

# A Statement Towards Adequate Day Care Services for Young Children

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I. A young child has certain basic needs. These basic needs are all the more pronounced if he is a child of poverty, as is often the case when his mother must work."<sup>1</sup> His physical emotional and social development must be safe-guarded. His self-confidence, spontaneity, curiosity and self-discipline must be encouraged. His mental processes and skills must be continually improved."<sup>2</sup> He must learn how to cope with life well enough to be able to have equal opportunity with other children within the society in which he will live.

None of these basic needs is met automatically for any child. They must be provided, either by the home or by an agency which functions as an extension of the home or by both. Nor must it be assumed that every home is able to meet these basic needs. For many children, a day care centre represents one effective way of meeting them.

II. There is an increasing pressure for day care centres because working mothers have become so integral a part of our society that we ignore at our common peril the special problems which this situation creates.<sup>3</sup>

It is a fact that mothers of young children make up a significant proportion of the Canadian labour force. A recent study<sup>4</sup> indicates that a majority of these mothers are working for economic reasons, many as the sole support of their family. A lesser number work for the enjoyment of working or because their skills are in high demand. Whatever may be the reason, the working mother is here to stay, and our economy counts on her continued availability.

Studies indicate that the working mother is just as serious about her family responsibilities as her counterpart at home.<sup>5</sup> The typical working mother is vitally concerned that her children receive wholesome attention in her absence, and she suffers deep anxiety when she doubts the quality of their care.

A leader<sup>6</sup> in the field of child welfare has said: "The lack of adequate day care services is threatening the future of our children. We have swept this problem under every conceivable rug. Our society is so ambivalent about it that on the one hand there are those who want all mothers to stay at home and look after their children while at the same time they decry the lack of enough manpower-and woman power-to meet our national needs. There is continuing pressure to get mothers off the (welfare rolls) and into the labour force."

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<sup>1</sup> In a thorough report of the *Day Care Needs in Calgary*, the Social Planning Council states (p. 21) that a sample survey of employed mothers showed that 36 per cent had family incomes below \$6,000; 32 per cent had family incomes between \$6,000 and \$7,900; and 32 per cent had family incomes over \$8,000. This means that 68 per cent had incomes below \$8,000 which is considered the very minimum salary for a family purchasing a new home.

<sup>2</sup> DeliQuadri, P. F., "To Serve the Nation's Children," *Lutheran Women*, March, 1969.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Social Policies for Canada, Part I*, a Statement by the Canadian Welfare Council, p. 10f., 1969.

<sup>4</sup> *Day Care Needs in Calgary*, Social Planning Council, June, 1967. Of 443 employed mothers of children under 12 who were interviewed, 63.9 per cent were working for economic reasons only, while another 19.2 per cent were working for a combination of economic and personal reasons.

<sup>5</sup> Ruderman, F., "Conceptualizing Need for Day Care: Some Conclusions Drawn from the Child Welfare League Day Care Project," *Child Welfare*, Vol. XLIV, No. 4 (April) 1965.

<sup>6</sup> Oettinger, K. B., cited by P. F. DeliQuadri in *Lutheran Women*, "To Serve the Nation's Children," March, 1969.

It is estimated that in Canada only one child in ten whose mothers work receive day care services in officially approved centers.<sup>7</sup> Social workers and educators take a dim view of many of the alternatives for which working mothers are forced to settle.

One thorough study indicates that, if given a choice, working mothers have a decided preference for adequate day care facilities over unsupervised forms of child care.<sup>8</sup> Most working mothers would like to see these facilities located in their own neighborhoods rather than away from home. There are solid reasons for this preference which relates both to convenience and the child's sense of well-being. Clearly, our neighbourhood churches can fit into the picture at this point.

III. Adequate day care facilities are primarily the responsibility of the total community, including employers who benefit from the availability of women in the work force.

It is the duty of the community which reaps the benefit of working mothers and pays for the plight of maladjusted children to take vigorous steps to meet the gaping need for adequate day care facilities. The community, on both the municipal and the provincial level, must assume the responsibility for setting and enforcing good standards for day care facilities, for ensuring that a sufficient number of such facilities is available to meet the need, and for bringing the cost of their use within the reach of the average family. The dimensions of the problem are too vast to consider any piecemeal approach adequate.

At the same time, industry benefits even more directly from the services of working mothers. It is therefore incumbent upon industry to carry its share of the responsibility for providing sufficient day care services.<sup>9</sup> "More and more the need for quality day care is being recognized as a key factor in the sustained employment of many women."<sup>10</sup> A few industries have already led the way in providing day care services. It remains for many more to follow.

IV. We request the Synods to encourage congregations to study the needs of young children and their families and in co-operation with the community to assess the total resources available and to assure the adequate day care services are provided. Many ideally located congregations possess facilities which go largely unused most of the week. Numerous examples could be cited of congregations which have made their facilities and resources available for approved day care services. Many others are yet to be aroused to the need.

"Whether or not the church is able to carry out these programs itself, it can make a contribution by mobilizing public opinion in a community to look at what is happening to young children and to stimulate the provision in some way of the services they need."<sup>11</sup>

We commend the booklet, *The Church and Young Children Through The Week*, for study and reliable guidance in determining which of several possible approaches to day care services might be appropriate in a given set of circumstances.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Calgary Social Planning Council, op. cit., p.7.

<sup>8</sup> Idem, p.2.

<sup>9</sup> This might include such courses of action as the following: a) Provision of day care services in direct proximity to the place of employment, b) Financial undergirding of community groups desirous of establishing such services in local neighbourhoods, c) Collective action through such agencies as the Chamber of Commerce, and the like.

<sup>10</sup> DelliQuadri, op. cit., p.14.

<sup>11</sup> Stapleford, Elsie, in *The Church and Young Children Through the Week*, p. 5 (see below).

<sup>12</sup> Sparling, Olive D., *The Church and Young Children Through the Week*, The Children's Work Department, The Board of Christian Education, The United Church of Canada, Nov., 1967.