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Recreation Under Schools?

Speeches last week by an Ontario cabinet minister and the chairman of the Metro School Board gave a clear indication that the future will see a closer link between a community's educational system and its recreation program.

Speaking before a school design workshop sponsored by the Department of Education and held in Toronto, Thomas Wells, Minister Without Portfolio in the Robarts Government said the province would prefer to see community recreation programs under the control of boards of education and making full use of costly school facilities. At present recreation and parks are under the control of the municipality. In Richmond Hill, for instance, there is a seven-member recreation committee appointed by town council which includes five citizens and two members of council.

Mr. Wells, who was chairman of the workshop, pointed out that in Flint, Michigan the complete community recreation program is under the direction of the board of education. He said the provincial grant system for education may be changed to force recreation facilities into school design. Mr. Wells thought there was merit in changing the legislation to make recreation more closely associated with education. At the present time recreation is under the complete control of a municipal council. "Perhaps this responsibility should be changed to make a school board responsible for establishing a recreation committee and carrying out a recreation program in a community," Mr. Wells said.

In a forceful address Barry Lowes who heads Canada's largest board of education said the public should assert its right to use school facilities which principals and trustees too often regard as their personal property. Mr. Lowes who is chairman of the Metro School Board said: "I would take issue right at the start with the educational point of view that the schools belong to the students. The schools are for the use of the community, and the students are a part of that community, but only one part."

"For too long, people have gone to the schools and the school boards with their caps in their hands, so to speak, seeking the use of school facilities. For too long, principals and trustees have said 'It's my school.'"

"It's not their school, it belongs to the community, to the people who built it and paid for it."

Mr. Lowes said he thought schools should play a far wider role in the affairs of the community, becoming "community education centres" catering equally to the recreational and learning needs of young and old.

To this end, they should design their auditoriums — the greatest "white elephants" in the schools — to suit community needs; build street entrances to their libraries so the public can use them at will; and develop day-care nurseries so mothers can enjoy educational and recreational facilities without worrying about their small children.

In addition, the Metro chairman said, schools should remain open for much longer hours and for 12 months a year to benefit the community and give students something to do after classes.

Unite Parks And Recreation

After considering the matter for some time Richmond Hill Town Council has decided it will amalgamate the parks board and recreation committee effective Jan. 1, 1970. At present both council-appointed bodies have a membership of seven. This includes five citizens and two council representatives. In deciding in favor of amalgamation, council is not only following the recommendations of a three member committee (William Ruttie, Parks Chairman Shaun Beggs and Recreation Chairman Angus Philip) which was appointed by Mayor Thomas Broadhurst to study the matter but, also the trend in other Ontario communities.

Although some members of council and the parks board had doubts regarding the feasibility of amalgamating the two bodies, a new joint board of directors will come into being in 1970 instead of 1969 as first suggested.

Under the present arrangement with two separate bodies there often has been an overlapping of duties and a lack of communication. Certainly if they were to be kept separate then there should be a clearer division of responsibilities between them. Recreation and parks are natural allies

The problem, he said, was not just keeping primary students busy, but providing some alternatives to the 14 and 15-year-olds "who get into glue-sniffing or what you please" because they have nothing to do after 3:30 pm.

Finally, Mr. Lowes urged the schools to become the focal point of a community's health and counselling services. "Most people can't afford the services of a psychologist, but they need someone to counsel them. The ideal place is the school."

This suggestion to combine education and recreation has already met its first opposition. The Ontario Association of Mayors and Reeves in a meeting with Education Minister William Davis complained bitterly of any move that would further weaken the structure of municipal government by turning all recreation facilities over to the school boards. However, in reply, Mr. Davis said his department was interested in integrating recreation programs with the school operations.

Mr. Wells said the government favors more money being spent on school gymnasiums and auditoriums so the buildings could be used more in off-hours by community groups. An expanded recreation program which would include the hiring of trained personnel and Saturday and holiday programs for children would mean the councils would lose control over another major municipal expenditure.

The huge investment most communities have in elementary and secondary school facilities simply means these buildings should be put to maximum use by the local residents. Recreation programs should be planned to provide recreation not only for the young but also for those who aren't so young anymore. It must be said that school boards in this area have been very co-operative in making their facilities available to various community organizations.

It is to be hoped that this availability of school properties will continue in the same way when the new county board of education takes office next January.

One of the greatest problems facing municipal councils in rapidly growing areas is to be able to raise sufficient funds to finance the educational system and at the same time provide among other municipal services a proper recreation program to meet the needs of that particular community. With some 60 cents of every local tax dollar collected going towards the support of our educational system, it is obvious the municipalities have very little left to channel into recreation. For this reason alone school buildings and play areas should be the focal point of any recreation program.

Mr. Wells predicted that in the future, education and recreation will be so closely entwined it will be impossible to distinguish between them. However, on the local scene, with the introduction of county school boards in the rural and suburban areas in January, the trustees will be kept busy for the next two years just meeting the demands of their new responsibilities. Certainly they should not be called upon to assume the additional burden of providing a recreation program for some time.



(Photo by Stuart's Studio)

A Thing Of Beauty Is A Joy Forever

There is a real thrill in creating an object of beauty with one's own hands, members of the pottery class which meets every Tuesday evening at the YWCA have discovered. Instructor Andre Bouter, (centre) demonstrates the technique for creating bowls to Mrs. Aileen Blake (left) and Mrs. Betty Harris.

Pottery is only one of the many creative arts offered by Richmond Hill YWCA in its programs for every member of the family.

Underway at present is a campaign for funds which will ensure that present programs of this active group will be continued and others added as the need or demand arises. Be generous in your donation to help the "Y" continue to serve your community.

Letters to the Editors

THE HIGH SCHOOL BOARD AND ISOC

Dear Mr. Editor:

Regarding the Richmond Hill nomination meeting on November 18, had I known before the meeting that candidates would only be allowed to speak for five minutes, I could have condensed my speech to my opinion (the high school board do not want parents to voice their opinions — confirmed by Robert Ross at the November 25 candidates meeting) instead of sticking to facts and letting people judge for themselves.

The York Central District High School Board approving the letter and questionnaire informed me on November 13 (after the previous day thereby

costing us an extra \$30 for paper) that they felt ISOC had no right to ask for people's "hopes and fears for the future" and they therefore would not guarantee that ISOC would receive the completed questionnaires.

If needed ISOC did overstep their jurisdiction, they did so very publicly and we cannot therefore understand why "the powers-that-be" did not point this out as early as June of this year when the first briefs were handed in. Only when a parents' brief was being organized was the ISOC jurisdiction questioned.

MRS EILEEN DINNING,
 328 Kerrybrook Drive,
 Richmond Hill.

WE GET LETTERS — and we want more. If you have a comment on a current event, an anecdote to relate, grouse to get off your chest, drop us a line. All letters must bear the writer's name and address, although a pen-name will be used in the paper if requested and at the editor's discretion. The editor reserves the right to cut or publish portions of letters if necessary. We can't return your letters. Sharpen your pencils — and let's hear from you.

Browndale Aims To Free Disturbed Child

By DYLAN CROSS

Just south of Oak Ridges, opposite Bond Lake, is a large house perched on a hill in a pine wood. Outside the entrance is a sign with the name "Browndale" painted on it.

It is from here that 34 Browndale homes for emotionally disturbed children in Ontario are administered. This is the headquarters of the Browndale organization, which is the successor in the province to the better-known Brown Camps.

Browndale was formed July 1 this year to supersede Brown Camps. It is virtually the same operation except that Browndale is a non-profit organization, whereas Brown Camps was a private company.

Brown Camps was established by John Brown, NDP MLA for Beaches-Woodbine, in 1966 following the absorption by the Ontario Government of the Warrendale Institute for emotionally disturbed children in Etobicoke and Newmarket, of which Mr. Brown had been executive-director for 13 years.

Any suburban community such as Richmond Hill needs an advanced program in both parks and recreation. However, faced with the high cost of education the town has often been short of funds for many worthwhile municipal services including parks and recreation. Increased local emphasis on both will likely develop in the years ahead. The new board will face a challenge in providing additional facilities to meet the demands of increased leisure time. At present parks and recreation receive their annual budgets from the town treasury and therefore the future will to a large extent depend on just how much tax money is available.

organization was the subject of sporadic criticism.

It's perhaps because of this unfavorable publicity that Brown Camps was converted into Browndale, a non-profit organization, by John Brown and his associate Stephen Lewis NDP, MLA for Scarborough West.

At an open-house held November 21 to publicize the new set-up, Browndale officials would, however, not say whether this was the reason for the change.

There has been no change in the organization in Saskatchewan and British Columbia, where Brown Camps also functions, and remains a private company.

BROWDALE caters for 222 children, and young people in age from 5 to 22, in various homes in Scarborough, Newmarket, Cooksville, Windsor, in a lodge at Muskoka and on five small farms in the Haliburton area.

These homes are not large institutions but family-type residences where the children live in small mixed-sex, mixed-age groups of five or six under supervision of two staff members, who really play the role of "foster" parents. The object, one gathers, is to establish as normal a family situation as possible.

"The child is treated as a child," says Mrs. Deborah Brown, director of Browndale and wife of John Brown. By this she means that a child is treated normally, not made to feel different not

Rambling Around

by Elizabeth Kelson

I Was A Commuter For Three Weeks

They say a new experience is good for you and whoever they are I believe them. When my son asked me to keep an eye on his city apartment while he went to Scotland to marry his girl, I jumped at the chance.

I had never occupied an apartment alone before. I had never passed a night without a single human being around some place. That very first night my senses were honed to the limit.

Never had my hearing been keener. I heard every sound magnified a dozen times. I wondered at strange shadows and the curtain weaving gently at the open window was enough for me to take action. I closed the window, naturally.

I lay awake in the dark listening to the persistent droning of planes overhead. I can't remember when I fell asleep.

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THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF BOOKS

Richmond Hill Public Library

Young Canada Book Week

By MAUREEN STEPHENSON

Young Canada Book Week, an annual celebration throughout the country, was celebrated by the Richmond Hill Public Library with an emphasis on introductory visits to the library by class visits from many local schools. Children were invited to tour the library and with the assistance of staff members in various departments were given a "behind the scenes" insight into the many processes necessary in order to get a book on the library shelf, from selection to cataloguing and processing.

Students learned about the many services available for their use in the library, including the use of the Xerox machine for reproducing reference material, and the availability of a teleprinter communication system enabling the local library to borrow books from other libraries on an inter-library loan.

Proof of the speed of this service was shown in a demonstration as messages were transmitted to connecting libraries in Brampton and Oshawa, and instantaneous replies were received sending greetings to the children of Richmond Hill and conveying best wishes for a happy visit to the library.

An enthusiasm shown by students for this type of program was pointed out very clearly in a letter of thanks received from the students of Grade 6 of St. Mary Immaculate Separate School who included in their letter a little poem.

"Roses are red
 Violets are pure
 Thank you for
 The Library tour"

Children from five kindergarten classes in Beverley Acres Public School had their own very special day of puppet shows and story hours, and a very informal "on the floor chat" with the librarian about the books in their library, and the very important section that belongs "just to them".

For several weeks past the library auditorium has echoed to the sound of hammer and saw interspersed with horrific screams and bellowing sound of "Fee-fi-fo-fum", as junior staff members under the direction of David Phillips, made preparations for the puppet show that was to climax book week celebrations.

Jane Doris, Lynne Freeman and Peta King busied themselves making stage settings and costumes, and dressing and painting puppets. Puppeteers Alistair Riswick, Patty Peters and Pat Collins, Brenda Haviland and David Phillips were busy rehearsing their roles in "Jack and the Beanstalk", and "Santa Claus comes to Richmond Hill".

At long last the great day arrived, the library staff waited with excitement and anticipation for the first children to arrive. Would we have a "full house"? The art of puppetry was perhaps quite unknown to many of the children — how would they react to the simple presentation of a fairy tale in this age of sophisticated television?

ed children's programs? Our young staff members were not disappointed. Almost 200 children sang along with the clowns, chuckled at the antics of Santa Claus and his friends, and sat in awe as Jack battled with the giant, and as the beanstalk toppled slowly to the ground.

An exciting finale to a busy week, bringing obvious enjoyment to so many children in Richmond Hill, this in itself a fine reward for the young members of the local library staff.

Postage Increase

(North Kent Leader)

In somewhat typical manner, the Post Office Department at Ottawa has issued a commemorative stamp bearing the portrait of Henry Bourassa, founder of Le Devoir; and in the same breath, has announced its intention to adjust mailing rates of second class matter.

Most newspapers are registered as second class mail, and it must be admitted in all fairness that the post office revenue for handling such mail is not excessive. In fact, the distribution of newspapers has added to the annual deficit of the department.

However, what must not be overlooked is the fact that newspapers are a means of mass communication, and are requisite and necessary for the general good of the country. This was recognized long ago by governments, and there is no reason to suggest that the picture has changed, despite the inroads of television. The CBC for instance, costs each and every Canadian about seven dollars a year, and it matters not a whit whether one has a television set or not, nor does it matter whether one lives near the American border or never turns his set to a Canadian program.

A recent survey in Lambton County indicates that only 30% of the homes subscribe to a daily newspaper but more than 70% do have one of the country's weeklies. The weekly newspaper is recognized as the ideal communication medium for rural communities whose people are closely knit into the fibre of community activity.

It would be regrettable, in fact nonsensical, to price the weeklies out of Canadian homes by raising the postal rates at the point where a subscriber would debate renewing his subscription. Some revision may be desirable from the post office viewpoint, but let the postal deficit on newspapers and magazines can be classed as a subsidy if so desired, but the principle is the same as subsidies on hogs, grain and other commodities . . . they are necessities, and so are the weekly and daily papers of our country.

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