

Report on Annual Meeting**NATIONAL COUNCIL for the
CARE of CRIPPLES in S.A.**

by ANNA MATHIAS

Representative S.A.S.P. present at meeting

In May 1973, I was once again privileged to attend the Annual Congress of the National Council for the Care of Cripples in South Africa, as delegate of the South African Society of Physiotherapy.

The Congress was held in Kimberley, the hosts being the Northern Cape Society for the Care of Cripples, and from the moment of being met at the Airport by a row of members who took turns to do this duty, the whole week was spent in an atmosphere of warmth, friendship and interest in the many ramifications of common cause.

After the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council on Monday, the Congress delegates met and were entertained at a Civic Reception given by the Mayor and Mayoress of Kimberley. Professor du Toit recalled the first Meeting held in Kimberley, and the tremendous advances made since then, with the virtual elimination of polio and decrease in T.B.

As the Meeting of National Council was due to start on Tuesday afternoon, I spent the morning first visiting, at Dr. Guthrie's invitation, the Physiotherapy Department of the new Non-European Hospital in Kimberley. Miss De Smidt showed me around, and I was certainly impressed by the planning, space, equipment and programme.

I had arranged with Mrs. Klemp to visit the Elizabeth Conradie School, as I was particularly interested in their combination of therapy and physical education. Mrs. Klemp fetched me, and we took with us Mrs. Vona du Toit and Prof. Louis Solomon. At Elizabeth Conradie there are six physiotherapists and eleven physical education instructors. I think that this co-operation between the two disciplines is an area which should be fruitfully exploited; seeing the achievements of a team of handicapped children who had been trained by a physical education instructor, but had obviously initially needed more physiotherapy made me realise that this was yet another aspect of rehabilitation where we have to stretch out and reach out and co-operate. One was also impressed by the stress placed on the abilities of the child, after the maximum reduction of his disability.

The Meeting, the theme of which this year was "Sheltered Employment", was opened by the Chairman, Dr. Goedvolk, who, to the end, suavely steered proceedings.

Mr. J. J. Kruger from the Department of Social Welfare and Studies read the opening address on behalf of the Deputy Minister, the Hon. J. T. Kruger, who was unable to attend. The speaker outlined the facilities and trends in the employment of handicapped people, and said that he did not see the establishment of protected workshops as a State function but as a responsibility of the private sector, with State assistance; without undue reliance on legislation as far as the employment of the handicapped is concerned. He once again stressed the importance of co-operation and co-ordination in a field where several Government Departments and other bodies are concerned with the provision of services. A departmental working group has been established to investigate rehabilitation services which, to be effective, should start early.

In the discussion which followed the point was made that although rehabilitation starts when the patient enters the hospital, "rehabilitation" as such is not catered for by the Hospital Ordinance (Dr. Grové). There was a gap from after the first year in hospital to the time of going home which was nobody's responsibility.

Work assessment was carried out by Province, but this was also not their responsibility. Rehabilitation now fell under the Department of Health, with Dr. Schiller at the head.

Professor G. T. du Toit (Cripple Care) with representatives of the Department of Health and money-raising organisations and Dr. Grové, form a Committee who are concerned with the building of a Spinal Unit at Pretoria. Prof. Solomon pointed out that such a unit was needed for the Southern area, and Dr. Grové gave a broad hint that this would be established if accommodation was made available in Johannesburg.

The care of the patient during the period of hospitalisation and home-coming was the concern of the Quadruplegic Association of South Africa.

As a fervent believer in total rehabilitation, I found it very frustrating to listen to the fragmentation of services, and I feel that this matter should surely receive priority in attention.

Province was asked for help in "preparative surgery", i.e. the transplanting of joints and organs.

Dr. Sidney Sacks reported on the South African Rheumatism and Arthritis Association, which had in 1973 held a national congress, the theme of which was "Arthritis in Africa" and was attended by overseas experts and visitors from African States with assistance from National Council. The South African Association has been invited to become affiliated to the International League against Rheumatism and Arthritis. Dr. Sacks and Prof. Solomon have been invited to read papers at Congress at this League in Japan later this year.

Following this, representatives of Government Departments made statements on reports which had been submitted. Owing to pressure of time no reports were read in full, but representatives were invited to comment on particular aspects.

Director of Health Services in South West Africa submitted reports upon the development of orthopaedic services and other services provided by their departments which concern and are of benefit to cripples.

Mr. Louw from Cape Town reported on the Orthotics and Prosthetics Association of South Africa. The critical shortage of personnel is not restricted to this country but is worldwide, and to combat this, many of the component parts for orthoses and prostheses are now mass produced, and imported, which has led to a "very radical change in orthopaedic technical services". Note the change of name of the Association as well.

Both a Diploma and a Degree course will be offered to Orthotists and Prosthetists, and the present "Orthopaedic Workshops" will become known as "Prosthetic and Orthotic Departments".

The South African Society of Physiotherapy report, submitted by your delegate, aroused comment on post-graduate training. Dr. Burger of Cape Town commented that the University there was planning such courses, and Prof. Solomon announced that similar courses could be motivated for with confidence by the Physiotherapy Society by applying to the Chairman of the Special Health Services Committee. He mentioned the Course 'Ante and Post-Natal Care' which will be held at the University of the Witwatersrand next year.

Dr. Burger reported that the Diploma Course in Physiotherapy in Cape Town was being converted to a degree course next year.

I thanked National Council for the assistance given to therapists to attend post-graduate courses overseas.

Mr. Marden mentioned that the number of blind and partially sighted persons from the Republic accepted for training in physiotherapy in London was restricted and fewer vacancies were being allocated to the Republic. He enquired whether facilities for training these people could not be made available in the Republic; and I undertook to bring this matter to the attention of the Society.

Mrs. H. J. V. du Toit of the S.A. Association of Occupational Therapists mentioned that a refresher course for staff members of Cerebral Palsy School would be sponsored

by National Council and held in Pretoria in September, 1973.

The "Medical Fitness for Work Unit" of the H. F. Verwoerd Hospital was ready to come into full operation. This had grown from the original Work Assessment Unit. The new Unit would involve all other Allied Health Services and would have a full range of workshops in which to test the abilities and limitations of patients, to improve their abilities, work habits and work capacity to effect placement of patients after treatment.

Prof. Solomon stressed the need for funds for research, and suggested that such bursaries be made available. He was supported by Prof. Lower Allen of Cape Town.

Dr. Sidney Sacks reported on the Tissue Bank, which now had a worldwide reputation and even supplied overseas countries.

On Wednesday 22nd delegates visited Yonder Settlement, which is a training centre for ineducable children (I.Q. less than 50) from the age of five years upwards. I cannot but use the hackneyed words of dedication, devotion, achievement, but they are filled with truth.

All children live in small hostels as family units. I urge anyone concerned with the education of handicapped children to visit this centre.

From the humble settlement of little houses we went to inspect the palatial new Elizabeth Conradie School. While admiring the superb appointments and being awed by the vastness of it all, many people wondered whether it was good for children to, temporarily, become used to such luxury, and then to have to return to the lesser reality.

Mr. Craig spoke on the rehabilitation of the Cerebral Palsied and showed a film illustrating the results of surgery and therapy, in the treatment of the cerebral palsied. I commented on a film, "The Integration of Therapy and Education" at the Forest Town School for Cerebral Palsied children, which was very well received by the audience who were very interested in seeing "what physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy actually looked like".

Mr. J. G. le Roux, principal of Tlamelang School, showed

a series of slides depicting his hundred handicapped Bantu pupils, aged from 6 to 18 years. This School, sponsored by the Dutch Reformed Church, assisted by the Department of Bantu Education, sell hand-made articles which were exhibited. Their sales rose from R77 to R7 000 per annum in less than 5 years. Orthopaedic and therapeutic services are urgently needed. Prof. Solomon offered to help as did your delegate on our behalf.

Mr. A. J. van Wyk, Chief Production Officer in the Sheltered Employment Division of the Department of Labour, addressed the Council on the Scheme operated under the wing of that Department, and described the administration and control of this Scheme—anyone interested would want to read the whole talk, which is available.

Reports of sheltered employment projects of Cripple Care and Cerebral Palsy Bodies were then presented also from Rhodesia.

The report of the Northern Transvaal Cripple Care Association, followed by presentation of slides plus commentary given by Mr. J. A. Pienaar was an inspiration to all those faced with the handicapped school-leaver. The slide presentation is the best I have ever seen on the subject.

One really cannot mention every speaker or paper, and on the other hand one feels bound to acknowledge those marvellous people like Mrs. R. M. de Villiers of the Beaufort West Workshop, who started these ventures with little more than faith and a desire to help others less fortunate. Mrs. Webber, Free State, reported that they had been fortunate in getting the services of an excellent physiotherapist.

The film on Sheltered Workshops in Australia made us realise how very unsophisticated our services are by comparison. Mr. Parker gave a most informative paper on this subject.

The Meeting ended with the report of the Executive Committee.

I felt, at the end of this Meeting, that physiotherapy was alive and well in the minds of the participants.

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