

PARENTS, PARTNERS

Many segregationists within school systems cannot accept our principle that "the expert on a pupil is usually the parent". In fact, the way a person in the education system responds to that principle is often a good indication of that person's openness to integration. Many good teachers and administrators welcome the participation of parents, and other support personnel, in the overall educational enterprise. Other teachers and administrators say they fear a loss of control over the classroom. Or they seem to reject the idea that parents have anything useful to offer. These fears should be dealt with sympathetically because the successful education of a pupil with a mental handicap and, increasingly, of other pupils, *requires* parent-teacher-administrator cooperation.

We find these fears are based on emotion rather than fact, and there is plenty of experience to show that the fears are generally unfounded. One of the most heart-warming aspects of our efforts over the years was seeing some teachers who were afraid of "integration" become its strongest advocates once they tried it.

We feel teachers and administrators have developed their fears through incorrect information and attitudes taught by faculties of education. In many cases, we see the teachers and administrators as the victims of *their* education. We find that the faculties of education of all but a handful of our Canadian universities desperately cling to outdated segregationist ideology and concepts based on out-of-date research. They refuse to give teachers the training they need to enable them to provide an appropriate, integrated education for *all* pupils. We have come to the sad conclusion that most faculties of education are incompetent in this major area. On the other hand this means that we, as parents, should be prepared to help and support willing teachers and administrators who want to do the right thing but do not know how.