



THE ROYAL BANK OF CANADA MONTHLY LETTER

VOL. 44, No. 9

HEAD OFFICE: MONTREAL, SEPTEMBER, 1963

About Guiding Young People

IT WILL HAVE OCCURRED to thinking people that the greater the freedom we have to choose and to do, the greater is our need for guidance services, because these freedoms bring in their wake pressures such as human beings have not formerly experienced.

If young people seem to be uncertain in their attitude toward life it may be because they are on the boundary line where one age merges into another. They cannot live on in the Victorian way of thinking, to which their grand-parents were accustomed, but they are not yet qualified for twenty-first century thinking.

This is why the school of today has to consider more than its curriculum. It must take into account the background and future of the pupil and his emotional functioning. It needs to offer help in the change from childhood to maturity. Guidance is not a magical word that will open the door of a treasure cave but it can show a path which the pupil may follow toward something of great value.

It is not correct to think of guidance merely in its vocational role. Professor M.D. Parmenter, Director of the Guidance Centre, Ontario College of Education, describes its function in this way: "Guidance is a process of helping individuals to help themselves through their own efforts to discover and to develop their potential resources for personal fulfilment and social usefulness. Guidance, in a school sense, is also a programme of services, co-ordinated in such a way as to provide the most effective help for students in this direction."

Counselling is the process by which an experienced and qualified person assists another person to understand himself and his opportunities, to make appropriate adjustments and decisions in the light of this insight, to accept personal responsibility for his choices, and to follow courses of action in harmony with his choices.

The counsellor does not attempt to direct pupils' lives. He believes that if they gain enough understanding of themselves and the nature of their problems they will make choices wisely. This nondirective

approach does not attempt to impose any set of values or beliefs on the pupils. It truly respects the integrity of the individual's right to decide for himself.

There are some extreme cases in which the counsellor has to "take over". Like a doctor, he makes a diagnosis based on information obtained from tests and questions. Then he prescribes a definite course of action.

Purpose of guidance

Because there are some mistaken ideas prevalent, it is well to establish firmly the fact that guidance in schools is not authoritarian.

It is the function of the guidance counsellor to help a young person to assess his talents, aptitudes and interests; to provide him with information about the world outside school; and to relate the two so that he may plan to put his qualities to the best possible use.

One of the imperative requirements of life is to be able to make choices. In order to do so one must know how to look at things and oneself. One must also learn that to live means being able to cope with difficulties: problems are a normal part of life and the great thing is to avoid being flattened by them. One has to grapple, instead of diving for the cyclone shelter every time a strong wind blows.

The counsellor seeks to help an individual, by his own efforts, to perform up to the level of his capacity. He does this by enabling the individual to understand his abilities, the nature of life, and the functions which his abilities enable him to perform in life.

Guidance is not solely a remedial treatment for adolescents who have kicked over the traces or are falling behind in their studies. It does not wait for a crisis point in a pupil's life, but, as Professor Parmenter said at a Canadian Education Association convention: "Present-day guidance services are becoming much more preventive and developmental. We are concerned with helping the student to advance gradually to the

point where he should be able to do, from time to time, and with a minimum of help from others, a job of self-guidance."

The guidance worker gathers facts about the youth and his environment; keeps his finger on the pulse of the youth's progress; is alert to spot a deviation; enlightens the youth in time to prevent a serious malfunction.

While counselling does not dictate a course of action or make decisions for the young person, the counsellor does not coddle him either. To encourage a youth to rely upon the counsellor is to frustrate the counsellor's highest aim, which is to enable the youth to gain his own insights and stand on his own feet. The counsellor doesn't try to make the youth drink a dose of wisdom, but to make him thirsty for it.

The counsellor

A code of ethics for guidance workers makes these five points: the counsellor's responsibility to himself, to the person counselled, to the school, to the community, and to his profession.

No system of tests or of occupational classifications; no machinery of collecting or tabulating or charting or filing, can take the place of the personal integrity, the individual capacity, and the basic common sense of the counsellor.

The counsellor is motivated by professional pride. He believes in the worth of every individual and in his own capacity to help that worth reveal itself.

While guidance does not consist of referring to case histories and turning up a page in a pharmacopoeia from which to select a prescription, it is not, either, a mere sitting down for a friendly chat. It is complex. It requires knowledge, skill, sensitivity and a high quality of responsibility.

The knowledge is knowledge about things as they are and are becoming. The skill is in fitting the person's aptitudes and capabilities into a pattern of society in which the dominant feature is change. The sensitivity is in recognizing differences in the persons being counselled; they cannot be catalogued by tests alone, but only by facts bolstered by feelings. The responsibility shows itself when the counsellor has in the forefront of his mind the fact that he is counselling a human being who will be at the peak of his life's cycle on the near edge of the twenty-first century, when the environment will be as radically different from today's as today's is from the year 1000.

The counsellor must not only be competent and feel competent; he must convey a sense of his competence to those with whom he is working. If he feels, in Zarathustra's picturesque words: "They understand me not; I am not the mouth for these ears", he is in the wrong profession.

Others in guidance

What part should teachers play in guidance? A definite, desirable and distinguished part. They have the best opportunity to know and comprehend every pupil. They can stimulate every pupil along the lines most suited to his individuality. They can provide motivation to the children whose temperament it is to drift. They can broaden the horizons of all pupils by showing the studies to be personal in their implications and related to the world outside the school.

A few people still look upon the function of the teacher as being that of mincing facts and precepts for children to swallow. Most people, however, recognize the key position of the teacher in moulding tomorrow's citizens. At an industrial conference it was said: "The teacher is in many ways the most important man in the modern industrial community."

The function of the guidance worker is not to supplant teachers or parents, but to contribute in a field where they have no exact knowledge. In a world of many new occupations, the very names of which are strange, and of new economic and social environment, parents are not prepared to give guidance to their children as parents used to do in a less complex age. Someone who is well-informed and not emotionally involved is needed.

Perspective is needed. Leonardo da Vinci said of perspective that it is "the bridle and rudder of painting". So it is of living. One must have one's eye on the distant future and at the same time see what leads to where.

It is known to everyone that many people are frustrated in their attempts to obtain these worthy things by some thoughtless turning aside, some momentary blindness, some false whisper. Guidance of the constructive, positive sort is designed to help adolescents find their way past these danger spots to self-fulfilment.

Assessing the future

Life today holds out dim prospects for workers without at least high school education and some skills. It is increasingly bright for the well-educated, highly-skilled, worker. Even the "thinking machines" need educated operators.

Today's grown-ups were taught that the labour force was like a pyramid. The base was made up of multitudes of unskilled workers; part way up one found the semi-skilled; still higher toward the tapering top were the skilled operators and the managers and the owners of businesses; at the very top were the professional workers.

That simplicity of construction has been shattered. In the United States the base has shrunk from 36 per cent in 1910 to a little over 25 per cent in 1940, to only 15 per cent today. *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto,

reported last year that unskilled job opportunities have declined from 70 per cent to 30 per cent since the war, and are expected to fall to 10 per cent within another decade or two.

No loosely-adopted or ad hoc procedures in guidance will cope with this situation. No statistical computation, however scientifically organized, will provide all that is necessary to prepare a youth for this new world.

Guidance must inspire. As Darwin said long ago toward the end of a lifetime of critical observation, men differ less in capacity than in zeal and determination to utilize the powers they have.

When a boy comes to a stream over which he wants to jump, he usually counts three before he leaps. It is not important that he should count to three; there is no magical connection whatever between the number and the jump. But it is important that he should stir up his feelings and collect his powers and tense his muscles.

Guidance is not merely a matter of finding out and recording and explaining, but of gathering together the powers of the youth and inspiring him to use them.

There's magic in a goal, the counsellor may tell his young people. Aim must be specific and definite — not a mere wish to succeed. Many people get nowhere just because they do not know where they want to go, but depend on chance to bring along what they hope for. This, the guidance officer may point out, just is not good enough in this age. Chance is a lady who smiles only upon those who know how to make her smile.

Educational direction

The curriculum is more complicated than ever before, and the diversity of the subjects in higher education is bewildering. Children need someone to look at the direction in which they are going as well as at the progress they are making.

One function of primary and secondary education is to provide a field of knowledge around which to organize all the wisdom and experience that are gained after leaving school. To this end, the principal occupation of the pupil is to learn what he is taught, but guidance workers seek to place the lessons in the context of living.

Thousands of students have simply started in from a point midway in space, on something that has just occurred to them as being desirable. The earlier a student learns that he has an inappropriate goal, the better. About this critical period it is said by the authors of *Guidance Services* (Humphreys, Traxler and North; Science Research Associates Inc., Chicago, 1960): "Helping students solve their educational

problems is one of the most frequent and important services that the guidance department of a school or college is called upon to render."

Consider the problem of the pupil in his last year in elementary school. Should he seek employment, or consider secondary school and perhaps university education? The choice is important not only toward personal fulfilment but toward economic satisfaction.

A pamphlet issued by authority of the Minister of Labour, Ottawa, makes this plain. "Every year of high school adds \$238 a year to your income, and matriculation year alone adds \$466 a year to your income. In lifetime earnings the value of a high school education over a grade school education is about \$42,000."

The pamphlet provides these figures, based on a 1959 survey of family incomes:

| <i>Income range</i> | <i>Education and percentage of workers:</i> | | |
|---------------------|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| | <i>Elementary School</i> | <i>High School</i> | <i>University</i> |
| under \$3,000 | 43 | 24 | 20 |
| \$3,000 — \$5,000 | 33 | 34 | 23 |
| \$5,000 — \$10,000 | 22 | 37 | 42 |
| \$10,000 and over | 2 | 5 | 15 |

Career planning

Report cards are commonplace in schools. Why should not the pupil's card include reference to his work in career planning? It must be recognized as having equal importance in his life as have individual subjects like literature and mathematics, which are part of the career he is planning. In Ontario, one period a week is set aside for work on careers. This is a course which should be taught by a well-trained guidance worker.

Much of the tragedy of human existence in this age is caused by people drifting into jobs. They make a choice based upon glamour, or social prestige, or to please a parent. The boy who is weak in mathematics may be forced by parental pressure into engineering; the girl who not only can't spell but doesn't know where to look up the words may choose to become a typist.

What is needed in order to help young people avoid these harrowing misfits is information; information about the aptitudes and capacity of the child, about occupational fields, and about opportunities for training within those fields. All these the guidance officer has or can put his hand on.

A course in career planning might use as its textbooks the several workbooks published in the Canadian Guidance Series and the monographs on individual occupations issued by the Guidance Centre of the Ontario College of Education and the Depart-

ment of Labour. The latter are obtainable from the Queen's Printer, Ottawa. The workbooks, revised and republished in 1963, are written by Professor Parmenter, and correspondence regarding them should be addressed to the Ontario College of Education, University of Toronto, Toronto 5. The titles are: *Your Further Education, You and University, You and Your Career*, and *Exploring Occupations*.

In helping a person plan for his occupational life, the school guidance worker will have in mind the importance of not overemphasizing specific skills at the expense of developing basic capabilities. Whereas special skills become obsolete very quickly, general capabilities are the necessary foundation for acquiring new special skills.

There was wisdom in the Boy Scout badge idea. Every Scout was encouraged to study for badges representing knowledge of trades, skills and arts: fireman, sailor, musician, astronomer, cook, clerk, and a host of others. While studying for these the lad met a great many people of varying talents and occupations and he learned a little about many lines of activity. He broadened his horizon. He attained understanding. He achieved that most important quality: versatility.

When pursuing this elementary sort of guidance into the crucial period of a young person's life the guidance officer needs to keep up with trends. There were, in the old days, badges for "saddle-maker" and "blacksmith". Today, these are obsolete, but only in degree from the ideas of occupations held a year ago.

Skills and the pattern of work change rapidly, as may be seen by comparing the "help wanted" advertisements in today's papers with those of a few years ago. The guidance worker must keep up, and he should have the help of industry, business and finance in doing so. Effective guidance in school contributes to the personnel efficiency of a business organization, and should be recognized by reciprocation.

The occupational classification of the Canadian Census of 1961 lists more than 16,000 occupations in which the people of Canada find a living. This formidable list might be utterly confusing without the help of a guidance officer. Professor Parmenter gives in his book *Exploring Occupations* a check list for narrowing down the list to manageable size. It is in ten sections, with a total of about seventy questions — which is far better than answering "yes" or "no" to the question "would you like this?" 16,000 times.

This is not to say that decision is, under any circumstances, easy. Our human environment has changed so rapidly that no single trait, such as mechanical dexterity, clerical skill, or scientific bent of mind, is a sufficient base for a decision. The ideal is to select tentatively a suitable cluster of occupations, and then to work toward that galaxy with the idea

of finding the right place when more is known about the job and about the student's talent.

Guidance is continuous

It is obvious that guidance is not something for this or that year in a school course, but is continuous. Few people reach the point at which they can set their sights on a once-for-all course. That fact may discourage some, but to others it is inspiring to know that they are never at the end, but are always at the task of preparing for something new. Some such thought as this must be behind the Canadian Association for Adult Education sponsorship of a national seminar called "Guidance Throughout Life" at Lake Couchiching in November under chairmanship of John Andoff of McMaster University.

There is a lot of talk about "maturity" as if it were something fixed and measurable.

To be mature does not by any means mean that a person must be completely fulfilled in all aspects of life. It does mean that there shall be no major area in which he feels frustrated, intellectually, physically, socially or emotionally.

As they advance in age people must progress in their depth of thought. A child enjoys the zoo, running from cage to cage in excitement, seeing the surface life of animals, babbling about their antics, but a scientist will spend a lifetime studying the way of a snake on a rock or the behaviour of an ant in its heap.

A young person is a dynamo of energy. He needs to be given an idea of what to drive with his energy as well as of the point of the compass at which he should aim. The guidance worker cannot command genius to appear in any youth, but he can show how the youth's capacities may be best directed in the search for happiness.

Some inertia may have to be overcome. Inertia is the quality brought to attention by Kepler in 1608: the quality, our school books tell us, in virtue of which a piece of matter will not move from a position of rest until a force acts upon it.

Having got moving in the right direction, a youth needs to realize an ancient but still valid truth, that nothing can be had for nothing. If a man wishes to reach the top of a hill he must not shirk the trouble of climbing. He may fail, and failure has a certain dignity, but not failure to try.

When a guidance worker brings these realizations to the mind of a young person, and points out the folly of being misled by mirages, and inspires the young person to look destiny steadfastly in the face and measure his strength with its difficulties, he has discharged an important responsibility and has shown how the young person may fulfil himself.