

**Need Is Great:**

# Marriage Counselling Centre Successful In Its First Year

By OLIVE DICKASON

The need for a marriage counselling service in Montreal has been well established during the past year, according to Mrs. Dorothy Barrier, director of the counselling centre of the Mental Hygiene Institute. Mrs. Barrier is the counselling bureau's second director; the first was Mrs. Gretta Andrews. The centre, which was the first in Canada and is still the only one in Montreal, was established last January.

"You would be surprised how many couples haven't got anyone to talk to," Mrs. Barrier said. "Every day people come to us who say they haven't got a soul they can confide in." Such social isolation, she added, is becoming more and more common as cities grow bigger and modern living becomes more complicated.

## Women First

It's usually the woman in the case who approaches the bureau about marital difficulties, Mrs. Barrier said. "It seems to be more socially acceptable for the woman in the case to seek help. Also, she usually has more time at her disposal. But once the effort has been made, the husband is usually quite co-operative about coming in to discuss things."

There has been conflict in marriage as long as there has been marriage, Mrs. Barrier continued. "The growing financial independence of women, today, however, seems to result in more open breaks than there used to be. However, neither divorce nor separation offer true solutions."

A marriage turns out happily not because it is without problems, the counsellor pointed out, but because the couple concerned is able to resolve them.

## Searching Relationship

"Marriage is the most searching and the most demanding of relationships," she observed. "A person can get along quite well in business or socially, yet fail completely in marriage. Sometimes this is due to false expectations or false ideals of romance; in other cases, it might simply be that the partners have not grown up properly emotionally, and are carrying their unfinished business into marriage."

It's a fundamental human need to make marriage work out, Mrs. Barrier said. However, the fact that a marriage is not turning out successfully does not necessarily mean that the individuals concerned are weak or deficient in any way; "in fact, sometimes the persons concerned are very strong individuals."

## Quarrelling

Most of the couples who come to the bureau do so because they can no longer speak to each other without quarrelling. They have lost the ability to communicate to each other, and "mutual confidence is of first importance in any marriage." Quarrelling, however, is often not as important as the couple concerned is inclined to think; a wife can be querulous in her manner without realizing the effect that it is having on her husband.

One of the most important things for couples to realize is their need for mutual emotion-

centage of success with couples who come for advice is high. "Usually their big need is to talk their problems over with an impartial third party. It helps them to get a different view of themselves. And no matter how they might talk, they seldom really want to break the marriage up."

The counselling centre has been so successful that plans are being considered to expand and to set it up independently of the Mental Hygiene Institute. It is non-denominational. Most of its clients come from above-average income brackets. The centre has a sliding fee scale, "as most people feel better if they pay a fee," but if that is impossible, the service is provided free.

al support, even in a quarrel. "Too often the husband or the wife freezes up, and that just makes things worse," Mrs. Barrier remarked. "There's bound to be problems, but the husband and the wife shouldn't withdraw from each other in working them out."

Mrs. Barrier said that the per-