

# CANADIAN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES: A DIGEST

This is the digest of a project undertaken for World Literacy of Canada from June 1975 to June 1976 to survey the Canadian literacy scene. Details of the full report of the project are given on the last page.

by Audrey M. Thomas

Contents

[The Problem](#)

[Characteristics of the Population](#)

[Existing Programs](#)

[Issues and Concerns](#)

[The Canadian Literacy Scene-- Retrospect and Prospect](#)

[The Adult Basic and Literacy Education Conference](#)

[The Full Report](#)

@ World Literacy of Canada  
692 Coxwell Avenue,  
TORONTO, Ontario  
M4C 386

July, 1976

## **PREFACE**

The idea for this digest came out of the Adult Basic and Literacy Education Conference held in Toronto from May 3-5, 1976. The conference was attended by 140 delegates with a variety of backgrounds from across Canada.

The conference was an integral part of a one-year project initiated by World Literacy of Canada, a non-governmental organization with 20 years of international experience. The major objectives of the project were as follows:

1. To identify and describe the adult population in need of literacy activities in Canada.
2. To identify and describe the literacy activities being undertaken by existing organizations, communities and individuals in Canada.
3. To share the findings of the project with interested organizations, government officials and individuals with a view to future literacy activity planning in Canada.

The two means for sharing the findings of the project were the report and the conference. The 180 page report was released and distributed to conference delegates on the second day of the conference and provided a basis for discussions and recommendations.

One of the many suggestions from several of the discussion groups was for a mini-report or digest in order to make the findings of the project more widely known in order to stimulate more consciousness-raising about the issues and concerns related to adult basic and literacy education in Canada.

The conference itself was a unique experience and was described by professional adult educators as an historic occasion. In deciding to publish this digest therefore, the decision was also made to include an additional section which would focus on the themes, issues and recommendations emanating from the conference.

Because of the enthusiasm and concerns of the conference delegates, and the many tasks to be accomplished, World Literacy of Canada has decided to continue its involvement in the Canadian literacy field in order to address itself to the expressed needs.

## THE PROBLEM

Canada ranks as one of the most prosperous countries in the world in terms of G.N.P., standard of living and average wages. This does not reflect, however, the reality of both micro-and macro-regional and cultural differences that exist within the country. Geographic, cultural, socio-economic and psycho-social factors acting either separately or combined have resulted in some sectors of Canada's adult population being deprived of educational opportunities. In our affluent, technologically advanced society, which has placed great emphasis on an education as the "open sesame" to a full and rewarding life, what level of education is needed to function competently? A corollary question, in the light of further technological advances and the knowledge explosion is--how valid is that level of education as a standard of functioning for the rest of the person's life?

Nearly 20 percent of adult Americans cannot really cope with every day skills. A further 34 percent are functional but not proficient.<sup>1</sup> How does Canada compare with the U.S.A.? The need for adult basic education was strongly brought home to Canadians in the mid-sixties when the results of the 1961 Census were analyzed.<sup>2</sup> At that time, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (now Statistics Canada) defined functional illiteracy as pertaining to less than five years of schooling--a definition it still maintains. However, in the late sixties, the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) defined functional illiteracy for Canada as pertaining to a grade 8 level of education or less. Since then, the CAAE has stated that "more than eight years of educational attainment is necessary for functional literacy in our technological society".<sup>3</sup> Literacy thus becomes a construct, the requirements of which change as society changes.

If the grade 4 and grade 8 levels of educational attainment are considered, two questions arise:

1. How great is the problem in Canada?
2. Has the situation improved over the last decade?

Table 1 indicates the answers to these questions and Table 2 gives the provincial situation for those adults with less than grade 9 schooling.

**Table1. Population 15 years and over not attending school, by education level, 1961, 1971**

Year	Total 15 yrs. and over	Less than Grade 5 <sup>a</sup>		Grades 5-8	
		Number	%	Number	%
1961	11,046,605	1,024,785	9.3	4,141,561	37.5
1971	13,168,020	937,440	7.1	3,961,905	30.1

<sup>a</sup> Includes those with no schooling.

**Table 2. Population 15 years and over not attending school, 1961, 1971.**

Region	1961			1971		
	Total 15 yrs. and over	Less than grade 9		Total 15 yrs. and over	Less than grade 9	
		Number	%		Number	%
Canada	11,046,605	5,166,346	46.8	13,168,020	4,899,350	37.2
Nfld.	241,345	140,472	58.2	280,870	137,470	48.9
P.E.I.	61,297	29,400	48.0	65,135	27,415	42.1
N.S.	438,467	184,990	42.2	470,080	166,985	35.5
N.B.	336,203	190,304	56.6	366,875	172,975	47.1
Quebec	3,117,580	1,721,401	55.2	3,679,045	1,732,390	47.1
Ontario	3,895,452	1,710,175	43.9	4,766,015	1,561,355	32.8
Manitoba	568,928	246,406	43.3	610,345	224,510	36.8
Sask.	553,625	275,673	49.8	557,555	228,765	41.0
Alberta	784,832	310,382	39.5	958,215	271,840	28.4
B.C.	1,026,989	345,566	33.6	1,385,400	363,560	26.2
Yukon	8,826	3,280	37.1	10,780	2,815	26.1
N.W.T.	13,061	8,297	63.5	17,705	9,275	52.4

In all instances, there has been a reduction in the percentage of adults with low educational attainment in the intercensal period 1961-1971, as well as a reduction in the absolute number for Canada as a whole. However, despite the decreased percentages, three areas exhibited an increase in their absolute numbers, namely Quebec, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories.

Despite the seeming improvements, we are still faced with the fact that 37 out of 100 persons have completed less than grade 9, and 7 out of the 37 have less than grade 5. It is a well known fact, that acquired skills atrophy with time, if they are not constantly used or called into frequent play. Thus, it is fairly safe to assume that the great majority of people are functioning at a grade or educational level lower than that actually achieved. The potential constituency for adult basic education programs therefore, is even larger than the statistics indicate.

## **DEFINITIONS**

The characteristics of the adult population in need of literacy activities had to be gleaned primarily from the 1971 Census. Although officially Statistics Canada recognizes less than grade 5 education as pertaining to functional illiteracy, its practice of releasing detailed data for those with elementary schooling (less than grade 9) actually favoured the CAAE definition of functional illiteracy. There are certain problems in equating functional illiteracy with level of schooling. Some of these difficulties are:

1. Level of schooling does not indicate the amount of learning that has actually taken place within an individual. Self-educated people with low levels of formal schooling are not isolated in the Census data.
2. In terms of functioning it is probably better to move towards some kind of measurement of task performance. There is a move towards this in the U.S.A.<sup>4</sup>
3. Many practitioners in adult basic education would be the first to acknowledge that some people with high school certificates are actually performing at lower grade levels.

4. The available published 1971 Census data does not reveal the numbers of people with no schooling, nor those who are completely illiterate.

To try to overcome the difficulties inherent in the definition the term chosen was literacy activities. This was defined as follows: Literacy activities may include those skills of communication (reading, writing, listening and speaking), computation, problem-solving and interpersonal relationships which are necessary for an adult to function in our present society.

In terms of focussing on operating literacy activities it was decided to include the following:

1. Organizations or individuals offering literacy activities to anyone 15 years and over who was not in attendance in the regular school system on a full-time basis.
2. Any courses, classes or activities being offered from the 0 to grade 8 level inclusive.

This meant that our definition of adult included in fact a teen or pre-adult group. However, as the age for compulsory education in most instances throughout Canada is 16 years, anyone leaving school in that time can become eligible for sponsorship in adult programs after reaching age 17. Two limitations were established:

1. The focus would be on Anglophone Canada, and

Classes in English for New Canadians or English as a second language would not be part of the study.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POPULATION

The target population was defined as the out-of-school population 15 years and over with less than grade 9 schooling and no other training in 1971. This totalled 4,574,130 persons or 34.7 percent of the total population 15 years and over not attending school full-time in 1971. There is thus an overall difference in Canada of 325,220 persons or 2.5 percent between the target population and those in the out-of-school population 15 years and over with less than grade 9 schooling who have some vocational training.

**Table 3. Population 15 years and over not attending school full-time 1971.**

Region	Total	Less than grade 9 - no other training	% regional total	% of Canadian total
Canada	13,168,020	4,574,130	34.74	100.01
Nfld.	280,870	134,600	47.92	2.94
P.E.I.	65,135	26,105	40.08	.57
Nova Scotia	470,080	158,700	33.76	3.47
N.B.	366,875	164,050	44.72	3.59
Quebec	3,679,045	1,624,370	44.15	35.51
Ontario	4,766,015	1,446,575	30.35	31.63
Manitoba	610,345	211,400	34.64	4.62
Sask.	557,555.	218,585	39.20	4.78
Alberta	958,215	249,830	26.07	5.46
B.C.	1,385,400	328,690	23.73	7.19
Yukon	10,780	2,525	23.42	.06
N.W.T.	17,705	8,700	49.14	.19

## GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Table 3 indicates the regional picture in Canada in relative and absolute terms. Absolutely, the province of Quebec has the highest numbers of the target population and 35.5 percent of the Canadian total. This is followed by Ontario with 31.6 percent of the Canadian total. The least numbers are in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. The four Western Provinces have 22.1 percent of the total while the Atlantic Provinces have 10.6 percent of the total.

However, since the authority for education in Canada has been invested in the provincial governments, it is the percentage of the target population within each province or territory which is most important in terms of any future planning for adult basic education and literacy activities.

SEX

**FIGURE 1 LESS THAN GRADE 9. NO OTHER TRAINING. BY SEX FOR THE PROVINCES**

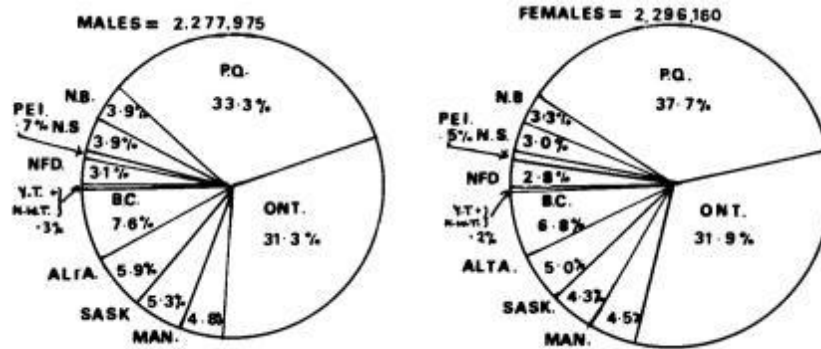


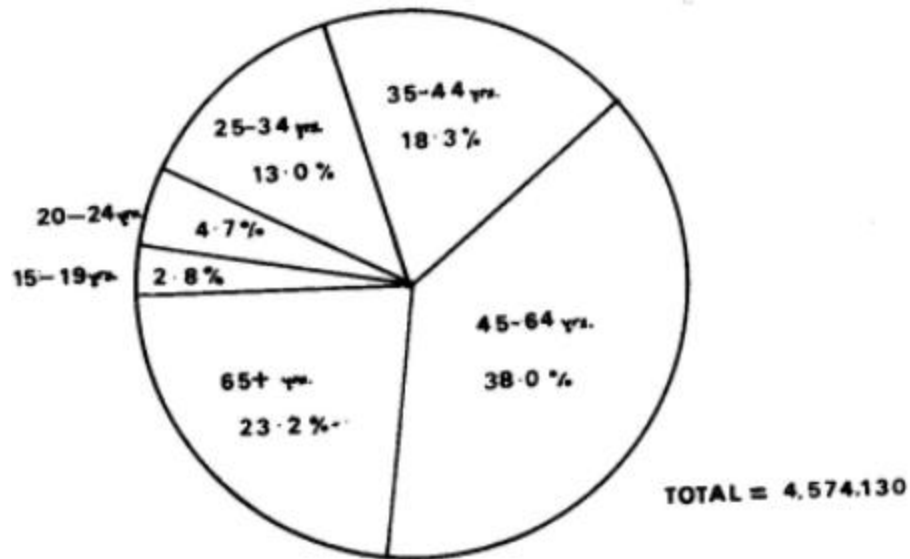
Figure 1 indicates that overall in Canada, there are slightly more females than males in the target population (2,296,160 females or 50.2 percent compared to 2,277,975 males and 49.8 percent). It is also interesting to note that, in all provinces except Quebec and Ontario, the male percentage is higher than the female.

Although absolutely there are slightly more females in the target population, relatively there are fewer women. That is, 34.2 percent of all women 15 years and over constitute the target population, compared with 35.4 percent of all the men.

Extremely high male target populations exist within Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Northwest Territories, Quebec and Saskatchewan (50.6, 48.8, 47.5, 47.3, 42.7 and 42.6 percents of the total adult population respectively). Extremely high female target populations exist within the Northwest Territories, Quebec, Newfoundland and New Brunswick (51.3, 45.6, 45.2 and 40.7 percents of the total adult population respectively).

## AGE

**FIGURE 2 POPULATION 15 YEARS AND OVER NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL FULL-TIME, WITH LESS THAN GRADE 9, NO OTHER TRAINING, BY AGE GROUP, 1971.**



It is obvious from Figure 2 that the largest age group is the 45-64 years group, followed by the 65 years and over, 35-44 years, 25-34 years, 20-24 years and 15-19 years group. In fact, 92.5 percent of the target population was over 25 years and 61.2 percent were over 45 years, in 1971.

Many people feel that the problem of the undereducated adult in Canada is non-existent or declining because Canada now has compulsory education and the older people who did not have the opportunities of education will not last forever. However, several points should be raised. Adult educators are dedicated to the principles of lifelong learning, recurrent education and continuing education. Moreover, there have been recent moves made towards Third Age Colleges, and courses for retirement, because of the realization of increased leisure time going along with the earlier retirements and increased longevity of Canada's older population. It is important then, for those intending to work with and to set up courses for older people, to realize how many of them do have low educational levels and the implications of these on their participation. Younger people taking their own education for granted, may be particularly unaware of this situation. For example, a university student who had worked with a group of senior citizens on an Opportunities For Youth Project in the summer of 1975 in mid-town Toronto told of her attempts to get the people to take some responsibility for chairing and handling their own meetings. She was faced with considerable reluctance, but could not understand this attitude. Gradually she realized that the reason for this reluctance was the fact that they were illiterate or had poor literacy skills and thus would not be able to take notes or send out announcements about meetings.

Sixty-one out of one hundred persons 65 years and over had less than grade 9 with no other training in 1971. At the other end of the age scale, it is disconcerting to notice that within the 15-19 years age group the percentage of the target population is relatively higher than within the next two age groups (20-24 years and 25-34 years). The percentages are 22.4 percent, 14 percent and 21.2 percent respectively relative to the total out of school population for the age groups.



The people in the 15-19 years group are the products of our modern educational system. In view of the permissiveness of much of today's education, the bewailing of universities and colleges about lack of standards of graduating high school students and increased drop-out rates, perhaps the figures should not surprise us. It will be interesting to follow the trend after the next Census. The lowest incidences of the target population within the age groups is found in the 20-24 years group. Are these the products of a better educational system or, did most of them assiduously attend night classes or take correspondence courses to complete their grades?

## **RESIDENCE**

Roughly seven out of ten of the target population live in urban areas, an additional two in rural areas, not including farms, and one on the farm. Above national average urban percentages are found in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia (77.8, 76.0 and 71.8 percents respectively). Prince Edward Island and the Northwest Territories have the least percentages of the target population in urban areas (27.7 and 30.0 percents respectively)

This is what could be expected. Of 22 Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA's) nine are in Ontario, three are in Quebec and two are in British Columbia. (See Table 4.) There are no CMA's in either Prince Edward Island or the Territories. Both of the latter regions are noted for their dispersed population patterns and it is not surprising that they rank high in the rural non-farm percentages. The other three Atlantic Provinces with only one modestly sized CMA apiece also have higher rural non-farm percentages than urban percentages. In the rest of Canada, Saskatchewan has the highest rural non-farm percentage. The target population here is likely to be living in small agricultural service centres. The highest rural farm percentages are of course to be found in Prince Edward Island ("the million acre farm") and the three Prairie Provinces ("the breadbasket of Canada"). Saskatchewan is the province with the highest percentage of its target population living on farms (28 percent).

## **ETHNIC GROUP**

Table 5 ranks the twelve groups recognized by the Census according to the highest percentage of the target population, relative to the total group population. The smallest ethnic group (the indigenous native population) has the highest rate, while the largest ethnic group (the British) has the second lowest rate. The dominance of the French group in absolute and relative terms is noteworthy.

## **BIRTHPLACE**

Roughly three out of four of the target population are Canadian-born. Very high Canadian-born percentages are found in Quebec and the Atlantic Region. Lowest Canadian-born percentages are found in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario. Even in Ontario, six out of ten of the target population are Canadian-born.

## **IMMIGRATION**

Nearly one-half of all immigrants in the target population came to Canada before 1946 and the statistics indicate an improved level of education among the immigrant population in more recent times.

## **LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION**

In terms of the total labour force<sup>5</sup>, 27 percent have less than .. grade 9. This percentage is below the national average of 37 percent for the out-of-school population 15 years and over

with less than grade 9 and thus points to a sizeable inequality in the employment field, to a lack of participation.<sup>6</sup>

Table 6 indicates the relationship between level of schooling and labour force participation.

**Table 4. Census Metropolitan Areas ranked according to highest percentage of population 15 years and over not attending school full-time with less than grade 9 no other training 1971**

Rank C.M.A.	Total pop. 15 yrs. + n.a.s. full-time	Less than grade 9, no other training	%	% Male	% Female
1 Montreal	1,757,830	676,220	38.5	44.1	55.9
2 Chicoutimi-Jonquière	72,775	27,945	38.4	44.2	55.8
3 Quebec	299,145	109,350	36.6	41.7	58.3
4 Thunday Bay	68,470	24,225	35.4	51.9	48.1
5 Sudbury	88,115	30,615	34.7	53.3	46.7
6 St-John's	76,070	24,875	32.7	49.6	50.4
7 Saint John	64,965	21,065	32.4	53.0	47.0
8 St.Catharines-Niagara	186,285	60,345	32.4	47.5	52.5
9 Windsor, Ontario	157,685	48,675	30.9	47.5	52.5
10 Kitchener	139,305	42,120	30.2	46.4	53.6
11 Hamilton	309,990	90125	29.1	46.9	53.1
12 Toronto	1,688,240	450,555	26.7	46.6	53.4
13 Winnipeg	344,260	90,745	26.4	46.2	53.8
14 Saskatoon	75,765	19,830	26.2	48.5	51.5
15 Regina	85,025	21,585	25.04	48.6	51.4
16 Ottawa	362,365	86,410	23.8	45.2	54.8
Quebec part	86,040	32,610	37.9	46.2	54.8
Ontario part	276,320	53,800	19.5	44.6	55.4
17 London	178,120	41,970	23.6	47.8	52.2
18 Halifax	133,665	30,220	22.6	51.0	49.0
19 Edmonton	293,390	62,100	21.2	50.4	49.6
20 Vancouver	711,180	149,615	21.0	49.6	50.4
21 Victoria	130,915	23,835	18.2	46.3	53.7
22 Calgary	240,210	41,515	17.2	50.6	49.4

**Table 5. Percentage of total Canadian population 15 years and over not attending school full-time by ethnic groups, 1971 and ranked according to the highest percentage with less than grade 9, no other training.**

Rank	Ethnic Group	Total	Less than grade 9, no other training	Percent
1	Indian& Eskimo (12) <sup>a</sup>	148,585	98,935	66.6
2	Italian (5)	434,930	270,320	62.2
3	French (2)	3,689,690	1,685,585	45.7
4	Ukrainian (6)	381,380	159,665	41.9
5	Polish (9)	207,685	83,600	40.3
6	Other & Unknown (4)	701,585	277,395	39.5
7	German (3)	824,725	272,700	33.1
8	Netherlands (8)	237,515	71,740	30.2
9	Asian groups (11)	171,150	48,715	28.5
10	Scandinavian (7)	249,870	67,395	27.0
11	British Isles (1)	1,491,830	1,491,830	25.2
12	Jewish (10)	46,245	46,245	23.6

<sup>a</sup> The number in brackets indicates the rank of the ethnic group in terms of the total numbers of people 15 years and over not attending school full-time.

**Table 6. Labour force participation in the Canadian population 15 years and over, 1971.**

	Total Labour Force	Participation rate	Less than grade 5 Labour Force	Participation rate	Grades 5-8 Labour Force	Participation rate
Total	8,813,340	58.0	330,070	34.3	2,071,425	50.3
Male	5,760,245	76.3	244,890	48.1	1,526,495	72.6
Female	3,053,100	39.9	85,180	18.8	544,890	27.1

It can easily be seen that those with lower educational levels are below the national average of 58 percent. Only one out of three persons with less than grade 5 schooling is participating in the labour force and one out of two with schooling between grades 5 and 8. If the two groups are combined, the participation rate of those with less than grade 9 is 47.3 percent--over ten percent lower than the national average.

## **UNEMPLOYMENT** <sup>7</sup>

Unemployment rates for those with less than grade 9 were only .2 percentage points higher than the national average (8.1 percent vis à vis 7.9 percent). It would seem then that it is the lack of participation, rather than unemployment as such, that is the crucial issue which has to be faced.

## **LABOUR FORCE BY INDUSTRY**

The data reveals that those males with less than grade 9 schooling are engaged in the primary resource industries in high numbers relative to the population. as a whole. The construction industry also employs a high percentage of those with less than grade 9. The lowest percentages for men are found in the administrative business, and service sectors of industry.

High percentages of females with less than grade 9 are found in agriculture, fishing and trapping and manufacturing. Low percentages are found in the traditionally male industries construction, transportation, mines, public administration and defence and the business sector (finance, insurance and real estate). Only in one industry is the percentage of women with less than grade 9 higher than that of men with less than grade 9. This occurs in manufacturing. Assembly line labour is usually made up of women except in the heaviest industries. Many light industries are female-intensive regarding labour, for example, food and garment industries. However, in terms of overall numbers most women are actually employed in the service industries while most men are employed in manufacturing.

## **SUMMARY PROFILE**

The "typical male" Canadian with no more than 8 years of schooling in 1971, could be described as follows. He was probably in his fifties, Canadian-born and lived in a centre of 1,000 people or over in Ontario if he were English-speaking, in Quebec if he were French-speaking. He was likely married to someone with similar schooling, had three children and was probably employed in a manufacturing industry where he earned \$5,500 a year. (This was the poverty line for a family of five in 1971.) A similar description would fit the "typical female", with the major exception that she was not a member of the labour force.

## **EXISTING PROGRAMS**

### **DEPARTMENT OF MANPOWER AND IMMIGRATION**

Since the 1960's the Federal government has been the provider of the largest adult basic education (ABE) program in Canada. Agreements have been worked out whereby the Federal government finances the training programs and the provinces provide the facilities and resources necessary for implementation of the programs.

Essentially there are two major ABE programs currently operating under Manpower auspices. These are Basic Training for Skill Development (BTSD) and Basic Job Readiness Training (BJRT). In the 1974-75 fiscal year 50,568 people were enrolled in BTSD.<sup>8</sup> However, this program covers all grades from 0 to grade 12 and the majority of people are in the upper grades. Many facilities in Canada do not offer academic upgrading below the grade 5 level. The reasons for this are related to the fact that the Federal government did not intend to usurp the provincial authority for education thus, time allowances of 52 weeks were established. Also, the thrust of the academic upgrading is to enable the client to become ultimately employable in the labour market. People who are accepted into Manpower programs therefore usually have a career goal and are taking the upgrading in order to qualify for skill entry courses or direct transition to the labour force.

The time allowance and other restrictions effectively exclude many people needing help with literacy skills. Older people and housewives who may not want to work but yet want to improve their basic education are not generally accepted into Manpower programs.

What other programs exist?

## **CORRECTIONS**

The shift away from revenge and punitive justice and towards rehabilitation in the correctional system in general over the years has seen the introduction of education as part of the rehabilitation process. Literature put out in the late sixties by the Canadian Penitentiary Service revealed that the average academic levels of inmates in Federal Institutions was approximately grade 6, and a brochure indicated that seven out of ten inmates had not

progressed beyond grade 8. Poor school records, bad school experiences and delinquency are part of many inmates' backgrounds, hence low educational levels are not surprising.

Educational opportunities for academic upgrading are available within most correctional institutions. Where they are not provided it is usually because of antiquated conditions and a rapid turnover of small numbers of inmates. Prison schools are generally characterized by small numbers of classes and staff. Ratios vary from 1:8 to 1:15.

In terms of basic literacy training rather than the broader field of academic upgrading, very few programs have indicated the difficulties of trying to raise the level of a completely illiterate person to a satisfactory grade level under the given time constraints. Perhaps more institutions could consider the each-one-teach-one method espoused by Dr. Frank Laubach and which has been used successfully in Guelph in Ontario where inmates have been trained by volunteers from the Hamilton area to teach each other.

## **OTHER GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

Various departments of social services run work activity projects on a cost-sharing basis between the three levels of government. These projects are designed for welfare recipients and as well as the work activity, some have an academic upgrading component. Some of these projects have now been handed over to Manpower and become BJRT programs, others coexist with BJRT.

Other government departments in urban southern Canada are generally involved in adult basic education through sponsoring clients or perhaps in sponsoring night classes; the Federal Departments of India Affairs, Regional Economic Expansion and Unemployment Insurance Commission are examples. Some provincial Departments of Education run correspondence course below the grade 8 level.

## **SCHOOL BOARDS**

School boards are involved in adult basic education in both the traditional and non-traditional ways. The traditional way here is taken as being the provision of night classes once or twice a week for a two to three hour period when adults can come and upgrade their academic levels in the regular school setting. Such night classes still exist.

The less traditional ways include adult day schools carried on either on a full or part-time basis in a school or community setting, and co-operative ventures where the school board has worked with other organization, social agencies and/or volunteers to produce and deliver a program which caters to the needs of the local population.

In 1969, an adult day school began as a Metropolitan Toronto Department of Social Services volunteer project. The aim was to try to fill the gap that existed between lack of education and employment opportunities for those people who were ineligible for Manpower sponsorship and entry into upgrading programs in the local community college and to serve the educational needs of special clients who were not accepted elsewhere. The school, situated in the basement of an emergency family shelter in downtown Toronto, became a viable project. The adult student population increased mainly by word of mouth rather than any advertizing. The Toronto Board of Education assumed financial responsibility for teachers' salaries and school supplies. The Metropolitan Department of Social Services provides the coordinator's and counsellors' salaries as well as the physical facilities and public transit fares for the students.

This co-operative venture has worked well<sup>9</sup>, and has been replicated many times throughout Toronto. The North York Board of Education (a northern borough of Metropolitan Toronto) now has four community settings where adults are taught during the day. The settings are, the basement of a library, a school building which has been leased to an Italian cultural organization - C.O.S.T.I.- for its programs, an Ontario Housing (rent-subsidy) building and a 'Y'. When Fred Ryan, the coordinator of the original Toronto adult school, discovered several students spent about two hours on public transit every day just to get to the school from their dwellings in Scarborough (the easternmost borough of Metropolitan Toronto), he decided to seek a Scarborough location. A library setting was chosen and the Metropolitan Toronto Separate School Board provided a teacher. After a few weeks, as word spread of this local venture, the class became too large for the library facility and had to move to a larger location--a mission hall. Additional staff were hired.

These projects start small, have an open atmosphere, are situated in community settings rather than schools, are free, use volunteer help when the need is indicated, and provide the necessary car or bus tokens for the student to attend class. They operate on a revolving door policy, students can reenter if they have temporarily left the program. The one in downtown Toronto operates on a full-time, full year basis, some of the others just on a part time basis -- e.g. mornings only. For students who have had bad school experiences the more relaxed community setting is an important factor in motivating them to improve themselves. School boards willing to do something for the adult illiterate and semi-literate person should bear in mind the importance of the setting and its psychological effects on the potential students. An integrated approach using the combined resources of the community has a greater chance of success than a school board working on its own.

## **LIBRARIES**

Libraries were mentioned as settings for holding adult basic education classes. What could be a more natural place for introducing someone to books and the pleasures which can be gained from reading?

In addition to offering their facilities, some libraries hold their own programs e.g. Regina Public Library, Parliament Street Library in Toronto. The former utilizes library assistants in teaching the adults. The latter utilizes volunteers.

It is realized that not all libraries have the space facilities for actually holding classes, but there are many other ways in which they could help the illiterate and functionally illiterate adult.

## **LITERACY COUNCILS**

Volunteers are used in literacy education in many settings as tutors. However, there are organizations which are completely run and "staffed" by volunteers offering literacy training. These are known as literacy councils. The literacy councils are affiliated with the National Affiliation for Literacy Advance (NALA), a membership organization of Laubach Literacy Inc. which has its headquarters in Syracuse, New York. The method used is that pioneered by Dr. Frank Laubach in the 1930's and which has since spread to 103 countries and 312 languages. It is based on the motto "Each one teach one". The set of books used are called "The New Streamlined English Series" and are published by New Readers Press, another division of Laubach Literacy Inc.

NALA offers a variety of services to volunteer literacy projects including training and certifying volunteer tutors in the Laubach method, providing guidance for setting up and administering volunteer literacy councils, providing guidance in English as a second language to undereducated adults, and so on.

The first literacy projects to use the Laubach method in Canada were initiated in 1970 in New Germany, Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia. Other councils or groups of tutors have existed or are existing in Truro, Liverpool, Antigonish, Stellarton, Guysborough and Cape Breton, according to sources in Halifax. Prince Edward Island have a group of tutors trained in the Laubach method and some training has recently been done in Saint John, New Brunswick.

Two of the active councils are located in large urban areas, namely Halifax and Hamilton. As volunteer tutor and student arrange their own time and place of meeting either their own homes, or a mutually acceptable alternative (library, cultural centre or church hall etc.). it could be that this type of organization is best suited to an urban setting where there are larger numbers of people requiring literacy training and larger numbers of potential volunteers. In addition, accessibility is less of a problem than in rural areas. In the Fall of 1975 Hamilton had 123 students receiving tutoring and Halifax had 80.

## **LITERACY VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA**

Another organization with its headquarters in Syracuse is Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc. (LVA). It has trained volunteer tutors in workshops since 1962 and produces among other materials, three pieces of literature --TUTOR, a handbook with step-by-step instructions for teaching basic reading; READ, a tool for determining how well a student can read and LEADER, a handbook for organizing, planning and directing a local tutorial program. Some Canadian volunteer programs have been trained by LVA and used their materials very successfully.

## **FRONTIER COLLEGE**

Frontier College is not an ordinary college. Except for its headquarters, (a converted house in mid-town Toronto), it has no campus or formal classrooms. Pre-structured courses are not offered, nor does it grant degrees, yet Frontier College has played a vital role in the development of Canada's human resources.

Founded in 1899 by Mr. Alfred Fitzpatrick of Pictou, Nova Scotia, the College began to combat the problems of illiteracy especially among immigrants in the logging and railroad camps in the north. Frontier College has committed itself to the belief "that education is the root of development and that it can only happen successfully between friends and equals" <sup>10</sup>

For 76 years, Frontier has sent about 100 young Canadians each year into mining towns, construction sites, fishing villages logging operations and railway crews in remote parts of Canada. Field-workers are called labourer-teachers and take on labouring jobs during the day, and, on a voluntary basis in their spare time, initiate adult basic education activities. The success of these activities depends on the rapport established between fellow-workers and the labourer-teachers. Education activities include not only training in communications skills, but also recreation and leisure time activities, setting up of library services and audio-visual programs and counselling.

## **OTHER PROGRAMS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Some individuals, concerned about "problem" students and drop-outs from the regular school system have initiated their own programs which have subsequently been expanded to include adults of low educational levels when the need was made apparent. Two such programs

include the Reading Clinics operated by Charles Craig in Orillia and district and the Radius Tutoring Project in Saskatoon. Both programs operate on a fee-for-service basis.

## **SHELTERED WORKSHOPS**

A number of agencies and people are involved in providing basic education skills in a sheltered workshop setting. Workshop settings can cater to one special client group, for example those with cerebral palsy, or those who are acutely mentally retarded, to clients with a wide variety of handicaps--mental, emotional and physical. These programs may be provided by provincial organizations, local initiative or concerned individuals.

## **SUMMARY**

Obviously, there is no one approach to helping adults of low education attainment improve their capabilities. Some approaches work better in some settings than others, some have been derived to meet gaps in conventional delivery systems, others to respond to particular geographic needs and social conditions. Some have succeeded because of the initial insight and hard work by a few individuals conscious of the needs and problems, other have succeeded because of the collective co-operation and efforts of many.

Be all this as it may, we are still faced with the fact that the Department of Manpower dominates adult basic education in Canada, yet the paradox is that in terms of basic literacy, local Manpower Centres generally do not refer people needing this kind of training, so alternatives have to be developed. In terms of the human resources required to support one illiterate person, the costs are so great that there have to be more efforts made towards using volunteers and towards using volunteers and towards increased interagency co-operation.

Cultural organizations, churches, industry and trade unions are some of the organizations involved in English as a second language training. Some unions are moving towards introduction of workshops on metrication. The capability and will is there to help the immigrant and the normal anglophone in Canada adjust to their present social and/or working environment. Could not these people, if the dimensions of the problem were made more clear to them, also assist the native-born English-speaking illiterate and functionally illiterate adult by providing literacy activities to cater to their needs?

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROGRAMS**

1. Recency.--Most of the existing programs have originated over the last 10 years and particularly since 1970. There is thus, an increasing awareness of those adults in need of literacy skills and basic education in Canadian society.
2. Source of origin.--Within educational institutions, ABE programs have usually been offered as a result of government initiatives and directives. However, the stimulus for most of the programs has come from social agency referrals coupled with the efforts of socially conscious individuals who saw an unfulfilled need and decided to do something about it.
3. Student referral.--It is not surprising therefore, to learn that most students come into the programs via social agencies and counsellors. Another important source of information and referral is the students themselves. Word-of-mouth among students, their friends and families provides further potential learners.
4. Waiting lists.--Many programs indicated that they had waiting lists.



Age of students.--The age range of students in the programs visited was from 14 years to 78 years, thus underlining a tenet of adult educators that people are capable of learning at any age. The average age, however tended to fall between 20 and 44 years. A tendency in the Manpower sponsored programs over the last few years, has been a lowering of the average age of students to the early twenties. The average age is higher in the non-Manpower programs. However, programs are in fact catering to the younger population, but it will be recalled that the Census data revealed the greatest potential need in the older population.

6. Locale.--Most of the programs operate in community settings, even those associated with community colleges. Buildings utilized include old warehouses, second floor walk-ups, church basements, abandoned schools, libraries, multi-cultural centres and, in the case of the one-to-one programs, the homes of either the tutor or the student.
7. Program content. -- There is some evidence that those programs relating content to the needs of the students are more successful than just academic upgrading per se. The introduction of life-skills into full-time adult basic education programs has been a important innovation.
8. Staff/student ratios.--In Manpower -sponsored programs it is rare to find ratios below 1:10. In some 10 literacy level BTSD classes, ratios as high as 1:17 are reported! This is far too high. Evidence suggests that an ideal ratio for a group setting is no more than 1:5. As much of the academic work is individualized and native born-Canadians in need of literacy training often have many attitudinal problems and psychological blocks to be overcome, small ratios are imperative. The success of the 1:1 tutoring programs attest to this fact and some institutional programs are beginning to use volunteers in supportive, tutoring roles.

## **THE INSTRUCTORS**

Of 23 Administrators interviewed most stressed that personal qualities were uppermost in selecting instructors. In many cases, of course, academic and teaching qualifications are required ,but personal qualities are the deciding factor.

Among the desirous qualities are: empathy, compassion, sensitivity, patience, commitment, maturity, independence, flexibility, creativity, social-consciousness, initiative, sense of humour, willingness to learn and involvement in one's own growth.

## **THE STUDENTS**

What prompts the students to become involved in classes and programs? Some answers were: "tired of being stupid"; "wanted a better job"; "wanted to learn more"; "I was like a blind person--I could not read"; "wanted to help my children with their homework".

What were some of the students doing before they entered the program? Many were in the labour force doing such jobs as cleaning, carwashing, driving, working in restaurants, or in hotels, or helping skilled workers such as welders. Many were on social assistance. Some included ex-inmates, parolees and probationers. Others were at home, "Going crazy watching TV and looking at four walls"! Many people just answered "nothing", thus tending to confirm the picture of withdrawn people with poor self- images.

These statements give some glimpses of the motivated minority. One cannot help but wonder about the thoughts and feelings of the silent "majority"!

## **REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN PROGRAMS**

In a land the size of Canada with distinctly different geographic regions, socio-economic backgrounds and twelve educational jurisdictions, there are of necessity, variations in approaches to providing ABE programs and literacy activities. Generally speaking, more people at the lowest educational levels participate in Manpower programs in Eastern Canada than in the West. Also in the East, programs such as BJRT tend to be longer than in the West and staff-student ratios are lower. The seasonal upgrading programs have been described as "disguised welfare". Geographic and economic factors obviously affect the training programs. One wonders, however, how much would be done or provided in the way of ABE and literacy activities without the Federal government's participation. Some alternatives have been identified but they are local, small efforts for the most part, the Laubach movement could be the possible exception.

In terms of numbers of alternative programs, more exist in Ontario than anywhere else in Anglophone Canada. This is partially due to decentralization of adult education in Ontario compared to the centralization in some other provinces.

Nova Scotia is a province where there is a happy mix of volunteer effort and government-supported programs. From the beginning of the Laubach tutoring programs, the provincial Department of Continuing Education has assumed responsibility for providing materials to both students and tutors as well as sponsorship of some tutor-training workshops. Despite this financial commitment the movement remains a voluntary one. Secondly, literacy classes held by some school boards also utilize volunteers to aid in tutoring. These programs are in addition to the usual Manpower-sponsored types.

For the future, one of the most exciting areas should be Saskatchewan. The introduction of community colleges into that province based on the philosophy of taking the programs to the people (as opposed to the more traditional educational pattern of bringing the people to the program) has tremendous possibilities for ABE and literacy. The decentralization and flexibility of the colleges allows for considerable variation in response to local educational needs.

Another aspect of adult basic education which varies throughout Canada is the preparation for and use of the G.E.D.<sup>11</sup> It is in use now in at least seven provinces and has implications for academic upgrading programs as to whether the emphasis should be on academic content and standards or whether the thrust should be more to concentrating on potentialities and competency. Some provinces actively prepare students for sitting these tests. They do provide some short-cuts to success but may shortchange students in the long run when particular skills are required.

## **ISSUES AND CONCERNS**

There has been minimal attention given to the problem of functional illiteracy in Canada. Many people working in the literacy field in this country have felt isolated and left alone to struggle through to the best of their capabilities. The desire to know what else was going on in Canada and in literacy generally has been strong. Indications have been received in the past that the greatest need for planning for the future of literacy work in Canada was in the area of assessment of the size of the problem and what was currently being undertaken to combat it. The project undertaken by World Literacy of Canada has made a beginning in this direction. Much still needs to be done.

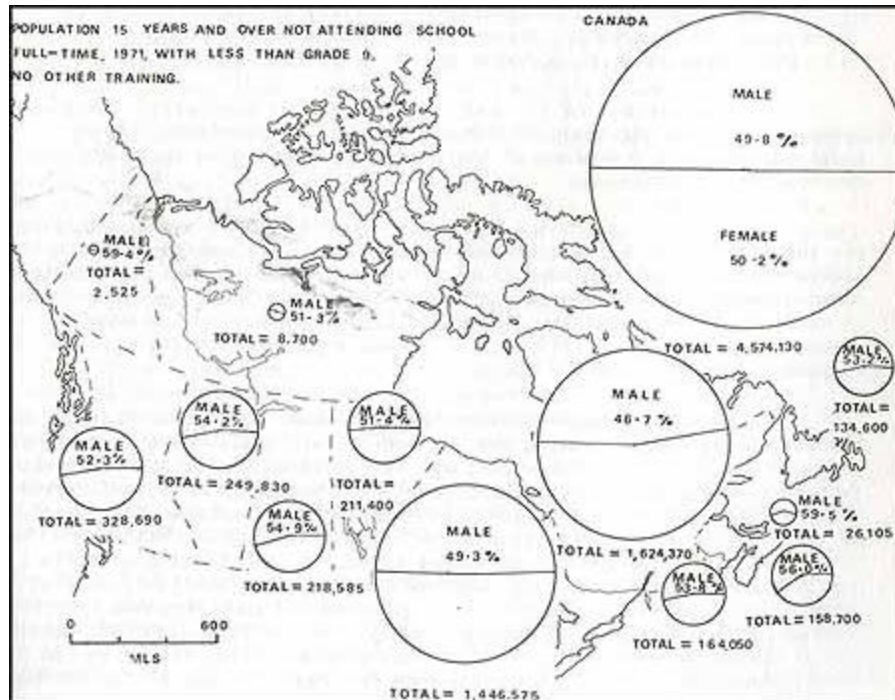
The current concerns of those working in the Canadian ABE field can be summarized as follows:

1. Functional literacy for all Canadians, regardless of sex, age, place of residence.

2. Elimination of the stigma and shame attached to illiteracy in our society.
3. Identification of those in need of literacy training.
4. A variety of 'outreach' and community activities to provide the necessary services and support.
5. Problems of funding and financing programs that are not federally or provincially supported. Problems of allocation of funds to ABE programs within larger educational institutions.
6. Improved networking and communication between those working in the field.
7. Development of programs which include and are sensitive to the whole person, rather than just catering to a narrow academic need.
8. The development of adult materials of high interest and low vocabulary with Canadian content.
9. More professional development and training opportunities for those engaged: in ABE, especially in the areas of human relations and interpersonal skills.
10. More realistic, lower ratios for those involved in ABE programs with students at the lowest levels. More volunteers and counselling support at this level.
11. The decline in school standards, which will put an extra burden on adult upgrading programs.
12. An increase in the visibility of and consciousness-raising about the whole problem.

Further areas for investigation and research could include:

1. The development of more suitable indicators or measures of functional literacy for the adult population than the level of schooling. . (In terms of incorporating any such measuring device into the Census for statistical purposes one has to plan NOW for the 1991 Census. .The questions for inclusion in the 1981 Census were all settled by the end of 1975.)
2. Documentation of literacy activities being undertaken in Francophone Canada.
3. The nature of literacy activities among the native peoples. There is a struggle to develop written forms of native tongues among some peoples. Then there are the special kinds of problems which are encountered in teaching one of the official languages to the indigenous population. How are these similar to or different from ESL classes for New Canadians?
4. Documentation of the concerns and the problems encountered with double illiteracy an increasing phenomenon among those involved with ESL classes.
5. The role of the media in reaching the target population, especially TV and radio.
6. The effects of functional illiteracy on a person's whole life and his own development. How does a person manage to get along? What particular needs are frustrated because of this handicap?
7. The effects of learning on an illiterate person. When one learns, one becomes involved in growth dynamics which can change the learner's living and social environment.
8. The role of the referral agencies and counsellors, who very often determine the fate of would-be students.
9. . The relationship between crime rates and illiteracy.



## THE CANADIAN LITERACY SCENE - RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

It has been seen that the typical Canadian in need of ABE according to the 1971 Census, is in his/her fifties; yet, in all the programs visited, it is the younger population that predominates, especially in the Manpower programs. In view of the latter's attitude towards training as a means to employment, and as the youth unemployment rate is high, in terms of budgets and priorities, the emphasis on youth can be understood, but does this mean that the older population has to be neglected? Is it their fault that they missed out on educational opportunities, or had bad school experiences, or that a particular learning disability or perceptual problem was not detected in elementary school? How can one help them to overcome the feeling of shame and stigma which are attached to not being able to read or write?

Thirty seven percent of the out-of-school adult population (over 15 years) have no more than elementary schooling. Seven percent or just under one million persons have no more than grade 4 schooling. We have seen that the situation has become a little better since 1961, statistically. We have also seen that more ABE programs and literacy activities have come into operation over the last seven years in a response to expressed needs. There are the beginnings of good delivery systems for adult basic education; do they 'go far enough'? Does everyone know that they exist? Can they be capitalized upon and better utilized? In times of financial restraint, there should be more moves towards increased information-sharing and co-operation to efficiently utilize existing facilities. Do we have the will to aid those who are disadvantaged or are we concerned only with token attempts to salve our consciences?

What percentage of the adults in the target population could be persuaded to take advantage of ABE and literacy activities if they realized they were not alone in their problem? How would we handle the demand, indeed, could we?

Costs of education are high at most times. They are even higher for the ABE student because of the necessity of lower ratios of students to staff. In addition, the support services that are needed can be costly in human terms as well as monetary ones. Essentially, in Canada, the population in need of literacy training is a remedial one, rather than a mass population who have had little or no exposure to literacy training and ABE, as is the case in the Third World.

It has been found from experience in other countries, that the best teachers in literacy training are the non-professionals. The each-one-teach-one approach and the use of volunteers as tutors in Canada has confirmed that housewives, students, retired people and people from many different walks of life can be used effectively in literacy training. Why cannot we more effectively capitalize and harness this source of human energy? Costs would be decreased. A volunteer tutor can help boost a person's confidence and morale and help improve their reading skills to a point where the student may eventually feel ready to continue learning in another situation - a study group, a night class at community college or school board, or by correspondence. Once people realize that they can learn, that they are not "dummies", they can begin to take charge of their own destinies.

Social agencies and public health nurses are perhaps among some of the best people to detect those who are illiterate. They can then hook into the local school board or community information center to find out what is available. It just takes some initiative and a willing desire to help. An example of how this can work was brought to the writer's attention. A public health nurse visiting an Ontario Housing unit, discovered a 26 year old sole support mother with three children who was not able to read the notes brought home from school by her grade 1 child. On inquiry, she learned of the local school board's literacy classes and made arrangements for the mother to attend. A babysitter had to be found. A local church group was contacted and a young person volunteered to sit. A local community college student, as part of a field assignment, came in once or twice a week to listen to the mother read. This case gives some idea of the processes and human support that are sometimes necessary to aid one person. Co-operation appears to be the key.

School boards should hook into the community resources. Many are concerned and willing to help, but must realize that the potential candidate has to be reached by means other than an advertisement in a brochure or pamphlet where the vital information is probably lost among a plethora of other course offerings. A concentrated publicity drive would be necessary, using all avenues and the media to utmost advantage. The NewStart experiences proved that many people did not know what services were available to them, and did not relate the fact that services were available, when they knew about them, to themselves. They had been detached from the mainstream of life for too long. A concerted publicity drive would help potential students realize that they were not alone with their problem, that reading could be fun, that help was available.

The limitations to the Manpower-supported programs exclude many people. Is Canada ready for a Right to Read program? There are the experiences of the U.S.A. and the U.K. to learn from. The U.S. started a Right to Read program in 1971 with the aim of eradicating illiteracy by 1980. The U.K. started a campaign in 1973 with the aim of substantially reducing illiteracy by 1985. The media approach used by the BBC could be adapted for North American tastes. At the same time, we could learn from the U.S. experience in relation to organization and administration, as in size and its federal system of states, it is more akin to Canada than the U.K.

A national campaign or directive from the federal government would help increase the visibility of the problem and do the necessary consciousness-raising. It would then be up to the individual provinces or some other non-governmental organizations to take up the challenge of implementation at the local level, with back-up support from the press, media, libraries, schools and community agencies. Canada's illiteracy rates are higher than those in the U.K. and the U.S.A. A Right to Read program for this country would represent a demanding but exciting challenge.

A word of explanation, lest some feel that Canada could not handle an over-educated population! Many people who desire to read, do so for quite simple objectives - to cook more imaginative meals for the family (by reading recipes hitherto ignored); to help their children with their homework; to read blueprints at work; to read for pleasure; to keep the farm accounts, etc.

ARE THESE OBJECTIVES TO REMAIN UNFULFILLED?

REFERENCE NOTES:

1. These were some of the headlines and figures quoted when the findings of the Adult Performance Level Study conducted by a team under Dr. Norvell Northcutt of the University of Texas were published in 1975. See for instance: Toronto Star, October 29, 1975 and The Kappan, January 1976, p. 355.
2. Edith Adamson, "Measuring the Need for Adult Basic Education," Continuous Learning, Vol. V, No.3 (May-June, 1966), 115-126.
3. Ian Morrison, Executive Director, CAAE, "Who's Literate?" Globe and Mail, March 11, 1975.
4. The Adult Performance Level Study has already been mentioned. See also: Thomas Sticht, Reading for Working: A Functional Literacy Anthology, (Alexandria, Virginia: Human Resources Organization, 1975
5. The labour force is derived by combining all non-inmates 15 years and over who, during the week prior to enumeration, worked for pay or profit or in unpaid family work, or looked for work, or had a job from which they were temporarily laid-off, or were absent because of illness, vacation, strike etc. Excluded are those whose only work activities were of a volunteer nature and housework in their own home. Also excluded are female farm workers who indicated they helped without pay on a family farm for less than 20 hours, and inmates of institutions.
6. participation rate for any area, group or category is normally the percentage the total labour force forms of the total population 15 years and over in the area, group or category.
7. The unemployment rate for any area, group or category is the percentage the unemployed labour force forms of the total labour force in the area, group or category. The unemployed consists of all non-inmates 15 years and over who, during the week prior to enumeration were not working, or were looking for work, or were on temporary layoff.
8. Training 75, Vol. No.2 (Fall, 1975), p. 45.
9. For a more detailed description of the project see Ethel Anderson and Elizabeth Woeller, "An Adult Basic Education Program in a Community Setting," Literacy Discussion, Vol. V, No.2 (Summer 1974), pp. 211-225.
10. From a hand-out 76 Years Old and Still Sweating on the Frontier, distributed at the 1976 Conference and Annual Meeting of Frontier College.
11. GED - General Educational Development Testing Program.

This is a testing program that originated in the U.S. Armed Forces to give adults a chance in obtaining a high school equivalency certificate. It is a ten hour exam which tests comprehension and ability in five subject areas.

# ADULT BASIC AND LITERACY EDUCATION CONFERENCE

MONDAY, MAY 3 to WEDNESDAY, MAY 5 1976

## Toronto

### CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

1. To increase the visibility of the nature and problem of functional illiteracy in Canada.
2. To share field experiences in adult basic education and literacy work from across Canada.
3. To increase the awareness of alternatives to conventional programs in Canada.
4. To consider the role of government organizations, such as the Department of Manpower and Immigration in the development of adult basic and literacy education.
5. To make Canadians more aware of international literacy issues and developments.
6. To discuss priorities for future planning of literacy activities in Canada.
7. To make specific recommendations for follow-up.

### **WORLD LITERACY OF CANADA WITH THE COOPERATION OF:**

Canadian Association for Adult Education

International Council for Adult Education

Department of Adult Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

The three day conference held at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education was attended by 140 delegates from across Canada. Those attending included government personnel, coordinators and instructors from institutional ABE programs, literacy volunteers, school board personnel and instructors, librarians, publishers, students, representatives of non-governmental organizations, academics and concerned lay persons.

#### In plenary sessions:

The major themes which dominated and recurred throughout the conference were:

1. The importance of the political decisions; the political will that is necessary to successful national literacy efforts.
2. The importance of cooperation among various levels of government and government departments and between government and NGO's and voluntary efforts.

3. The development of a good infrastructure of supporting services and supplies for literacy/ABE work.
4. That functional literacy is applied to problem-solving skills that a person needs to function in his society.
5. That although transferability may be limited, Canada can learn from the experience of other countries and select those aspects which are applicable to her own situation.
6. That basic skills include more than just mastery of print media.
7. Innovative work has been done in ABE in Canada, but there is a gap in the communications network. People in the field have been isolated and don't know what's going on.
8. Canada has a problem but has been slow to recognize it, or do much about it on a concerted scale.

Small group discussions:

These groups met each day after the major plenary sessions and were asked to focus on the issues and to come up with recommendations for the final plenary session.

It soon became apparent that the two issues of most concern on the Canadian scene were the need for a national communication network/organization to give leadership in Canadian ABE and literacy work; and the need for increased visibility and national consciousness-raising about Canadian ABE issues and problems. There was a strong feeling that any such organization should have a strong grass-roots component and that an NGO was best suited to this role. At the micro-level there was concern about instructional approaches and materials.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS RANK ORDERED**

1. That an umbrella organization be formed to develop and maintain a communications network for ABE and literacy work in Canada.
2. Two recommendations tied for second place viz:
  - a. That the grass-roots spirit and component of the conference be fostered and maintained in any national movement.
  - b. That there be increased national consciousness-raising around literacy issues and adult basic education.
3. That Canadian content ABE materials be developed.

A. Recommendations concerning activity of national organizations, (rank-ordered)

1. To provide information on literacy training, resources, programs, contacts, etc.
2. To coordinate literacy and ABE scene in Canada.
3. To develop a Newsletter on Canadian literacy and ABE.
4. To give aid in publicizing International Literacy Day--(September 8th).
5. To develop and hold national conferences.
6. To provide media statements.

B. Recommendations concerning national consciousness-raising, (rank-ordered)

1. That the Right to Read be reaffirmed and acted upon by educational authorities at all levels.
2. That literacy involves more than the 3Rs.
3. That there be heavy use of all media to reach the target group (potential students).
4. That lobby targets be identified to draw attention to the problems and issues (of literacy/AgE in Canada).



5. That a national literacy policy be accepted.
6. That other organizations and groups who would be affected by or could contribute to a national campaign be involved.
7. That attention be drawn to the "overcertification" demands of business and industry.
8. That a conference statement be developed akin to the Persepolis Declaration, but concentrating on the Canadian scene.
9. That other types of literacy (eg. visual literacy) be acknowledged.
10. That governments be alerted to the pending paper crisis.

c. Recommendations concerning instructional approaches , (rank-ordered)

1. That the humanistic approach be emphasized.
2. That the emphasis should be on competencies rather than grade levels.
3. That more Canadian content materials be developed.
4. That more emphasis should be placed on recurrent training in Manpower programs.
5. That there be more teacher training.
6. That graduates of literacy programs be involved.
7. That volunteers should be used wisely, not exploited.
8. That there be more work on all aspects of evaluation.
9. That the family unit be involved in programs.
10. That there be more research in ABE/literacy.

## EXCERPTS AND QUOTATIONS FROM SOME OF THE PLENARY SESSIONS

The human race finds it easier to perform advanced, technological feats such as putting a man on the moon, rather than solve the problems associated with illiteracy and provide adult basic education for the one third of the adult population in need of this in the world. **John Cairns**

### ***Adult Illiteracy: A Universal Challenge***

The Persepolis Conference in September 1975 was hailed by UNESCO as a turning point in the struggle for illiteracy...There was a fight of ideas. The problem of illiteracy became the basic issues in the world today--development, human relations, and social progress. It was realized that nobody can give lessons to anyone in this field. Solutions have to be endogenous ie. come from the people themselves in their own contexts.

For some time on the international scene, because of the difficulties of translating "functional" in the concept functional literacy, the term came to mean "work-oriented literacy" which limited the scope to a narrow economic endeavour. It has taken time to return to the concept of functional literacy as only applying to problem-solving skills and interpersonal relationships. The teaching of the three R's is no use if it is not geared to solving people's problems.

The conclusions of the conference were embodied in the Persepolis Declaration which was unanimously approved by the delegates. The Declaration is seen as being useful for revisions and new endeavours in literacy work, a turning point in literacy. At the same time, it will have no bearing whatsoever if it does not inspire grass-roots workers to get on with their work.

### ***Leon Bataille***

What the British Broadcasting Corporation is doing is to make it possible for the adults who need help to come forward. The BBC can attack the sense of embarrassment, shame, stigma and ignorance that are the barriers to people coming forward to learn. The sense of isolation and ignorance-- not knowing that others have similar problems is staggering.

Results to date --60,000 students have come forward in the first 7 months of the project. By extrapolation, 100,000 are expected to have come forward by the end of 1976, and 250,000 by the end of a three year period. 80,000 volunteers have come forward.

**David Hargreaves**

"The State of the Art" is looking at studies and documents relating to ABE and literacy at the macro-level and the micro-levels. The following useful pointers have emerged at the micro-level:

1. Teaching should be done in the mother tongue.
2. People can learn at any age.
3. Literacy teachers are often most effective when they are from the same socio-economic milieu as students.
4. Regarding motivation, the approach is one of finding ways to determine people's interests so they motivate themselves. The question of method becomes less important if people are motivated. Method becomes more important when intrinsic motivation is lacking.
5. Methods differ according to the language being taught, no one method is so distinctly superior that it should be used exclusively. **Budd L. Hall.**

**Factors which might be important in a good ABE program for Canada**

Factor	Current Rating	From where can we learn?
1. National commitment	fair/poor	USA & UK
2. Coherent and sustained organization of our efforts	fair/poor	Brazil and Tanzania
3. Linguistic development (language tools)	good/fair	Somalia, France & Germany
4. Appropriate instructional methods	good/fair	Ourselves
5. Supporting infrastructure and delivery system	good/fair	UK, Brazil, Appalachia, & USA
6. Social support of family and community of learning activities	fair/poor	India, USSR
7. Rewards/incentives and/or recognition of achievements	fair/poor	USSR
8. Assessment of progress	fair/poor	Brazil & Iran

Humbleness and humility should not lead to paralysis --not getting the job done.

**J. Roby Kidd**

. . . what we all need to learn some time in our lives, is a group of languages which are the keys to information and communication... They are roughly fours:

- reading and writing - the command of print which provides access to all those things which are exquisitely familiar. . .
- mathematics - . as close to a universal language as we have.
- music and oral speech - the language of human conversation, of radio, of domestic life, public speaking or oratory. . .
- visual. . . - the language of movement, film, television. . . . . Functional literacy, in my view, now means the liberation and extension of these languages as part of the ordinary talents of human beings. . . .

We have learned in the past twenty years that you cannot alter a society by concentrating exclusively on children. . . .

"Innis argued that societies were at their liveliest, freest and most exuberant when at least two dominant modes of communication were competing for total authority. I would suggest that this is precisely what is happening to us, and that it is a healthy and exciting opportunity to realize many of the goals for which we believe a concern for adult learning stands. We simply must have the imagination to respond to it."

**Alan M. Thomas**

## **ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES IN CANADA. 1975-76**

by Audrey M. Thomas

This is the full report of a one year project undertaken. for World Literacy of Canada to survey the nature and extent of functional illiteracy in Canada, with a focus on those activities currently being undertaken in Anglophone Canada.

Contents:

1. Introduction - background, extent of the problem - 1971 Census statistics compared with the 1961 Census statistics, scope of the project. 1
2. 1971 Census Data Analysis - twenty tables and six figures are presented showing national and provincial breakdowns of the "target population" for selected demographic and social characteristics. Capsule descriptions are provided for each characteristic and a profile of the "typical" adult in the target population is built up.
3. Methodology - the two phases of the project - in Ontario and the rest of Anglophone Canada are described.
4. Types of organizations currently involved in Canadian Adult Basic Education and literacy are described.
5. Findings from the interview schedules in Phase I are presented. Phase I covered 23 organizations involved in ABE and literacy in Ontario. Administrators, instructors and students of these programs were interviewed to gain as full a picture as possible of program operations.
6. Findings from Phase II include a summary of the delivery systems for ABE existing in all of the provinces, except Quebec, and a summary of a survey of Anglophone school boards.
7. The final section of the report presents a series of questions, issues and concerns arising from the whole project.

Selected bibliography and appendices with additional statistics are also included. pp. 180.

Price: \$5.00 postpaid per copy. \$4.00 per copy in bulks of 10. (In Canada & U.S.A.)  
International orders: \$10.00 postpaid air mail; \$7.00 postpaid surface mail.

Available from:  
World Literacy of Canada  
692 Coxwell Avenue,  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4C 3B6

**PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY ORDER.**

ISBN: 0-920180-01-9

Note: A French translation will be forthcoming.