

## COMMENT

*On Counsellor Education*

To date, my congenital laziness has protected the readers of *Canadian Counsellor* from exposure to the expressions of concern which follow.

This departure from customary silence is occasioned by the editor's call for papers, by the "needling" of concerned colleagues, by what I consider the unwarrantedly bleak picture painted by the Career Decisions Survey (Breton & McDonald, 1967), the Lethbridge Survey (Perkins, 1968), and certain masochistic articles which have appeared in some of our newspapers and professional journals, but perhaps most of all by the desire to see recognition given where it has been fairly earned. Recently I have heard some of the more recent arrivals in the counsellor training field dismiss in rather airy fashion the tremendous amount of pioneer work done by non-university agencies, apparently simply because they believe that respectable counsellor training can take place only under the roof of the university. I recognize and pay tribute to the fine programs which some of our Canadian universities have set up and I strongly support an extension of these programs, but I think that in fairness we should keep the record straight. I believe, for example, that the Ontario Department of Education, which has done a great deal to produce an informed, effective school guidance staff over the past twenty-four years, and probably more than any other single agency or institution in Canada, also deserves recognition.

I am convinced that the whole truth has been escaping some of us in C.G.C.A. So, in order that credit may be given where credit is due, may I present a few facts.

(1) The first school guidance counsellor training courses in Canada were offered not by graduate schools, not even by a university, but by the Ontario Department of Education in 1925.

(2) In 1945, the Ontario Department of Education began a four-phase counsellor training program leading to Specialist certification in Guidance, with an initial enrolment of 150 candidates. During 1968, each of more than 1600 school counsellors received at Department courses the equivalent of six semester hours of instruction, at least some of which were provided by the same persons who lecture in the graduate programs of the universities. In addition to lectures, these 1600+ students participated in seminars, workshops and group discussions, and did outside reading. Furthermore, practically all of them during the year tried out in daily practice the theories received during attendance at courses, and many of them worked under the direct supervision of Guidance Specialists.

(3) The class lecture time required for an Ontario Specialist Certificate

in Guidance is now the equivalent of thirty-two semester hours and no certificate is issued until the course is completed.

(4) The Ontario Department of Education summer school staff for the current year includes nineteen members with Doctoral degrees, forty-six Masters (most of whom hold the Ontario Specialist Certificate in Guidance), and eighty-four others holding Specialist Certificates in Guidance who work in consultation with senior staff personnel, primarily in the area of practicum supervision.

Over the years many outstanding Canadians have given leadership as staff members; the list includes such illustrious names as Dr. John A. Long, Dr. K. S. Bernhardt, Dr. J. D. M. Griffin, Dr. Wm. A. Line, Dr. R. W. B. Jackson, Dr. H. M. Fowler Professor M. D. Parmenter, Dr. H. O. Barrett, Dr. D. Carlton Williams, Dr. T. Mallinson, and Dr. Wilson Head.

And, working side by side with these staff members, have been specialist practitioners from the schools — persons who have demonstrated on-the-job competence in school guidance programs.

Now I know that someone will be quick to cry, "Oh, but in Ontario you accept non-degreed persons on your courses!" And I admit that on the surface this would appear to be a nasty fact. But it is also a fact that, even though some elementary school teachers who do *not* possess a baccalaureate degree have been permitted to take the Ontario courses, very few of these non-degreed persons (actually less than one in ten) have progressed to Specialist certification, but all of them left the courses better prepared to carry on their day-to-day activities as teachers. Many of them have completed degrees after taking guidance courses. In almost every case the Ontario Specialist has Grade 13, a three or four year bachelor's degree, a year at College of Education or Teachers' College, plus the aforementioned thirty-two semester hours of courses specifically "Guidance" in content. At least one-third of these Guidance courses deal with Counselling Theory and Practice, and utilize recorded interviews, closed-circuit television, and regular supervised practicums.

During the past three years I have examined in considerable detail the courses in Guidance and Counselling leading to Master's degrees offered at Canadian, American and British universities, and have conferred with counsellor educators here and abroad, and I am now convinced that the school counsellor training program of the Ontario Department of Education compares very favourably, in time and content requirements, with any of them.

Furthermore, the performance of Department-trained Specialists in the schools exhibits the same range of quality that one finds in the work of graduates of the universities' Masters' programs. In either case the personal qualities of the counsellor appear much more important than *where* he or she has received his or her training.

In Ontario I believe that we are developing between the graduate schools and the Department of Education not only a good working relationship but also an understanding that at present both institutions have a role to play in counsellor education, and that in spite of the best efforts of both we shall continue for several years to have an insufficient number of trained counsellors. There is already a precedent for a two-way interchange of credits be-

tween the Department and at least one Canadian university as well as several United States schools.

Let me hasten to make two points very clear. First of all, we are not complacent about our Ontario courses; every year sees modification and, we hope, improvements. Secondly, we are moving as fast as possible in the direction of having school counsellor training (or "education", if you balk at the term "training") provided by the universities, for that is where we believe it belongs. Almost daily I advise someone to take the graduate program rather than the Department program, because we are in an age when additional degrees mean increased status and better salaries. But until the day when the universities can cope with the demands for counsellor training, I trust that it is not presumptuous to expect reasonable credit for our pioneering and for our quarter-century of effort to build adequate school guidance services for young people in these fast-moving and rather confused times and for establishing a foundation upon which current graduate programs can be built.

We have never professed *perfection* in our Departmental programs, nor do we yet see perfection in the programs of the graduate schools. It seems to me, therefore, that we should try to move forward positively, not denigrating the efforts of those who blazed the first trails to counsellor competence, but recognizing their contribution and adding our contribution in turn. Surely our ego-building does not have to be achieved by speaking disparagingly of the work accomplished by those who preceded us.

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#### REFERENCES

- (1) Breton, R. A., & McDonald, J. C. *Career Decisions of Canadian Youth*, Vol. 1. Ottawa: Department of Manpower and Immigration, 1967.
- (2) Perkins, S. A. *Secondary School Counsellors in Canada, 1967-68*. Lethbridge: University of Lethbridge, 1968.