

EDITORIAL

We are reaching the end of 1982 and it might be of interest to some of our readers to review some of the events of 1982 which have a bearing on the activities of the Australian Association of Special Education and on future directions for Special Education.

Stronger Ties with New Zealand

The immediate Past President of A.A.S.E., John Burge and I (as Editor), travelled to New Zealand early in 1982 to forge stronger links with New Zealand Special Educators. Supported by funding from the Australia – New Zealand Association, we were able to visit most larger centres. Besides being hosted with great kindness and consideration, we were impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment of our trans-Tasman colleagues. We distributed copies of the Australia-New Zealand Special Edition of this journal and discussed constitutions, future conferences etc. We sincerely hope that the various New Zealand groups will discuss with the A.A.S.E. Executive the development of stronger ties. This can only be a benefit to all of us, professionally, and to all handicapped in our two countries by creating a stronger, more informed, more committed advocacy association.

Western Australia hosts the 1982 Annual Conference of A.A.S.E.

After many years of strong attendance at other National Conferences of A.A.S.E., the W.A. Chapter had its chance to host a National Conference – and they did it in splendid style. The Conference Agenda was well-planned and well-balanced. Stephen Lilly offered a penetrating analysis of Special Education trends in North America and many other presentors stimulated and informed the many people who attended the sessions. The May, 1983 edition of this journal will feature many of the papers presented at this excellent conference.

Besides being an annual conference of great importance, the A.A.S.E.'s National Conference is the venue for the Annual Council Meetings of A.A.S.E. Election of Office Bearers, presentation of reports and plans for the ensuing year are part of the Council process. Paul Duerdoth was re-elected as National President and we look forward to his continued leadership of the Association.

To many members of A.A.S.E., the whole concept of a National Executive, Council and National Conference may be very remote and unimportant but the outcomes which attend such National-level activities are very important. It is essential that policy makers, parents, the handicapped themselves, see that Special Educators DO CARE and that they have strong views on, and interest in, matters which rise above local issues and classroom concerns. Obviously, your more immediate concerns must not be ignored but it is equally obvious that the Association's strength derives from strong membership support at branch, chapter and national level. Just as, in a time of economic gloom, many communities are promoting the concept of being 'Alive and Well' so we want to project a similar healthy image!

1983 and Special Education

It would be interesting to undertake some sort of futures research, like a Delphi, to see where Special Education is going. There have been some powerful events in recent years, like the Year of the Child, the Year of the Disabled, strong initiatives in the area of support personnel (Resource Teachers, SATs etc.), a growing interest in special curricula (e.g., prevocational preparation), deep debates over instructional emphases (e.g., direct instruction) and strong interest in educational provisions for those not previously catered for (e.g., the severely and profoundly retarded).

What can we expect of Special Education in 1983? I would point to a few areas represented in some of the papers in this journal.

...a deeper interest in changing community attitudes towards the handicapped and furthering the aims of I.Y.D.P. This will require continued work in mainstreaming, teacher education programs for regular teachers, changing the attitudes of specific groups, e.g., employers (see the paper by Haines and Davidson).

...the development of a stronger research thrust, perhaps based on individual case studies and clinical work rather than group studies. A worthwhile example is the case study on the Aphasic child by Jackson and Badenhop.

...the development and evaluation of service delivery models and curricula for the severely / profoundly mentally retarded. This work, initially, will be with younger retarded people but may extend to adults in workshop situations. The paper by Tom Bellamy in our last journal is a good example.

...greater emphasis on social and interaction skills for the handicapped. There is a regrettable lack of Australian research in the area of linguistic pragmatics, or, if you will, in discourse-in-interaction studies. The communication problems of the learning disabled, the lack of social skills in the emotionally / behaviourally disturbed, the need for better social and even grooming skills for the retarded, - all of these areas are worthy of examination and development.

...I would expect to see a greater emphasis on technology for the handicapped. The use of microcomputers, speech synthesisers, communication boards, graphics tablets, modified keyboards must have a strong place in Special Education and must have value in alleviating the isolation of many handicapped people.

1983 should be a strong year for all Special Educators. It is my fervent hope that this journal and the Australian Association of Special Education will contribute effectively and impressively to the continued professional development of Special Educators and to the broadening and enrichment of the lives of the handicapped children and adults to whom we are committed.

Jeff Bailey.