centre varies from eight to one hundred. Mothers pay on a monthly basis approximately \$75 for full-time and \$35 for part-time care.

Dissatisfied with the programs available, Jackie Barkley met with other young mothers and organized the Children's Co-operative. This program has been in operation for seven months. Since then two other groups have been set up and plans are being made to start three full-time centres under the Winter Works program.

Children's Co-operative is based on the belief that mothers know how to look after children. The mothers agree that there is no "classical" way a child should be brought up. "When a kid goes wrong, sociologists blame poor upbringing — the mother raised the child wrong. But it probably had more to do with the lack of money, job and a husband."

The centre is run on a co-operative basis. Each mother comes in once a week to assist the day care worker. The program is one of more or less unstructured play time. No particular group is catered to, rather it is "multi-class." It is arranged to accommodate

mothers working part-time (from 1 to 5 p.m.) although one mother is on welfare.

In attempting to set up a day-care centre, Barkley advised looking for a local church willing to provide a basement rent-free. "We didn't want one that wanted to interfere with the running of the day-care either." Rev. Victor Moriarty has donated the Sunday School playroom of St. John's United Church.

The group will need to hire at least one full-time worker and should be prepared to pay about \$220 a month. Margo Pyne, the co-op worker, is not a licensed teacher, as the mothers feel that training is not necessarily a qualification. "All she has to do is relate well with kids."

The co-op runs on a minimum of money with the mothers contributing sums varying from nothing to forty dollars a month. According to Barkley, "It is determined among ourselves. We charge a flat rate. There is no penalty for a mother having an extra kid." Besides the fee,

each mother also contributes \$3 a month for food as a small lunch is served every afternoon.

The maximum number of children allowed in the group is ten. "We have found that ten is a good number to work with. The mothers can get to know each other," said Barkley.

According to her, weekly meetings are essential. The mothers get together with the day-care worker and discuss the centre's direction and evaluate the group's operation. How are the children adjusting to it? What are they getting out of it?

Plans are made for one major project per week in an effort to alleviate boredom, particularly for the older children. It might be a ride on the ferry or feeding a potter's wheel at work.

"Policy is determined by the mothers, not the worker," said Barkley.

Women seeking help in setting up their own day-care centre should contact Jackie Barkley at 429-4199.



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