

## Editorial

As we go to press, the announcement of the appointment of an official committee to review special education in Ireland is a welcome development. A commission or committee on special education was recommended in the Report of the Primary Education Review Body. It was also strongly urged at the First National Conference of the Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education in June 1989 and in this journal (see "Acts, Commissions and Change", REACH 3,1 and "Time to Act", REACH 3,2). The Minister is to be congratulated on this action.

The committee will have the following terms of reference:

To report and make recommendations on the educational provision for children with special needs in respect of

- (a) the identification of children with special needs and their assessment with a view to determining the educational provision best suited to the needs of each child;
- (b) the arrangements which should be put in place in order to provide for the educational requirements of such children through complete or partial integration in ordinary schools, through special classes in ordinary schools or through special schools or other special arrangements, in accordance with the circumstances as assessed of each child;
- (c) the range of support services which may be required and in particular the future relationships between remedial teachers, visiting teachers, other support teachers and ordinary class teachers;
- (d) the linkages which should exist with other Departments of State and services provided under their aegis.

The composition of the committee, which is to be chaired by Declan Brennan, a former Secretary of the Department of Education, will consist of nominees from eight bodies and two named individuals. These are: the Department of Education; National Parents Council; INTO; Special Education Unit, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra; CPSMA; Church of Ireland National Schools Chairpersons' Association; Union of Voluntary Organisations for the Handicapped; Sr. Eileen Buckley; and Dr. Aine Hyland. While it is regretted that the request by IATSE to have formal representation was not acceded to, it is understood that the Association will have at



least three of its members serving on the committee. A formal submission, based on the proceedings of an Open Forum at the **Third Annual Conference**, will be made to the committee in due course.

The committee's brief is a broad one and this may be no bad thing. A concern would be that this committee would have sufficient time to explore its brief, to examine all aspects of a complex subject so that its final report might contain concrete yet creative proposals. Some questions can be raised at the outset: why is there no second level representation in the committee's composition? If integration is to be considered, this must be a vital dimension. Will the committee confine itself to the structures of special educational provision? A clear philosophical basis for future provision must not be ignored.

It is better to be optimistic. Change is in the air. Educators, from the classroom and beyond, will have the opportunity and responsibility to make considered contributions on behalf of the children of tomorrow.

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**Editor**