

Proposed Legislation Causes Uproar

SOCIAL SERVICES ACCUSED OF IMMORALITY

The P.E.I. Department of Social Services last week unveiled its proposals for new comprehensive children's legislation at a public meeting which drew both considerable and curious comment from the large number of people attending. In summary, the Department proposes: to codify, in law a number of basic rights of children; to eliminate the legal status of illegitimacy; to eliminate as much as possible adversary proceedings in child custody matters; and to provide a much wider range of options for families in distress; to make provisions for fathers of children born within commonlaw unions to be heard in legal proceedings pertaining to their children; to establish conditions for disclosure of information regarding adopted children; and generally to bring other aspects of legislation pertaining to children and families in line with current philosophy practice and with public values.

There was a mixed reaction to many of the proposals including an accusation that the Department proposes to sanction immorality and an abandonment of Christian values pertaining to the family and to home. One comment was made that if the same rights accrued to children and fathers outside marriage as within marriage, then there would be less incentive to marry! The chairman of the meeting, Mr. Eugene MacDonald of the departmental staff, stated that the legal status

of the child should not depend on the legal relationship between the parents, and that the child born out-of-wedlock should have the same rights in all respects as the child born within wedlock.

Last year some faculty members sponsored meetings to consider issues pertaining to battered children. The new legislation proposes to make mandatory the reporting of cases where child battering is suspected, although lawyers present suggestions that this type of legislation is more symbolic than practical. There were mixed feelings on the subject of child protection, with some persons showing more concern with the rights of parents and the sanctity of the home than with the protection of children from neglect and abuse by their own parents. One lawyer present indicated that parents of no rights with respect to their children, only obligations.

That left open the question of what happens at the door of the castle when parents are not providing for the care and safety of their children, with some persons pleading for greater attention by the Department to the phenomenon of "emotional battering."

This is the sort of legislation that should be of more than passing interest to the University community, for it involves community values, social philosophy, human relation-

ships and human rights, property rights and a whole host of public policy issues. The Deputy Minister of the Department, Mr. J.E. Green, told the SUN that the proposed legislation faces a lot of hurdles yet before it becomes law. "We have to fully satisfy the Minister on some of our proposals, then the Cabinet Committee on Legislation, afterwards Executive Council, then the Government Caucus, and finally the Legislative Assembly itself. There is every likelihood that our proposals will be substantially revised by the time the process is completed," he said, "and we would very much welcome the informed views of the University Community."

The new law will combine four present acts: the Adoption Act, the Children's Act, the Child Protection Act and the Child Care Facilities Act.

Copies of the proposals may be obtained simply by writing or calling at the Department of Social Services, Provincial Administrative Building, Charlottetown,

Editor's note:

For the benefit of the faculty, it should be pointed out that the elimination of the legal status of illegitimacy will not eliminate the epithet hitherto attached to that status. They will still be referred to in the same kindly terms as in the past.

STUDENT/FACULTY ADVISOR PROGRAMME

OF TO A GOOD START

On September 6, the new Faculty/Student Advisor Program got off to a good start with approximately 53 participating in an Orientation Program in the Lecture Theatre of the Robertson Library. Following that, the 46 students involved stationed themselves in the gym, armed with a list of 14 names, and hopeful that they would be able to match them with a face.

Meanwhile, the 46 Faculty Advisors were located in their offices awaiting a visit by their Freshman Advisees, led by the Student Advisor.

This program had been in the planning stage since early spring and it was very rewarding for myself and my Committee to finally see it come to full bloom. The enthusiasm and the sense of committ-

ment generated at the Orientation Meeting made our efforts very worthwhile. Furthermore, we were assured that this incoming Freshmen Class were in a very privileged position due to the fact they had this group of people interested in them. Not all of the Freshmen students could be assigned to a Faculty and Student Advisor because there were not enough Advisors to go around, however we were able to accommodate approximately 400 Freshmen.

Many of the faculty I knew before but the group of Student Advisors were mostly new names to me. I must commend them on their interest and desire to be of help, and the enthusiasm with which pursued and have followed through in con-

tacting their Advisees. I think we are very fortunate to have such a dedicated and committed group as we have in the Faculty and Student Advisors.

A note to the Freshmen -- you do not have to have a problem to see your Faculty or Student Advisor. They are there as good friends, information resources, and generally some one who is concerned about you as a person. If your Faculty or Student Advisor haven't yet sought you out, please make yourself known to them.

Marion Basha
Chairman of Faculty/Student
Advisor Committee

The editorial staff of the UPEI SUN would like to announce our new format. Every page except the front page (the one with the photograph) will be upside down. This is to give us two front pages: one with the picture and the other with news. To read it, just flip the paper over after looking at the photo.