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Giving and Receiving

The framework of social support for individuals and families.

Jean McCaughey

Occasional Paper — G.T. Sambell Memorial Trust — 1984



GIVING and RECEIVING

**The framework of social support for
individuals and families**

**The Fourth G.T. Sambell Memorial Oration
delivered by**

Jean McCaughey

on

9th December, 1984 at the

54th Foundation Festival of the
Brotherhood of St Laurence

G.T. Sambell Memorial Trust
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FOREWORD

In honour of Geoffrey Tremayne Sambell

Geoffrey Tremayne Sambell was born in Broadford, Victoria in 1914 and later attended Melbourne Boys High School. His leadership qualities were recognised when he was selected for the Lord Somers Camp, after which he played rugby with Powerhouse. This fostered his interest in young people and led him into a leadership role in the Church of England Boys Society.

During a short but promising business career he was involved with St Mark's Social Settlement during the 1930s. He was then called to the ministry and he entered Ridley College and was ordained in 1940. After serving a curacy at St John's East Malvern he served with great distinction as a Chaplain with the Australian Military Forces, both in the 57/60 and 2/11 battalions in New Guinea where he was mentioned in despatches. After the war he completed his B.A. at Melbourne University.

In 1947 he was appointed Director of the Melbourne Diocesan Centre, a co-ordinated multi-parish and chaplaincy venture based in the inner city. While in that position he was appointed as Archdeacon of Melbourne in 1961 when he became for a time the Director of Home Missions. In the midst of his Diocesan responsibilities, and his leadership of the Brotherhood of St Laurence he was also Warden of the Mission to Streets and Lanes, and involved in other welfare activities including the Victorian Council of Social Service. He was consecrated Bishop in St Paul's Cathedral Melbourne on 24th February 1962 and subsequently enthroned Archbishop of Perth in 1969. He died in December 1980 after an outstanding Episcopate in Western Australia and throughout the national church.

The G. T. Sambell Memorial Oration has been established by the Brotherhood of St Laurence to commemorate his work. His connection with the Brotherhood was longstanding and arose out of his deep social concern which had been the chief among the several forces which led him into full-time service of the church. He had great organising ability, recognised by Fr Tucker who invited him to join the Brotherhood in 1949. He was firstly involved as a member of the Board of Directors, then as Bursar, Director of Social Services and in 1956 Director and Deputy Chairman of the Board. Later in the 1960s he became Chairman of the Board, a post he retained until he moved to Perth.

Geoffrey Sambell was a big man, in body, mind and spirit. Long before he died (at the age of 66) his influence had been felt far and wide in the Anglican Communion and in the ecumenical movement beyond. He twice represented the Australian Church at the East Asia Christian Conference, and was the representative of South-East Asia on the Executive Officer's Advisory Committee of the Lambeth

Consultative Body. In Australia he was the dynamic Chairman of the General Synod Social Responsibilities Commission, which under his leadership spoke out for the national church on social question. He was respected and listened to by Government at both State and Federal levels, and in 1978 he was appointed Chairman of the Federal Government's Social Welfare Advisory Committee.

He was a forceful character who could, and sometimes did, ride roughshod over opposition, backing his judgment and knowing that he was right. But behind the bluff exterior he had the heart of a pastor who never spared himself for anyone, clergyman or layman, who needed his help. He had vision, but it was a very "down to earth" vision; he was a loyal Anglican but at the same time a wholehearted ecumenist; he was a missionary and a missionary, but spurned paternalism or ecclesiastical triumphalism; he was an ordained priest, but no one welcomed the rediscovered "priesthood" of the laity more than he did or had more friends amongst them.

Leader, pastor, organiser, financier - he was all these, but much more, a man of God.

December, 1981.

GIVING AND RECEIVING

The framework of social support for individuals and families.

*This paper makes use of two family research studies; one carried out at the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research in the seventies which resulted in the book **Who Cares?**; the other, more recently undertaken by the Institute of Family Studies on family support networks, which is nearing completion. Both studies depended on in-depth interviews in the home which explored the experience of each family, their relationships inside and outside the home, the problems they had had to face and their ways of coping with them, and the nature of help which they had given and received.*

"All happy families are alike but an unhappy family is unhappy after its own fashion." So Tolstoy began his novel **Anna Karenina**.

The "Aliveness" of Happy Families

But are all happy families alike? Clearly there are differences: some are poor, some are comfortably off, some are even rich! Their "aliveness" I would agree, depends on the quality of relationships within the family and between the family and the community in which it is placed.

The family is a place of commitment, based first on the commitment of husband and wife in marriage and extending to include the children who (in a happy family) respond by an appropriate commitment to their parents.

The commitment is, however, two dimensional: to the well being of the family itself, and to values and ideals which exist beyond the family. Without the latter, commitments inside the family could become a sophisticated form of selfishness. A happy family is one in which values and ideals are to some extent shared, in which a way of life is evolved; and that way can be summarised as the way of giving and receiving.

It is in the family that most of us learn to give and receive. Among the first words which children learn are "please" and "thank-you" - how to ask and how to receive. Children have to learn to share, and learn is the operative word as those who have brought up children will know. We are not givers by nature; we have to learn it, and if we do

not learn it as children it is even harder to do so later. In the family we learn to give and receive material things, and through that, we gain the most important experience of all - what it means to love and to be loved. We learn it by word of mouth, but even more by example, by being part of a family which is committed to that way of life.

Loving and being loved don't come naturally either. None of us self-centred men and women are very good at it, so we also have to learn how to give and receive forgiveness. In the family we are accepted as we are, not because we are clever or glamorous or amusing or influential but for ourselves. That is the real basis for self-esteem. We talk about home truths, implying that truths can be spoken and, even more difficult, heard in the family and the hurt which they may inflict on pride can be forgiven.

For this to take effect the family must be a place where love and discipline go together. The point has often been made that it is of paramount importance for children to learn within the family an ordered, considerate way of life. Many families however have become unhappy because it is assumed that authority to impose discipline belongs to the parents, the receiving of instruction to the children. In a happy family the parents will have recognised that to bring up children, to love and to care for them, is an exercise in self-discipline. Once children are begotten or conceived the life of the parents, both of them, will never be the same again; this is the great act of giving and receiving on which there is no going back.

The happy family has one more characteristic which must be mentioned: it is outgoing, it has a commitment to the society to which it belongs. Giving and receiving do not stop at the garden fence: they reach out into the world outside, and touch and are touched by the extended family, friends and neighbours and the local community.

These qualities of life combine to create a sense of security within the family which enables children to develop their own potential and grow into mature adults, and which also enables parents to face the limitations of old age without undue anxiety.

A recent Institute of Family Studies study by Helen Glazer based on a survey of almost 800 young married Australians aged between 18 and 34 (293 males and 495 females) found that more than 80 per cent believed that marriage means love, warmth and happiness and that the most important relationships are those in the home.

The Unhappy Family

Mindful of Tolstoy, I shall not attempt to define the "fashion" of familial unhappiness but only suggest some of the consequences. The unhappy family does not - often cannot - provide for its members, especially the children, the opportunity for warm and supportive

personal relationships. Some families are even destructive. Children learn not so much to give and receive but how to protect themselves, to distance themselves from the conflicts around them. One young woman whom we interviewed said -

"My parents used to argue all the time and when they started fighting my brother and I got scared. We used to hide until the row was over. We never talked about it to anybody, not even to each other. We just dreaded when it would start again."

Also destructive is the experience of poor relationships outside the family, the lack of the networks of family and friends which were such a strong support for the happier families. The unhappy families are usually the isolated ones.

One of the striking contrasts between these two types of families which emerged in both research studies was their ability to cope with problems. All families encounter problems. Some have the capacity to face them as they arise, to seek resolution for those which can be resolved and to find ways of adapting to those which cannot. This capacity depends to a large extent on the internal dynamics of the family and also on the support networks they can call upon and on their access to appropriate services. Unhappy families tended to ignore their problems until they reached crisis proportions. Often they had no one inside or outside the family with whom they could talk over their difficulties and they did not know about or did not care to use helping services. One respondent, a migrant woman, spoke for many when she said "There is no one who can help us, no one".

The following case studies illustrate, or rather embody, some of the things I have been trying to say, and lead into a fuller description of family support networks.

The Murphy family were comfortably off and lived in a fine Victorian house. Both parents were university graduates and were in professional occupations. The mother had stayed at home when the children were young but when the youngest child went to school she took up art-time work.

Like most families they had had problems, and theirs were difficult ones. One of the children was unhappy at school, had been a truant, had got into trouble with the police and, shortly before the interview, had been placed on probation. The marriage relationship was also going through a difficult period and was held together largely by commitment to the family.

The interviewer summed up the family as follows: "This is a family with strong moral traditions seen in their close ties with the church, the school and other community groups. The investment made in terms of ideals of family and home is striking. The family is impressive on several counts - its humour, warmth and sincerity. The members all have close relationships with friends and neighbours. The parents relate well to various institutions such as the school and the probation officer. The family is part of the church community and also of the wider local community. The many stress points are more than offset by the strong motivation of each member of the family to create a warm and free environment in the home, and the degree to which the church has so far been able to provide meaningful group membership and concrete assistance in the times of crisis."

The Tomson family lived in the same suburb but in a Housing Commission flat. Their social circumstances were very different but the quality of relationships had some "alikeeness".

Mrs Thomson had emigrated from Scotland in the fifties. Her husband was an unskilled worker. They had four children and even with her part-time earnings, the family was just on the poverty line. They had many problems to face: Mrs Thomson had had several periods of illness, they found it hard to manage on their income and one of the children had gone through a phase of wagging school. However, they had coped with all their problems and were managing well.

The interviewer described them as follows: "This family obviously draws extensively on a supportive family framework. Their life style shatters many community beliefs about lack of stimulus and of social opportunity for poor working class children and families as a whole. Whether from necessity or preference this family has opted out of the competitive materialism pervading our society and settled for the immediate enjoyment of family life found in games and outings. The family has developed a web of relationships both formal and informal with groups and institutions in the local community such as the local church, play groups, schools and even the outpatient clinic at the hospital. The mother is a woman of great drive and energy with a talent for leadership. To talk to her was an exhilarating experience of getting to know a family of spirit and character who managed to bring some of the homely folk-lore of Scotland to the uniformly stark environment of the

Housing Commission block."

A third case study is added to show that one parent families can also cope with very difficult circumstances and can still provide a happy and positive environment for children.

The Maxwell family had had the devastating experience of the long standing mental illness of the father. Two years before the interview he had been committed to a mental hospital. Mrs Maxwell had to go out to work to support her three children and had to cope with the stress of low income as well as her distress about her husband's illness. The interviewer described their story as "a chilling and tragic narrative". Yet, as a family, they were managing well. The interviewer summed up the family as follows: "Due to the support given by her local doctor and the Psychiatric Clinic, her own strength and resourcefulness and the help and support of her family, this woman has managed to emerge from this experience with greater awareness and compassion. She has avoided a retreat into the isolation which characterises many one-parent families. On the contrary, the fabric of the family's life is solidly interwoven with contact with relatives and friends as well as more formal membership of community groups."

On the other hand there were many unhappy families caught up in problems which they could neither resolve themselves nor find help to alleviate them.

Mrs Hill was 22 and had two children. She had had a disastrous marriage and now lived with her children in a Housing Commission flat. The interviewer described the family as follows: "This family of a mother and two young children is in an invidious and precarious economic, social and emotional position. They do not have enough money to live on, enough personal network of family and friends to support them or enough competence to deal with their problems. It is not surprising that the mother said "What's the use of going on?"

FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORKS

The survey of families carried out by the Institute of Family Studies gave ample evidence of the help which was given and received through the informal networks of extended family, friends and neighbours.

We asked about their sources of help in the following situations: setting up the first home; unemployment; illness in the family and

other family problems. In all these situations between a third and a half of the families had relied mainly on their informal networks and a further quarter to one third on a combination of informal help and formal services. Less than one in ten had relied only on services.

The Extended Family

Extended families were by far the most common source of help of wide ranging kinds. In unemployment they used their contacts to try to find jobs, gave encouragement to the family and often financial help as well. For example, a young couple with a baby became very depressed when the husband was unemployed for several months in spite of strenuous efforts to find work. He said -

"I was fed up sitting round the house with nothing to do and the wife was fed up with having no money. Then Mum lent us her car and Dad gave us 500 dollars and they told us to go and have a holiday. It gave us a real lift."

Young couples also received a great deal of help in setting up their first home. In the better off families, parents often gave or lent money for the deposit on a house, helped with larger items like refrigerators and washing machines, provided expertise on obtaining loans or mortgages and sometimes financial backing as well. The less affluent families who did not have a few thousand dollars to spare often helped by providing accommodation for a year or two while the young couple worked to save the deposit on a house or waited till their names came to the top of the Housing Commission waiting list. These families also provided much practical help with cleaning up old houses, renovating and decorating, and often providing basic furniture. One respondent described setting up house as follows:

We bought an old weatherboard house - it was all we could afford and it was in a shocking state. We had to do a big clean up. So my Mum and Jeff's Mum and my auntie all came and we scrubbed for two whole days. Then on Saturday the two Dads and my brother and uncle all helped us to move in. That night we had a big barbecue in the backyard and all the cousins came as well. Everybody was really pleased that we had our own home even though it was an old place.

It was interesting to observe that in the sixties and seventies when many of our respondents had been setting up home, home ownership was a goal which could be achieved by most young people, especially with support from their parents, either on the private market or

through the Housing Commission. Now, poor families have little chance of owning a home, and the most which parents can do to help is to pay the bond money on a rented flat.

The extended family also responded with valuable support in times of illness or when the mother was in hospital having a baby. Parents and married siblings often care for the children, cooked meals, helped with the house keeping and generally kept the household going. They also gave emotional support, sharing anxieties, providing a listening ear and sometimes a shoulder to cry on. Similarly family problems which could sometimes only be disclosed within the family were often shared. Sometimes just being able to talk about it made the problems more manageable.

Naturally these relationships were not without tensions even in closely-knit families. Sometimes young couples felt irked by the social pressures and expectations of relatives. Some mothers felt that mothers or mother-in-law interfered with their way of bringing up children, that parents offered too much unasked for advice. In general, however, the extended family was an invaluable resource giving everyday help with household tasks, looking after children to leave the mother free for a few hours to pursue an interest of her own or enjoy some social life, coming to the rescue in a crisis, and often providing the only financial and material help which families were prepared to ask for or accept.

Another important aspect of extended family networks was their availability. The fact that they were there and could always be relied on gave young families a sense of security even when they did not need to call upon them. As one young father said "We always knew that help was just at the other end of the telephone".

The following case study illustrates many of these points.

John and Christine married in their early twenties. John was a carpenter working in the building trade, Christine was a shop assistant. Before marriage John had bought a block of land on which they planned to build their home. In the meantime, they rented a small flat. Both worked hard taking all the overtime they could get. Christine's savings were set aside for furnishings. All went well for two years, they secured a loan and started to build. Then Christine became pregnant and soon had to give up her job. She was an asthmatic and had a difficult pregnancy. Then John became seriously ill with a chronic disease which required major surgery. Their situation changed drastically. Instead of having a good wage which enabled them to pay their way and continue to build, they were dependent on sickness benefit. The rent of the flat was more than half the benefit and they simply could not live on their income. As well

as money worries, they had the anxiety about John's illness and the uncertainty of their future, especially their house.

Christine's parents came to the rescue by suggesting they should move in with them until John was better and the baby was born, and they gratefully accepted the offer. We take up the story as Christine told it.

"It was a big effort getting our own home. After the operation John was still not in good health, but he worked all week at his job and built the house at weekends with Dad acting as labourer. Mum wouldn't take any money except a little bit for food. Every cent went into the house, including all my savings. We had no money for anything else but that didn't worry us too much. We had each other and it was such a relief when John began to get well again. The house was our aim. We had no social life except the church - we were too tired to socialise anyway.

Well, we did finish our house, but I don't know how we would have managed without Mum and Dad and being able to live with them for two years while we were building. We would have lost our house when John was ill - we couldn't have kept up the payments. Both lots of parents were very good when the baby was born. They provided all the equipment and gave me a lot of help. During the years when the children were young I had a lot of trouble with asthma and John's illness recurred and he had to have more surgery. All through that time, they gave us a lot of support with looking after the children and keeping the home going. The great thing was that we always knew they were there and would help us when we needed it.

Now life is much easier. John and I have better health and although we are not rich we don't have any money worries. But our parents still give a lot of help by looking after the children so that we can go out and enjoy some social life, and they are always happy to have the children to stay so that we can have a holiday together."

Although many other examples like this could be quoted, the study does not present an idealised picture of the family but rather brings out its ambiguities: its potential for love and support and also for neglect and destructiveness. Respondents who had grown up in deprived families were likely to repeat the pattern. One woman who had grown up in a poor and isolated family dependent on the father's invalid

pension, remembered that she was never allowed to bring friends home after school. There was no coming and going with neighbours and no relatives within reach. In fact she said she could not remember anyone outside the family being in the home except the doctor until her father's death when two neighbours came in to help her mother with the arrangements for the funeral.

She now had a family of her own and was equally isolated. Her first child was born with a severe handicap and when she came home from hospital her husband walked out. She said -

"It was all too much. I couldn't cope, I just fell apart. There was no one to help me - I never talk to the neighbours about anything, I just mind my own business and let them mind theirs. The only help I could think of was the doctor and he referred me to a psychiatrist".

Another family from the **Who Cares?** study illustrates the extremities which destructiveness can reach. The interviewer writes:

The family has become the focus for all the despair, frustration and violence which has characterised their relationships with the community. The impression was one of almost total anarchy. Their destructiveness towards each other is seen in the incestuous relationship between two of the adolescent children and the physical abuse of one of the younger children. Personal fulfilment is at a minimum. The father and one son have attempted suicide. The mother said the only solution for her is not to care, and so - apart from any consideration of the suffering and waste of human potential in the process - the cycle is likely to continue in the next generation.

Friends and Neighbours

Not all families had the advantage of having extended family or relatives living nearby but many were able to build personal networks of friends and neighbours. This was true of a group of middle class families which we studied, mostly young professionals who had moved to a provincial town in the course of their careers. The first points of social contact were usually colleagues at work or neighbours, then other parents through kindergarten and schools, then memberships of local groups such as churches, sporting clubs, youth organisations etc. So the circle widened to provide a range of acquaintances out of which emerged some close and supportive friendships.

This group also provided evidence of the ambiguity of the family.

As well as the socially integrated families it also contained one of the most destructive and isolated families in the summary, though outwardly they were among the better off.

The value of help given and received by neighbours is illustrated by the following examples:

The Turner family had experienced severe health and financial problems after moving some distance from their native town. They missed the support of the extended family. The interviewer writes "This has been compensated by a network of assistance from neighbours who helped her to care for her children, discussed problems with her and gave her moral support as well as practical information about the services available in the locality. The mother herself said 'Around this area we are fortunate, we rally to each other's help in an emergency. If we can't get one neighbour, we can get another. We don't always agree on things, but we stick together for everyday help as well as in a crisis.'"

The mother of another family who had gone to live in a small community on the edge of the town said:

"We're a very friendly community and most of us have young children. We all take in each other's children, share cars for shopping, taking children to swimming, football etc. - very necessary here with very little public transport. If you feel down you can drop in on a neighbour for a cup of coffee. In fact we're a real 'little Italy'."

A nice compliment to the Italian community!

An interesting side light from another country illuminates the importance of these supportive relationships. In the strife-torn country of Northern Ireland where I was born, every town and village is divided between Catholics and Protestants, often bitterly so. Over the last 20 years many efforts have been made to bridge the gulf, through such initiatives as the Peace Movement, Women Against Violence and one which is simply called Friends and Neighbours. This group brings together at the local level Protestant and Catholic families in acts of simple friendship and neighbourliness, and so create community where it did not exist before.

All these support networks were based on the experience of giving and receiving. As Titmuss said in **The Gift Relationship**, "The social relations set up by gift-exchange are among the most powerful forces which bind a social group together."

Within the extended family it was likely to be an interlocking system of support. Young families who had received help from their parents with the demanding tasks of bringing up children were willing to care for their parents in time of sickness and, as they grew older, when they could no longer completely care for themselves. Older parents who were helping sons and daughters to raise families, remembered their parents doing the same thing for them. This even though the care sticker "Parents unite. Live long enough to be a problem to your children!" probably strikes an answering chord in many parents involved in the problems of adolescent children.

Help from friends and neighbours was likely to be on a more reciprocal basis. It did not depend on accepted rules of barter or exchange - what Titmuss calls "Do ut des", I give so that you will give. "What I do for you, I do only as a means to effect your present, past or future service for me." Giving and receiving were the expression of caring human relationships, a recognition of our dependence on each other. Nevertheless it is also true that families whose needs could be easily met and who were in a position to offer help in return were much more likely to be able to ask for help and receive it.

This brings us back to those families who did not have these resources, the 10 per cent of families in our survey who had to depend mostly on services. Who are these families? Some are migrants whose families and friends are far away and who are cut off by barriers of language; some come from deprived families who are unwilling or unable to help; some have such serious problems that friends and even family stay away. Such problems include alcoholism and drug addiction, violence, mental and physical handicap, psychiatric illness and poverty. One respondent whose third child was spastic said somewhat bitterly, "After he was born the relations stayed away in droves". The experience of another family in which the father was a heavy drinker and frequently violent was described by his teen-age son as follows:

"Nobody likes my Dad and we never tell him nothing. My Mum would like a divorce but she can't tell him because he would bash her up. Anyway she has no money. We don't get on with the people around here. Across the street don't like us and down the street don't like us either. They never talk to us - they talk to each other but not to us. They used to talk to us when we were little kids but not now. I think it's all the fighting and that and the police coming round sometimes."

PRESSURES ON THE FAMILY

It would be dangerously easy to interpret the findings of these

studies as showing that most families can look after their own members and that support services are only needed by a minority of families who have no informal support networks of their own. This is not the case. In fact today many families are under pressure and are finding it increasingly difficult to carry out their caring role. What are these pressures?

First poverty. The effect of poverty on the family deserves a paper to itself and that is not my theme. But it would be impossible to discuss pressures on the family without including it. Many of us are grateful to the Brotherhood of St Laurence for bringing the realities of poverty to the attention of a generation which finds it all too easy to ignore them and whose prevalent attitude is "I'm all right Jack". Even in the churches, concern about poverty seems to be regarded as an optional extra, and the will to do anything about it curiously lacking. There was much evidence in these studies of the burden which poverty lays upon the family. The following quotation indicates the despair it can cause.

Mrs Moore was trying to maintain a family with three children on unemployment benefit. She said "When your husband can't get work for months and you have to struggle week after week to pay the rent and feed the kids love flies out the window ... If you're really poor money is the most important thing - without it you're stuck. If you don't have any, money is everything."

Families are under pressure from inadequate services in almost all areas of health, education and welfare: housing, child care, services for the aged, the handicapped, the young unemployed - the list goes on and on. This is due in part to the ruthless cutbacks in the seventies under the Fraser government but the Labor governments, both State and Federal, have been less than whole hearted in pursuing more adequate welfare programmes. Some good things have been done but they are only a beginning. I shall return to the role of the services later.

Almost every week we are reminded by some media source of the rapid rate of social change and the pressure which it exerts on the family. In the sixties and early seventies we heard much of the values of togetherness and young people left home and university to live in self-supporting communes which were to be characterised by simplicity of life style and non-aggressive relationships. Whatever their merits or demerits they put question marks, temporarily at least, against some of our authoritarian and materialistic values. In the last ten years there has been a massive return to individualism and self-realisation and, for many, self-aggrandisement have become the key to the good life. We have become what Christopher Lasch, an American

sociologist, calls 'the me generation'. "Our society" he writes, "lives for the moment, defines consumption of commodities as the highest form of personal satisfaction and exploits resources with cavalier disregard for the future". This was written about America but is not far wide of the mark for Australia.

We also suffer from what he calls the cult of narcissism, the preoccupation with the self. Every week our newspapers carry advertisements for courses in personal growth, self-development, self-assertion etc. (some I regret to say under the auspices of the church) as though these were in themselves ends to be pursued. "We suffer", as Lasch says "from the romantic dream that liberation lies in individualism, self-realisation and freedom from commitments". So, if my marriage, or my family, or my commitment to this group of people or that community does not promote my personal development, I should seriously consider withdrawing from it.

If, as I said at the beginning, the family is based on the commitment of its members to the well being of all, the pursuit of self-interest, however dressed up in psychological or sociological terms, hardly seems likely to lead to personal fulfilment or to the stability of the family. The pursuit of self-interest has many manifestations. It may be expressed in pre-occupation with work or career which relegates family responsibilities to second place. It may be the romantic dream about freedom so well summed up by Lasch. Of course I do not wish to assert that marriage is indissoluble or that separation and divorce are never justified. But the intention must be a permanent commitment. It was encouraging to find in the survey of young married Australians already quoted, 75 per cent said that they believed that marriage was for life.

The most positive aspect of "the me generation" has been the women's movement. In the last 10-15 years it has done much to raise the consciousness of our society to the inequalities which pervade almost every aspect of its life and to the subordination of women. Slowly there has been a change in attitudes to the role of women both in the family and in society. Nevertheless, the responsibility for home making and child rearing still rests mainly upon women. They must choose between staying at home to care for their children or working in paid employment - a choice between economic independence and dependence on the husband. Moreover, those who remain in the work force, as well as taking most of the responsibility for child rearing, must compete on equal terms with men in a very competitive world. It is not surprising that some feminists see the family as essentially patriarchal, the means of perpetuating the gender division of labour and the subordination of women. The answer is not, I would argue, "down with the family", but "down with the present organisation of the work force and the sexual division of labour".

Speaking at a recent Children's Week Seminar, Dr Edgar, the Director of the Institute of Family Studies, argued that the "social revolution of the past 20 years had meant not only that female and male roles had changed, but that in the 1980s there are major internal and external pressures on two of the most central institutions in society: the family and the work place". "The central question now is", Dr Edgar said, "can adults manage productive roles in the labour force at the same time as they fulfil productive roles in the family, at home? Two earner income families now represent 35.5 per cent of all family types, and families with only one earner number 35.2 per cent. Once both adults are in the paid work force, complete separation of work and home is impossible, if children are to be borne and reared satisfactorily."

He compared the well-articulated child and family policies of countries such as France, Sweden and Hungary with the ad hoc approach in Australia. Hungary aims its benefits at encouraging women to stay at home to look after young children without loss of career options. France aims at assisting choice for women to work or care for children, while Sweden's policies are uniquely family-focussed, encouraging both parents to meet their joint responsibilities for child rearing and to participate in the labour market. It is the latter policy which I would like to see us moving towards in Australia.

Can the family still find in the network of relatives, friends and neighbours the support it needs to withstand present day stresses and pressures? I believe it can provided it is supported by adequate services. The family has a unique role to play in the care and nurture of its members, a role which cannot be replaced by the services. But the State also has its role to play in providing those basic services in health, education and welfare for all. There needs to be a partnership between the informal networks of family, friends and neighbours and the formal network of services. Basically we need a new understanding of the nature of the family which defines it neither in patriarchal terms nor in utilitarian Marxist terms but as a living, changing entity bound together by commitment, by giving and receiving.

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

In his brilliant book **The Gift Relationship**, Titmuss argues that social policy as distinct from economic policy is centred in those institutions which create integration and discourage alienation. "What unites social policy with ethical considerations" he says, "is its focus on integrative systems or processes which promote an individual's sense of identity, participation and community and allow him (or her)

more freedom of choice for the expression of altruism and which simultaneously discourage a sense of individual alienation." This really says it all.

The sense of 'identity, participation and community' is much more likely to be created by services based in the local community. The opportunity to be involved in the planning and carrying out of such services enables users to have some say in how they will operate, to give as well as to receive. Through working together personal networks are also created and strengthened and the social fabric of the community strengthened.

Services can offer the family and the individual freedom to choose the kind of support they want. For example, some old people will want to remain in their own homes as long as possible and to do so they may need a range of domiciliary services as well as the support and companionship of family and friends. Others will prefer a more sheltered environment and they will need a range of residential accommodation from shared housing to hostel living.

Mothers in the work force will need full time day care for their children; others, who choose to stay at home, will need casual child care so they can have the freedom to pursue interests of their own or just have a rest.

Some families will choose to look after their handicapped members, and for that they will need the support of local services; other families or individuals may choose special accommodation which must also be provided by services.

In all these and many other situations of dependency families and individuals will benefit greatly from the support of relatives and friends, but they should not be coerced into giving or receiving, that is, being dependent on such support, because nothing else is available. Both giver and receiver should be free to give or not to give, to receive or not to receive.

Another freedom which must be guarded is the right of families and individuals to make their own decisions and control their own lives as much as possible. In the past services, both government and non-government, have been prone to assume that because they provided care for people they also had the right to determine how they would live. Now, there is a growing recognition of the rights of dependent people to exercise the greatest possible choice about how and where they wish to live.

One of the many interesting developments over the past few years has been the formation of new kinds of households, of people previously thought of as needing institutional care. This normalisation policy has made it possible for handicapped people to live together in "families" in ordinary suburban houses and have much greater freedom in the way they live. Other forms of shared housing have also been initiated for

aged people, homeless youth, people who have been mentally ill. If these initiatives are to succeed they must be backed up by strong support services. They are not a cheap alternative to institutional care but they are a much more humane alternative. They epitomize the necessity of partnership between State-funded services and the support of family, friends and the local community. These households need the best professional help available, but equally they need the acceptance of people around them. More than most "families" they need the giving and receiving of an informal network of family, friends and neighbours. The formal and informal support networks need each other.

Many of the respondents in our survey when asked about preferred forms of help said in different ways: "Family and friends are best but sometimes you need outside help as well". In the present and for the foreseeable future much of the care of dependent people will continue to be given by families and friends both at a personal level and, in a more organised way, through voluntary community based help. Women have been and still are the traditional carers, but this is changing, if slowly, and men now take more responsibility for providing help as a recent Australian Bureau of Statistics survey of volunteers in Victoria showed.

The various studies of family support including our own show that this help is costly to the carers, and if they are to continue to provide it to the benefit of both giver and receiver, more services need to be available.

There are voices, some very insistent, raised against the whole concept of community-based care, on the grounds that it depends upon the unpaid labour of women and is therefore exploitative. Social policies which promote this kind of care are therefore accused of reinforcing the subordination and economic dependence of women. And, of course, there is some truth in this argument. Women are expected to carry the burden of caring for the young, the old, the sick and the handicapped, often with little recognition of the value of what they do. Yet to label this kind of service as exploitation is to ignore the rewards and joys which it brings to many people. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" is not a religious precept. It is a fact of life. Certainly no one should be coerced into giving, either by the expectations of society or by the absence of services, but neither should anyone be deprived of giving because of some ideological stance that they are doing something voluntarily which the government should pay for.

One of the basic freedoms which must be fought for in human services as elsewhere is the right to give. To quote Titmuss again -

"The notion of social rights - a product of the twentieth century

- should thus embrace the right to give in non-material as well as material ways. If it is accepted that man has a social and biological need to help then to deny him opportunities to express this need is to deny him the freedom to enter into gift relationships."

In these days we often speak of helping people to assert their rights, and this is very necessary especially for those who have traditionally been regarded as the objects of care. But do we remember often enough that one of these rights is the right to give? One of the many things for which we can be grateful to the Brotherhood is the emphasis it places on the dignity of those whom it serves. Programmes such as SPAN have made it possible for people who were on the sidelines to contribute to the community and to be more fully involved in its life. To be truly human we have to be able to give as well as receive, to serve as well as be served, to love as well as be loved.

We need to hear again and again the words "Freely you have received, freely give."

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Jean McCaughey was born in Northern Ireland, and studied medicine at Queen's University Belfast, but her course was interrupted by the war in the final year and never completed.

She married Davis McCaughey and came to Melbourne in February 1953 and lived in the grounds of Ormond College for the next 27 years. Davis was Master of Ormond for 20 years and their lives were closely involved with the life of the College.

On study leave in Cambridge 1966-1967 she studied computer programming. On her return to Melbourne she was appointed to the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research.

She worked with Professor Ronald Henderson, first as a computer programmer then as a Research Fellow. She contributed two chapters of **People in Poverty** by Henderson, Harcourt and Harper; and was co-author of **Who Cares?** and wrote the Family Study.

In 1981 she was invited to be a consultant to the Family Support Network Study at the Institute of Family Studies, and gradually became more involved and is now writing up the case studies section of the survey.

Her other appointments include - Member of the Council of St Hilda's College and Chairman for four years; Member of the Board of the Royal Melbourne Hospital for 12 years; part-time Member of the staff of the Community Services Division of the Uniting Church for 2 years after union; Member of the Brotherhood of St Laurence Board of Directors since the beginning of this year.

Jean and Davis McCaughey have three sons, two daughters and nine grandchildren.