

# Over 300 Officials Attend Day-Long Seminar

**By Margaret I. McLean**

Some 300 teachers, public school inspectors and superintendents, public health nurses and school board members attended a day-long seminar on "The Exceptional Child" at Newmarket January 26.

All children are exceptional, stated Dr. M. Alderton, clinical director of the Thistle town hospital for disturbed children, in objecting to the term "exceptional child".

The term is used in so many different concepts as to be almost meaningless, he stated. He preferred the term "emotionally handicapped".

"This tells you that the child is not functioning normally," continued Dr. Alderton, emphasizing that an emotionally handicapped child is less able to choose how he is to behave.

The child's withdrawal or break down into fear or explosion is not his free choice, he is unable to react in anything but a stereotyped way. An awareness of this fact might help reduce a negative attitude on the part of the teacher who otherwise may project a lot of hostility towards a handicapped child.

This sort of thing was much less likely to happen where a school aids in the early recognition of emotional handicaps, Dr. Alderton told the seminar.

An emotional handicap should be suspected whenever a variety of symptoms present themselves; academic failure, where a child having no phys-

ical defects cannot learn and is persistently achieving below his level, even where the child is presenting no discipline or other problem; a disturbance in the child's relationship with his peers, such as one who is always solitary or who must always be the boss, or is always a follower; a poor self-concept, where the child has an unusually low opinion of himself or his expectation of himself is unreal; persistent unhappiness or anxiety; inappropriate emotional response or behavior under ordinary circumstances; either over-reacting or showing no response; when a child is persistently ill and develops illness under stress.

Dr. Alderton stressed that all of us are disturbed emotionally at times and that the teacher must distinguish between normal, transient disturbance and a persistent handicap.

**Dr. Alderton stressed too that it was not possible to graft on a mental health program to a school system but it would depend on the attitude of the teaching staff.**

This will determine if they make an effort to pick out the handicapped children. The clinic might have little success if a condition has gone on for five or six years, he added, stressing that teachers must feel free to try to get help early.

Dr. Alderton had many questions put to him by his attentive audience at the close of his address. In advising what

part inheritance had in emotional handicap, he stated that what appears to be inherited is a potential, a tendency to react.

In the great majority of cases, he stated, the experiences the child has had are more important than any other single factor. Tough, unruly behaviour on the part of a child usually indicates a child who feels very inadequate.

In dealing with such a child, the teacher must not allow himself to be provoked. Such a child has a distorted view of adults. "You must show time and time again that you want to help him and must not be rejecting and punitive," advised Dr. Alderton, adding that he well knew how hard this was, and how time-consuming.

In closing, Dr. Alderton strongly recommended that as treatment facilities for handicapped children are limited, there should be some type of screening in the first two or three grades to pick out children who are in difficulty.

If these children are allowed to go on for five or six years with repeated failures, it will be much more difficult to help them, he said.

John Brown, director of Warendale, a residential treatment centre for girls, stressed that it was in the home that the child was his basic personality structure.

He noted however, that the home was no longer the safe haven it had been in previous times where an understanding grandmother, aunt or uncle who was part of the family circle would make up for any deficiencies in the parents.

Families are now often small, isolated groups, where the whole burden of the child's emotional development falls on two or sometimes only one parent.

He felt that more and more the schools would have to assume a greater responsibility for the mental health of the children in our society.

involving the whole personality. Play reflects the child's age and his culture and is an end in itself.

While an adult acts under the influence of intelligence, the child acts under the influence of environment and his play is a spontaneous imitation of that environment, both physical and psychological.

Rejection, insecurity, ambivalence and fears may all be revealed through play, Mr. Multari stated. In play a child can give release to his feelings and this is not only therapeutic but enables the psychologist to go to the child's level and start back from there.

Another member of the clinic's staff, F. K. Boden, a social worker, spoke on the subject of helping the family of an emotionally handicapped child.

Mr. Boden stressed that teachers must realize that no parent can be objective about his own child, much less about a child who is causing trouble. A parent may deny completely that a problem exists and in so doing, is merely defending his own self-esteem.

This makes another problem to consider. Often too, a parent may be reacting to an experience in his own childhood, or be trying to compensate through his own children. Although such tendencies put pressure on the child, and tend to make him neurotic, Mr. Brown urged the teachers not to get merely angry.

It is necessary to educate the parent as well as the child. He suggested that such terms as "slow" or "lazy" appearing on a child's report card had no meaning. "Inability to cope" or "disinterested" would be much better.

"By flexibility in dealing with parents, we can get the point across," he continued. "You must provide the parents with a listening ear. If you do this, you have some way to relate to the parent and he will have confidence in you."

Mr. Brown also reminded the teachers that they could be pressure groups, trying to improve facilities by constructive criticism.

Taking part in a panel on the exceptional child, Mr. McDonald, Vaughan Township elementary school inspector, stressed the problems of the exceptionally gifted child.

"We have taken these children for granted," stated Mr. McDonald. "Because they learn easily we have assumed that their school progress will take care of itself."

This was not true, he said. The school program is graded to the average and does not take care of the needs of the exceptionally bright child.

Although a gifted child is commonly thought of as one with an IQ of over 130, the needs of the child with an IQ between 111 and 130 as well as those with other outstanding talents must be considered.

Gifted children are usually characterized by an ability for academic learning. They can see relationships quickly, are capable of critical judgments, are often highly motivated and can assume responsibility readily, the school inspector said.

In our present society, Mr. McDonald said, people who can enter a profession requiring high academic excellence are at a premium. For the benefit of our society, we must develop these children as highly as we can.

We also must think of the needs of the individual him-

self. He must experience the satisfaction of having his mental ability challenged to the full, and the satisfaction of putting forth maximum effort.

Mr. McDonald stressed that such a child, although he learns easily, must have sequential development so there won't be gaps in his knowledge.

He said the gifted child needs a deepening of interests and direction into the value of learning, orderly habits of thinking, creative activity and training in social values.

Because such children can become isolated, and termed "egg-heads" they need help in adjusting emotionally to their environment. They need help in discovering a purpose in life and a sense of direction, Mr. McDonald said.

Failing to challenge such children properly, said Mr. McDonald, leads to boredom and discipline problems as well as under-achievement which leads to laziness. Often as a result of this, such children never fulfil their full potential.

John McTavish of the Ontario Department of Education, Auxiliary Services Branch, also stressed that gifted children needed recognition.

The popular provisions for such children are acceleration and enrichment. He felt, however, that acceleration was not the entire answer and that enrichment did not mean just giving the child more of the same type of work.

Special experience must be provided for gifted children. This can be done by segregation, or by partial grouping with special teachers coming from school to school, he said.

An even less formal arrangement is provided by the unit or level system where the child-

ren move at the rate which is best for them. This he felt, was particularly good in the early grades. Later on, such children need a true enrichment.

In speaking of the needs of the mentally retarded child, Mrs. D. Ketola, head of Thornhaven School for Retarded Children, noted that these children thrive on discipline and routine activities.

This makes it impossible to accommodate emotionally disturbed children in the same classroom with them. The needs of the emotionally disturbed cannot be met by the type of program provided for the retarded.

At the Thornhaven school, they have children with an IQ of from 20 to 50. Their program teaches these children acceptable behavior, and the practical arts are stressed, such as manual training, home training in how to prepare food and kitchen duties.

Reading for safety is taught, as well as simple number work dealing with coins and simple writing such as the child's name and address.

Chairman of the panel, Dr. S. E. Jensen, director of the York County Mental Health Clinic, expressed the hope that mental health therapy might eventually be carried right into the school environment.

The clinic is doing a splendid job he stated, but in the future we must look forward to having such services provided in the child's own school.

He also stressed that counseling services must be extended to parents. "The parents provide the environment in which the child operates," he concluded, "and we must prepare parents to set up an environment conducive to good mental health."

**"Life In The Hill"**

**Will Be Found On Page 11**

**This Week**

## Your M P Reports

(Continued From Page 2)

It was an honor to attend and be invited to address the 1963 inaugural meeting of the York County Council and to see Mr. Clarence Davies elected and installed as the new warden. He has my best wishes for a very prosperous and progressive term.

**Aurora's Centenary**

Another pleasant and important evening during the month was the 1963 inaugural of the Aurora Town Council. It is a hundred years since Aurora became a town and it is now at the height of a developing career. The expansion of recent years has changed the town tremendously, but the spirit and character which have marked Aurora from the beginning carry it adventurously into the new era.

**Excellent Response**

In order to gather information which will assist in the establishment of a rail commuter service between York North and Toronto, a questionnaire has been sent to every home in the constituency during January. The response to this has been most helpful and I want to thank those who have returned the filled - in questionnaire. There is no postage required for mail to your M.P. in Ottawa and I would encourage those who have not yet sent in the answers to do so as soon as possible. The information will be co-ordinated and sent along to the appropriate authorities. This will further our campaign for the service which Donald Gordon, president of the CNR, has said could be started within two years.

**Next From Ottawa**

Now that we are back in business on Parliament Hill, I shall be sending my next report on what goes on here... on the nation's business, the most important business in Canada.

Sincerely,

*John A. Adams*

nouncement. What it did, as the Euromart countries have been doing for some time, is to show up our Canada as being definitely out of step.

The President's proposal to give people in the lower income brackets a major break by recommending \$11 billions in income tax cuts is a tremendous investment in his country's future. His message also recommended \$2.5 billions cut from corporation tax and this too will prove a vital incentive in stimulating his nation's prosperity.

**Canada Should Follow**

Some readers may recall that in my maiden speech to Parliament last October, I urged that the Government of Canada do just this kind of thing to get our stagnant economy back into high gear. It is a proposition I must continue to urge, and I want to explain just why.

By reducing the direct income tax, especially for the millions of people in the lower income scale, the economy is immediately benefited. The money which would go to the government in tax payments is left instead to be spent on goods and services. This means more money in circulation, more jobs, more buying... a genuine boost to the country's welfare.

**Helps Everyone**

Properly handled, income tax cuts could enliven the economy and increase national spending. Indeed, this should be the purpose of income tax cutting. Purchasing by the masses of people is encouraged, more money goes into circulation, thus, works for everybody. Income tax cuts also add to the saving power of the people.

**In Our Riding**

In the few weeks away from Ottawa, I have made a determined effort to get all around the riding and have seen a great many people. I want to say how much I appreciate their welcome and greeting.

Present Pin For Quarter Century Of Postal Duty

Twenty-five years of faithful service to the post office department was recognized recently when Alex MacGregor of 285 North Taylor Mills Dr., Richmond Hill, was presented with an engraved pin from District Director of Postal Services G. J. Fultz.

Mr. MacGregor joined the postal service at Toronto in April, 1937, remaining there until 1950 with time out for duty in the Canadian Postal Service in England from 1942 to 1946.

In 1950 he was transferred to the Willowdale office and served there until June, 1958, when he was posted to the Richmond Hill branch.

Born in Glasgow, Scotland, Mr. MacGregor came to Canada when he was three years old.

He has one son, Brian, 15, attending Bayview Secondary School.

Mr. Brown acknowledged that the handicapped child demanded extra effort on the part of teachers but urged that the teacher should try to evaluate his behaviour.

Such a child may be coping with great stress, his basic control system is not always adequate and the ordinary demands of the classroom may be more than he can cope with.

He also stressed that the climate created in the classroom determines the relationship between the teacher and the child and that maintenance of discipline in the classroom is not always best for a child's learning.

In answering a question as to whether the teacher should sacrifice a child's academic progress to his emotional well-being, Mr. Brown stated emphatically that there was no choice in the matter.

If a child's self-image has been shattered, he can't perform but must be helped to recognize that it is an emotional problem which is handicapping his learning.

Following a two-hour luncheon break, during which those attending the seminar were invited to inspect the premises of the York County Mental Health Clinic, the afternoon session began with an address by G. Multari, psychologist on the staff of the clinic, who spoke on the importance of play therapy with exceptional children.

"There is no such thing as a bad child," stated Mr. Multari. "There are only happy and unhappy children."

Only a happy child can play, he continued, and described play as a spontaneous activity



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