

'Just forget they're blind'

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I'm blind by other people. I don't mind being blind as much as I resent the attitudes of other people towards it." Mrs. Yale commented. "I don't believe I'm half a person. I'm a whole person. "Blind people can live too. I want a choice. I don't want to be told what to do. I should have access to the same courses as sighted people." "North America has been conditioned into buying by packaging. If something looks nice people want it. Blind people are fortunate in that they see the person first," said Mr. Heatherington.

Mrs. Yale has a friend with cerebral palsy who drools and is sometimes not allowed to eat in restaurants. "It's not his fault!" Mrs. Yale shouted. "It happened to him. The wrong thing to do is to try to avoid it. Look fear right in the eye. It's the unknown that we're afraid of."

"We feel that the key is exposure. People tend to lump all the blind together and not look at individual capabilities. Rehabilitation will not give the blind money for such courses as High School teaching."

GUIDE DOGS
"BOOST started to fight for a guide dog law in 1975, and in July, 1976, we got it. CNIB said that they did the lobbying. We are bargaining for blind people to get covered by the human rights commission."

"The CNIB is trying to sing the same theme song that BOOST has been singing for five years. The only thing is that they have to come to us to learn the words," Mr. Heatherington said.

"We run our board meetings openly. Anyone can attend and stand up and speak," said Mrs. Yale. "The CNIB meetings are closed to non-board members. And their board is not elected; it is appointed by current board members."

When Mrs. Yale inquired to see if she could attend a meeting, she was told, "Let's not get pushy."

"We refuse to take half measures," Mr. Heatherington said. "The Canadian government has offered us two different bills in the human rights commission where a special environment would be created for us. We refused them. We want to be included in the system. Until the system is changed or modified to include handicapped people, we will continue to maintain our organization."

Both speakers said they believe that their organization will take the place of the CNIB, and they hope eventually BOOST itself will become unnecessary.

Don Ferguson, district administrator for the CNIB, told The Herald that "BOOST has some legitimate complaints." In the past it was true that blind people were not prepared for integration into society by CNIB workshops, he said. "The CNIB has made some changes as a result of BOOST's criticisms," he explained.

"It is also true that the CNIB acts as the agent for distributing blind equipment in Canada. These items are manufactured in Sweden, England and the United States, but we do not raise the price after they enter the country."

"BOOST members are the rebels of the CNIB. They are very angry people. There was a suggestion that some of the Americans were chased here by the U.S. police," he commented. "But they are doing some good."

"I feel that the CNIB has been responsive to the needs of blind people, and has handled its responsibility fairly well," he said. Several CNIB officials were disgruntled at what they felt was a slight on the part of meeting organizers, in failing to invite the CNIB.

Mrs. Yale will conduct a seminar on "Assertiveness Training" at the Rotary-Laughlin Centre, 110 Edward St. in Toronto, April 23 at 6:30 p.m.

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