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SUBMISSION TO CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL

Community Plan Vol 1 Page 10

I congratulate our City Council for its long-term community plan draft, and for its call for submissions. I would have preferred a later closing date as I was already heavily committed for the period.

Page 23 Planning Process

I ask that the Council be open continuously to submissions for appropriate consideration and/or action. Creative recognitions will not cease on 6.5.04, but may be lost if not passed on.

Page 25 A LEARNING CITY

Desired Outcome: our people have the knowledge and skills needed to participate in society.

Reading, writing and very simple arithmetic are achieved by a majority of students at primary school, but the 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey showed that over one million New Zealand adults could not adequately use the printed material required for them to meet the complex demands of life and work in today's society. (See accompanying page "Literacy in New Zealand")

Adult Reading Assistance Scheme Inc. (ARAS) of 72 Gloucester St Christchurch reports that it could significantly increase the annual numbers of adult students whom it helps to read if it received still more adequate funding. The Manager has said to me that current City Council funding is extremely valuable for their functioning.

A high proportion of the curriculum knowledge presented to the pupils of traditional primary and secondary schools is NOT used by them subsequently in their lives; that means much wasted time and expense.

The outcome for too high a proportion of students at traditional schools is boredom, frustration, a sense of being of no value, rebellion, anti-social behaviour. The main effective function of much schooling has been the control of children while their parents work, (so described by Graham Nutthall , recently retired Professor of Education at Canterbury University on National Radio in February 2004). Adults believe that disruptive class behaviour impedes the learning of the other students.

Yaacov Hecht, Director of the Democratic Institute of Education, Israel, who has conducted recent seminars in Christchurch, had with him the results of research showing that the incidence of violent behaviour in Israeli alternative schools is 85% less than its incidence in conventional classrooms and schools. The difference is attributed to the children's working on their individually chosen programmes. There are three schools in Christchurch which operate similar programmes and I would submit them as suitable subjects for similar research.

Darren Ross, director of Airform Int Ltd, Hornby, Christchurch, has developed a thriving business using sophisticated machinery to produce highly specialised plastics. He reports to me that the education base which he used in these developments came from his apprenticeship as a fitter and turner.

I endorse the enclosed page 'The Aims and Special Character of Tamariki School' (primary) of Woolston Christchurch. This school gives highest priorities to

- Free play which is children's work
- Emotional and social growth (necessary for learning)
- Cooperation
- The children making rules and resolving disputes (with some guidance)
- The children learning by following their own interests at their own pace
- A very high adult to child ratio (mostly less than 1 to 15)

A very important factor in the quality of Tamariki is the high personal quality of the individual teachers. They have considerable relationship with the parents, offering a great deal of support to them and their children, and this school functions as a genuine community. As such it makes great demands on its members, and staff in such schools require more support than is currently available.

When the children complete Tamariki schooling, they enjoy learning and know how to learn. They are generally valued by their secondary schools, particularly Hagley Community College and Unlimited. However many ex-pupils of Tamariki are disappointed with many of the practices of their secondary schools.

Christchurch is unique among New Zealand cities in that there are three schools Tamariki, Discovery and Unlimited, where students work individually at their own pace on work that interests them with supervision from tutors. They generate a great deal of interest from other parts of New Zealand and, in fact, world wide. Some schools are already trying similar new approaches on a small scale. This situation provides opportunity for research.

A group of people drawn mainly from the Christchurch community, and including parents, students, educators and others interested, is in the process of setting up an Incorporated Society called the Institute of Developmental Education Aotearoa, for the purpose of furthering such approaches, and initiating research. I consider it appropriate for the City Council in its push for a learning city to support such a body.

I have three further recommendations:

- That disruptive and truanting children at each school work in a separate class modelled on the work of Chrissie Piper in Kaikoura
- That secondary students, even quite young, be placed in apprentice style work, perhaps part time if they are not involving themselves in their conventional schooling. There would be learning 'on the job', and opportunities for appropriate 'off the job' learning. At any later date, when motivated, they could return to school education.
- That the apprenticeship system be re-established in an appropriate form and that the City Council itself use apprenticeships to train its workers.

Something different for different kids – Kaikoura style

In the mid 70's Kaikoura High School allowed a special class programme to be developed for a particular year of fourth form students. This programme allowed extended time access in school to a group style exploration of language/social /life skills. A careers exploration / work based experience component was vital to the programme.

These students (a group of 60) had been marked throughout their school life as hard to handle, obviously not thriving in the normal classroom situation.

As third formers half these students (the more academically successful) had been given a progressive situation where they were given extra time in the school day to extend a language/ social studies/ life skills programme. The other half had been behaviourally managed in two groups of 15.

For their fourth form year they were regrouped into three groups of 20 and each group spent a third of their day with the programme teacher. They were given the opportunity to explore who they were and what they were interested in and were given plenty of kinaesthetic opportunities and time outside the traditional classroom situation. There was a focus on diary keeping and goal setting and personal honesty and responsibility.

The students of this programme blossomed – many of them went on to achieve success in their School Certificate year and hold employment in Kaikoura today.

Nothing much really had to shift for this programme to happen – just the nod of the Principal to allow the different thinking, the support of the HODs of Social Studies and English to a couple of young inspired teachers to put into practice their creative ideas. Both teachers and students were strengthened by the experience.

Noted by Christine Piper, Teacher Motueka 2004

Our economy is based on practices that promote and improve health.

Mothering of Infants

Doctor Peter Cook, retired consultant child psychiatrist, formerly of Christchurch, but now of Sydney, has been campaigning for many years that mothers wishing to care personally for their infants should receive the same subsidies as would be paid to child day care centres for those infants if the mother returned to work. Many mothers would prefer to care for their own children, but are driven by economic pressures to work and leave their infants in day care.

A long-running reliable U.S. study of a thousand children has shown that although higher quality child care was associated with better cognitive performance at 4, the more time during these four years that these children had spent in any time of non-maternal child care, regardless of its quality, the more assertiveness, disobedience and aggression they showed with adults, both in kindergarten and at home. At school one year later they continued to be more aggressive and disobedient, not just assertive or independent. So non-maternal child care, whatever its quality, is associated with important risks.

I ask the Council to assist any moves that enable mothers to care personally for their infants, ideally throughout the first five years, but definitely for the first two and a half to three years.

Family Life

I support the concept that family incomes should be sufficient to enable all children to develop along the pathway to their full potential for contributing to a caring society, without sacrificing the well-being of either parent. Significant subsidies may be needed for larger families; some larger families are needed to maintain New Zealand as a nation.

Activity Groups

Many organizations, which function through volunteers, are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit help, e.g. sports clubs, youth organizations, caring groups. The cause seems to be that so many people have excessive work and personal commitments. Health is then at risk, both for the over-committed and from the reduction in youth activities. Council support for the management and coordination of voluntary activities is already appreciated.

The Goal of the Economy

This should be quality life, with satisfying personal activity, including a good balance between work and leisure.

Air Pollution

The economy of Christchurch has been threatened by new government restrictions on the production of new air pollutants.

I recommend that the Council pay close attention to the ongoing work of Roger Best for reducing the air pollution from open fires in ways that could save city electricity use by the equivalent of the intended output of Project Aqua.

I shall be happy to attend your hearings in June 04, if you wish me to enlarge upon my suggestions, and if you wish me to bring further papers from Dr. Peter Cook

R. Hunt.