

Training and development of the mentally retarded-- Governments respond with meag little action; private association is the ball

By KATHY WESTMAN and DAVE SIMMS

The provincial government—although it subsidizes the education of most New Brunswickers—has been slow to assist the training of the mentally retarded, according to Canadian Association for the Mentally Retarded official Paul McDonnell.

McDonnell called it a paradox that the government continues to give very little support for these people whose needs are greater than most. He said this put low-income parents of mentally retarded persons in especially disadvantaged positions.

McDonnell, University of New Brunswick psychology department associate professor, was recently named head of CAMR's local Board of Management.

Interviewed by The Brunswickian last week, he asked why the provincial government subsidized the regular education system, social assistance programs and rehabilitation of the physically handicapped but left the developmentally handicapped to the care of private associations like CAMR.

The deaf and the blind, he said, have been supported to a greater degree. He said this could be because people can expect a higher "dollar return" from their investment in rehabilitation of the handicapped but "we must expect somewhat less in the way of success" from retarded persons.

He said "we're discovering now that we can do much more with the developmentally handicapped than was previously thought."

"When I look around at all these government departments," he said, referring to the provincial departments of social services, education and labor, "I wonder if one of them can't help us."

One of CAMR's developments in Fredericton is the Training Centre. Housed in an antiquated former fire hall on King Street, the four-year-old centre has had problems ranging from a less-than-spectacular record of co-operation between its staff and a former Board of

Management to the restrictions on long-term planning caused by financial uncertainty.

The number of contracts and work orders from organizations and individuals has increased however, said O'Connell. There are also indications a city group may support efforts for construction of a new building.

The centre is open from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday to Friday all year except for two weeks in August. O'Connell said the 40 enrolment are served by three full-timed licensed teachers who are paid by the New Brunswick education department.

A ceramics instructor, an activities instructor, an assistant shop instructor and a driver are paid through a Local Initiatives Program (LIP) grant. The education department funds the centre with \$200 for each person under 21. The fact that such grants apply for only a 13-week period limits the centre largely to short-term planning of programs.

The centre is governed by an 13-member Board of Management elected for a three year term. The members—mostly lawyers and businessmen and some parents of the retarded—hold monthly meetings.

The overriding concept now, said McDonnell, is towards "normalization" or as much integration with society as possible for these persons. Such exposure would involve learning how to take rides on buses and working regular hours—long than the present shifts at the centre. "Up to now we've underestimated their ability to do this."

O'Connell said "the kids right now and they need Public sympathy, he said and that the trainees should be one favored. "These kids they're not stupid."

McDonnell said he predicted a new era. "The services for the mentally retarded changes in existing legislation New Brunswick in 1974, general election a comprehensive plan for family support, education Progressive Conservative shown an interest."

McDonnell said it was taken outside the home and them with the outside indoors at home for their ability to cope.

O'Connell said he would not handle the ins from the mentally retarded handled by CAMR. "We program. Many of the janitors—but where are they that?"

He said he would like funding program which CAMR make long-run administration remain would accommodate flexible skilled staff and expansion O'Connell said that at three levels of training, level for the grossly retarded basic living skills and the piece work for which tokens are exchanged for the individuals spend the a bank account at the centre.

The trainees need facilities to handle money including banking, how to telephone building is pretty well "since the old one just is into."

Negotiations are being Kinsmen about erecting kinds of things we could O'Connell described "cradle-to-the-grave" mentally retarded. He successful if they had two There has been some st out as mother's helpers garbage collection crew prefabricated fence post

He said two or three of can do a good job so long isn't too much competition "While there are possible find their niches," he said that the majority of our for for the rest of their life for them to do and some TV" and regress.

Presently the only recreation evening each Wednesday room organized by the Kin to the Canadian Association the Kinettes and parents should be a separate room



Production in the workshop is often done assembly-line style.