

Aiding The Blind And Deaf

From The Toronto Bureau of the TIMES-NEWS

TORONTO — When Alex McCuaig became chief educational officer of Ontario's schools for the blind and deaf seven months ago his first lesson was to learn which handicap is more severe.

The former Schreiber resident believed as most people do that blindness is more of a deterrent to learning than deafness. Not so, he soon found out.

"I was quite surprised," he told the Toronto bureau of The Times - News. "In terms of learning, deafness is far greater a handicap."

That theory he discovered was the contention of Helen Keller. "She was both blind and deaf," he said, "While she felt blindness cut down her vision, deafness isolated her from language and thought."

Establishing policies and controlling expenditures are Mr. McCuaig's chief responsibilities, but he is also involved in the recruitment of teachers for the handicapped schools.

"It used to be the teachers were older people called home parents," said Mr. McCuaig at his Queen's Park office. "But now the community colleges are offering courses that graduate child care workers. These are the people we are interested in."

TEACHING VARIES

Instruction now involves guidance counselling, physical education, and field trips for the deaf and blind students. No longer is there emphasis placed on providing shelter and seclusion before actual teaching.

But one guideline remains the same. "We are absolutely insistent on their personal safety," said Mr. McCuaig. "High priority is attached to that."

Over 200 persons are enrolled at the school for the blind in Brantford. Others live and work out of Canadian National Institute for the Blind headquarters in Toronto with assistance afforded by the Ontario government.

At Ontario's schools for the deaf in Belleville and Milton, there are almost 1,000 students. A government concept of introducing regional centres has materialized at London where 34 attend a school for the hearing handicapped.

Still, the province's expenditure on schools for the handicapped remains a drop in the education bucket. Ontario has allotted \$9 million to blind and deaf instruction this year, about .7 per cent of a total



ALEX McCUAIG AT QUEEN'S PARK OFFICE

education budget of \$1,278,087,000.

"What we have to attempt to do is improve quality while reducing expenditure," admitted McCuaig.

"Fortunately public attitude has definitely changed. Once the treatment for the students was to smooth the pillows, make them comfortable and keep them there."

ADJUSTMENT BY PARENTS

A problem of adjusting to a life without hearing or sight involves the relationship between a handicapped child and his parents. Mr. McCuaig's department seeks to overcome any difficulties by arranging to keep family visits and correspondence on a regular basis.

"The parents are invited to come down to Belleville, for instance, in the summertime for

a week. We try to give them training and reassurance. Sure it's a burden, we tell them, but they're not the only ones," said Mr. McCuaig.

Nearly every three-day weekend means a trip home for most of the deaf and blind students. His department makes arrangements for transportation to their homes.

TAUGHT AT RED LAKE

The head of the blind and deaf schools was born in Fort William but only spent four days there. At Schreiber, he dropped out of high school to work with the CPR. After two years on the railroad he returned to school.

"I swallowed my pride, and decided to dig in and do it," he remarked.

After graduating from high school in Schreiber, he attended North Bay Normal School. His

first teaching assignment was at public school in Red Lake where he later became principal.

Studying at Queen's University between school years, Mr. McCuaig obtained his master of education degree and joined the staff of University of Toronto Schools. A year in England and Europe on a Canada Council fellowship preceded four years as a history and social studies inspector at Cochrane and Owen Sound.

Before being appointed to his present position, Mr. McCuaig was assistant curriculum superintendent with the education ministry. During that time he became involved in studies for the influential Hall-Dennis Report.

Mr. McCuaig and his wife, a high school teacher, live with their three adopted children in the Don Mills suburb of Toronto.



MRS. WINNIE CAMPBELL'S prize for the incoming 'original' bonnett caught the eye of judges and won first prize for the president of the Schreiber Women's Institute.

Incoming Institute Vice Pres. Takes Easter Bonnett Prize

SCHREIBER (Special) — The annual meeting of Schreiber Women's Institute opened with payment of dues by members and climaxed with a display of Easter Bonnetts each had made and serving of lunch.

As a result of elections the following will head the Branch for 1973: Mesdames Ann Todesco, president; Winnie Campbell and Jessie McCanna, vice-presidents; Winnie Clemens, secretary and Chris Morris, treasurer. Mrs. Clemens was also appointed district director and Mrs. Todesco is curator for the Tweedsmuir History Book. Mrs. Agnes Bryson agreed to act as meetings pianist, and the following will head committees: Mesdames Marion Yates, cuboard supplies; Betty Baxter, card secretary; Tressia Spanton, 'ponny for friendship'; Annie Niemi, family and consumer affairs; Winnie Campbell, agriculture and Canadian industries; Eunice Bolan, public relations and Katie Verdone, education and cultural activities.

Donations for the Cancer Cupboard were collected and a box of remnants distributed to be made into articles for a penny auction planned for May 24 in the Town Hall. This yearly money-raising project will be convened by Mesdames Niemi, Campbell, Baxter and Miss Susan Dzioba. It was agreed to order more tickets for the project.

Mrs. Clemens presented both monthly and annual financial statements; Mrs. Baxter reported on cards, gifts and flowers sent during the year and Mrs. Todesco gave a detailed account of the Branch's programs.

Members were in agreement that the Branch would not support a resolution proposed by the Upsala Branch, with regard to changing legislation to require bicycle riders to travel on the left side of roads instead of 'with the traffic,' as is the mode of travel presently for bicycles.

The date of the District Annual Meeting was announced as May 17, at Murillo Town Hall,



1972 TEACHER GRAD

Mary Speziale, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vincenzo Speziale of Schreiber, received her diploma in education from University of Western Ontario at the June 3 convocation exercises. Her parents and sister Mrs. Gary Speck and three children attended. Miss Speziale was awarded her BA degree in physical education and English at the 1973 exercises of Western University. She has been accepted on the teaching staff of Parkside Collegiate, St. Thomas, Ont., where she will be instructing in physical education and English in grades 10 and 11.