

brotherhood action

The Journal of the Brotherhood of St Laurence

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Education for what?

That's a good way to get into an argument.

Some educators don't like that question being asked at all. Just for the sake of this article let's call these objectors 'the idealists.'

Other educators, 'the scientists', think that the question should be asked often — but only very precisely and very carefully by certain people in certain places — by those who are strictly 'in the know.'

Other educators, with particular convictions or policies in mind, like to ask it as part of a campaign. We'll call them 'the campaigners.'

Other educators tend to become so preoccupied as 'practitioners' with the busyness of each day that they never pause to analyse their day's work in terms of such a question.

It is always unfair to tie labels on to people or lump them into categories because it is never quite true and not nearly so neat as the labels suggest. But it may help us to understand our question better — even if we have to confess that there is a fifth and much more reprehensible group called 'the journalists' who keep breaking into print and trying to present the truth as so many little neat pots of jam.

The idealists and education for what?

When we ask a question like that we seem to have decided already that education must be for something — not much use in itself — just for some other purpose.

Our kids must all go to school 'for the sake of a good job' or 'for the sake of democracy' or 'for the preservation of free enterprise capitalism'.

A question like this creates at least two problems for school teachers and Ministers of Education.

Firstly, we seem to be suggesting that education, learning, thinking, forming judgments, making choices, asking questions, discovering answers, understanding our relationships, enjoying our minds and bodies, savoring beauty, cultivating our gifts, shaping our environment, celebrating our lives — are activities without any special value in their own right. As though they will be worthwhile only when they make a cash profit or when they make our country more powerful than some other country or our children more obedient.

Secondly, we are tempted to ask it so that we can jump in straight away and answer it with our own answer before somebody else does. As though we expected only one sort of answer — our own answer. With ancient Spartans the question was this rhetorical sort of question.

by Michael Norman

It expected only one clear ideological answer — 'to make Sparta strong through her fearless and fervent soldiers.'

Can anyone live in Melbourne, send their children or grandchildren to Melbourne schools and believe that education has only one clear objective about which we all agree? As though ideological consensus were possible or desirable?

These problems have led the idealist to suggest that we should stop trying to state our aims and just let school programs grow naturally out of the expressed wants and the apparent needs of our children and the particular communities they live in.

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ACUTE HOUSING NEED

by David Scott

The Brotherhood is very concerned at the housing plight of elderly people and also invalid pensioners in the inner suburbs of the city. In the past two years there has been a rapid rise in the prices that can be obtained for properties.

This is due to an increasing number of better off people wanting to live in convenient areas where they are attracted to the older buildings and the interesting, varied environment.

As a result when terrace houses and lodging houses are sold it often means that pensioners and low income families are obliged to leave because the owners want vacant possession or because they renovate the buildings and increase the rents. As the Housing Commission has provided very little accommodation for pensioners and single people this has meant a decline in the stock of housing for these groups. The Brotherhood and other organisations have been urging the Commission to buy older property to ensure that they will continue to be available at reasonable rentals, but so far it has not embarked on a program of purchase and preservation.

In an attempt to stop people being forced out of inner areas, the Brotherhood has recently purchased two properties in Fitzroy. One is a block of 10 small flats which were built for commercial purposes about four years ago. This will provide excellent accommodation for elderly people living on the pension, and is eligible for the \$2 for \$1 subsidy under the Aged Persons Homes Act. It is close to the Coolibah Centre so the tenants will have access to the good cheap meals and the recreational and home care facilities provided by the Centre.

Rooming house for 20

The second property consists of three old terrace houses which have provided rooming

house accommodation for 20 people for the past 40 or 50 years. The establishment has been very well and sympathetically run; quite a number of the residents are members of the Coolibah Centre. The owner offered the property to the Brotherhood at a price which was considerably less than she could have obtained on the open market because she was concerned that otherwise her tenants might be evicted. Another reason was her appreciation of the care that Jess Sumner and Jess Millott of the Coolibah Centre have provided for elderly and handicapped people for so many years. This property is not eligible for subsidy but we have been able to purchase it with money left to the Brotherhood. As the property will not be subsidised, it will mean that we will be able to take in people not of pensionable age, such as invalids and single itinerant people who find it extremely difficult to find suitable accommodation.

We are also planning to build hostel accommodation in the inner suburbs. This will be financed by a Government grant. In this year's budget the Government provided grants for organisations which had built accommodation for the aged prior to the introduction of subsidies under the Aged Persons Homes Act in 1955. Consequently the Brotherhood has an entitlement for funds to provide accommodation for about 100 people. We are thinking of building three hostels, each providing accommodation for 30 to 40 elderly people in the inner suburbs. An architect, Andrew McCutcheon, has been appointed to prepare plans and to consider possible sites.

These programs will enable the Brotherhood to make an important contribution to areas of acute housing need.

Foundation festival

The Brotherhood's 42nd Foundation Festival will be held on Sunday, December 10. This year it will hold special significance as in November the new Family Centre moved into what was the original home of the Brotherhood in Melbourne.

Originally the Brotherhood was formed at Adamstown, Newcastle in New South Wales in 1930. In 1933 it moved to St Mary's Mission in Fitzroy. This building has now been the Mission House for the Mission to Streets and Lanes for many years and the Brotherhood has recently purchased it to house the Family Centre.

The Festival service will be held this year at Christ Church, South Yarra and will commence at 7.00 p.m.

Clothing. Crockery. Books. Toys. Ornaments. The Brotherhood of St Laurence can put them all to good use. Your help will provide homes for elderly people . . . run Youth Camps . . . overcome family difficulties and housing problems.

Phone 41 3181 and a van will call.

Country donors can send goods free by rail to Flinders Street Railway Station

Brotherhood of St Laurence, Depot: 75 Westgarth St., Fitzroy.



The Brotherhood has begun the first phase of a unique three-year project designed to assist poor families in a way which has never before been attempted in Australia.

The project arose out of a strenuous year of discussions and planning between the members of the various departments in the Brotherhood who have been trying to help poor families for many years.

Despite the sustained efforts of social workers and youth workers, neither the social system nor the economic conditions of some families changed. We provided family counselling, money, clothing and adolescent and children's activities, yet the families remained poor and very often were stripped of their dignity and self-respect.

The crux of our new thinking is that poverty is not a matter of personal inadequacy but of inequality and lack of opportunity.

A man on the minimum wage (\$51 per week) with four dependent children, living in a private home (at least \$20 per week rental) will always be poor and, in some cases, will have to rely on welfare help. In the past, Brotherhood relief payments, although given with great sympathy, were inadequate and spasmodic because of the huge demand on our resources, and did little to enable families to reduce inequalities or extend their opportunities. We set out to find a way to relieve poor families of the all-encompassing anxiety of 'making-ends-meet' so that they would be freed to take advantage of the opportunities which our society offers and to create new opportunities for themselves.

"Open-door" goes

The resources of a voluntary agency such as the Brotherhood are, of course, limited. Therefore it became necessary to restrict the numbers of families so that we could provide more adequately for them. We decided to close our previously 'open-door' and concentrate on 70 of the families we have worked with in the past. We have combined the staffs of the social work and youth services and the old Mission House in Fitzroy Street, behind the Brotherhood headquarters, houses the new project.

Our task is to provide this group of highly vulnerable poor families with adequate resources to improve their social and economic condition. These resources include a multi-disciplinary staff with many different skills, a basic guaranteed minimum income, and a building which the families can use to provide opportunities and activities which society has previously denied them.

Participation and practice in decision-making are the key-notes of the project. In general, the centre is 'activities' rather than 'problem' oriented and the families themselves will decide which activities best fulfil their needs.

A new approach



A sewing group for women is one of the activities of the new Family Centre

by Concetta Benn

Some activities are already underway — a sewing group for women, a painting and repairing group for men, and various holiday activities. Counselling services are still available for families but greater emphasis is placed on task achievement, building family strength, and improving individual skills. For example, the best way to improve the lives of an unskilled worker and his illiterate wife is to retrain the worker so that he earns more money and obtains greater job satisfaction and to teach his wife to read and write.

Gathering data

An essential part of the project is that the families, with the staff, collect basic data about their patterns of living and their social condition. Although there is a great deal of information about the numbers of people who live in poverty, there is little information about the quality of their lives or the ways in which they cope with their difficulties.

It is hoped the families themselves will collect this information (assisted by a research worker) and will use it to inform the community about poverty. The current Government enquiry into poverty could provide the families with an excellent opportunity to present this evidence.

The centre began to operate fully in the Mission

House on November 27. It is open six days a week from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., and staffed by people from various professions supplemented by a wide range of volunteers with a variety of skills.

This project is an attempt to find a new approach to poverty. There is mounting evidence that the traditional social work methods of helping poor families do not eliminate poverty.

It is not possible for the Brotherhood to provide for all poor families in our community, but our aim is that the family centre will provide evidence for a social action and community education program which will lead to more humane social provisions for all poor families.

A project such as this involves a great deal of expense and hard work, but if it has the far-reaching effects that we predict, the money and effort will be well worthwhile. The active encouragement of other welfare organisations and the support we have received from our many contributors have helped to sustain us through the arduous planning phase of the project.

We hope to retain this faith in our efforts by reaffirming the traditional roles of the voluntary agency — experimentation and demonstration as a basis for social reform.

BOOK REVIEWS:

The Powerless Poor by Peter Hollingworth,
Stockland Press \$4.95.

Reviewed by Alan Jordan

Until a couple of years ago, most Australians thought widespread poverty had gone out with the great economic depression of the 1930's. They knew vaguely that pensioners weren't doing too well, or Aborigines, or families with young children on the basic wage, but they didn't think of those different groups as making up a large category, the poor.

Now, growing public awareness that many thousands of Australians have no share in prosperity has made poverty a political issue of some importance. In August the Prime Minister, having denied for months that there was any real problem, climbed down and appointed Professor Ronald Henderson to head a national inquiry.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence has played as large a part in these developments as anybody. This new book by the Brotherhood's Associate Director, Peter Hollingworth, presents the main facts and the main issues in a form that can be understood by the ordinary citizen.

Chapters deal with definitions and causes of poverty, the extent of poverty in Australia, the structure and defects of the Australian welfare system, health services, education, the legal system as it affects poor people, housing, economic policy, and the role of the Church.

Recommendations for an anti-poverty program include positive educational discrimination in favor of poor children and poor areas, establishment of national health and superannuation schemes, and expansion of pre-school education and day-care, as well as improvement of cash benefits and pensions.

The book is a remarkable achievement in covering such a wide range of material. However, it might have had more effect on public debate and national policy if it had aimed more at depth and breadth.

Recognition of the needs of the poor only takes us so far. There are knotty theoretical and practical problems still to be solved before much can be done. This book touches on many of them in passing, but is of limited help in finding solutions.

How much weight should be given to direct income supplementation, and how much to counselling and other personal services? If only so much money is available, what is the relative importance of, say, education, child care, public

All about poverty

housing and cash benefits? When we speak of a right to support, do we mean an unconditional right? What is the desirable future of the private welfare agency?

Perhaps it is a mistake to stray too far from the idea that poverty is lack of money and other material resources. The basic questions for Australia, still unanswered, are: how much of the

goods of the society are we willing to redistribute in favor of the poor, and how can that be done most efficiently and most fairly?

Although the *Powerless Poor* might have been more useful if its recommendations had been more closely argued, it will be of value to anybody who wants to know what the current debate on poverty is about.

An analysis of public housing

Housing and Poverty in Australia, by M.A. Jones. Melbourne University Press. \$9.90.
Reviewed by Don Glasson.

The State Housing Commissions in Australia have tended to judge their achievements in terms of physical criteria such as the number of housing units produced and the number of acres cleared. In this thoroughly documented book Jones evaluates their achievements by focussing upon the implications of the Commission's program for the people seeking public housing.

The book discusses the characteristics of public housing in Australia and presents and examines extensive statistical data on who occupies flat housing and by what methods it is allocated. The author concludes that the public housing programs have failed to meet their basic objective of catering for those most in need of housing assistance, with the exception of the female householder with dependent children who has been favorably treated in all States.

'The undeserving poor with a low capacity to pay and in need of specialised service fare the worst of all in their access to public housing.'

The author, who gained a Ph.D. from the Australian National University for the studies which form the basis of this book, gained much of his data from extensive field work in all Australian States. In spite of the somewhat legendary clashes between the author and representatives of the Victorian Housing Commission following the presentation of some of the author's earlier

papers in this field, the book does not make use of the emotional language frequently found in discussion of Housing Commission activities. The evaluation and conclusions are objectively set down.

Of particular interest to those concerned with the Victorian Housing Commission's policies are the chapters on Slum Clearance and Area Development. Jones questions the assumptions underlying these programs and spells out their negative social and economic consequences.

These adversely affect not only those displaced and those housed, but also those left on the waiting lists because of the wasteful expenditure of funds on expensive high rise units, the acquisition for demolition of sound housing and the allocation of cleared land for subsidised private development.

Housing and Poverty concludes with a valuable chapter on Policy Conclusions in which the author reviews alternative ways to alleviate poverty other than through a public housing program.

This comprehensive analysis of public housing in Australia presents a clear case for current policies to be questioned. With a wealth of statistical information embodied in the text the book is not light reading. It does however, provide interesting reading and should be read by everyone concerned with housing and poverty.

HBA won't pay!

Why is it that the largest medical benefit fund in Victoria, the Hospital Benefits Association, does not pay medical fund benefits on Family Planning Clinic consultations when many of the smaller and less financial benefit funds do?

The HBA maintains that under the rules of the organisation they do not pay medical fund benefits unless a service is rendered by a doctor in the course of his private practice. Thus if you are a subscriber to HBA you get a rebate on the consultation fee if you go to a private doctor for family planning advice but not if you seek similar advice from a salaried doctor at a family planning clinic.

This in itself seems odd enough, but when you consider that the HBA does pay medical fund rebates when services are rendered by salaried doctors to insured patients who obtain medical services at the Trade Union Clinic or who attend public hospitals for pathology services or x-ray and electrocardiograph examinations, then it is harder than ever to understand.

Dr Bill Vorrath, the President of the Family Planning Association, commenting on this incredible situation points out that all services supplied by a doctor are supposed to attract rebate.

'This is the whole purpose of health insurance,' he says. 'I am staggered at the unco-operative attitude of the HBA which would appear to be discriminating against patients seeking family planning medical advice.'

'I know of several doctors who have withdrawn from the HBA as a result of this attitude and they are talking to their patients about their reasons for doing so,' he continued. 'Under the circumstances people would be far better off insuring themselves with one of the Friendly Societies which are willing to pay fund benefit rebates on family planning consultations.'

Dr Vorrath lists these societies as: The Hibernian Catholic Benefits Society; The



Ancient Order of Foresters; The Australian Natives Association; The Grand United Order of Oddfellows; The Independent Order of Oddfellows; The Manchester Unity Order of Oddfellows.

Dr Vorrath also points out that Australia is the only country in the world that levels a sales tax on contraceptive pills — 27½ per

cent. 'To the best of my knowledge there is no local industry to protect as the medical components of the pill are all imported,' he says.

'In 1971 sales tax on the pill provided the Federal Government with just under \$4 million. It would be interesting to know how much money they devote to family planning.'

The brotherhood and politics

by David Scott

Sometimes people say to us that the Brotherhood is political, with the implication that welfare organisations should not be political.

The Brotherhood is political but not in a partisan way. From the very early days Father Tucker, the founder of the Brotherhood, believed that it was not enough for a welfare organisation to limit its concern to helping people. 'Ambulance' work is important, but it is just as important to try and get to the causes of social problems and then to try and eradicate those causes.

The factors that cause individual or family suffering or distress may be due to the apathy or ignorance of the community or of Governments. They may be the result of higher priority being given to matters which are of less social importance in the community, or they may be caused or accentuated by the way society is organised. Making known the results of research and advo-

cating changes in attitudes and priorities is necessary.

In its social action activities the Brotherhood does not favor any particular political party, although Government parties are naturally more likely to be targets for criticism or praise because they are in the position of power. The Brotherhood always makes its information or views known publicly and hopes that they will have some influence on people of all political persuasions. We are being political just as anyone who expresses concern or an opinion is being political.

Democratic government can only work if there is active participation by people and organisations in debate and action which brings about social change. In many ways this is one of the most important activities of the Brotherhood and we would hope that people who support and finance our welfare services understand that research, community education and participation in the public arena are as important as the provision of welfare services in assisting people in need.

Southern Memorial: I

Short bed stays.
Full use of beds.
Caring for old people in their own homes.
Para medical services.

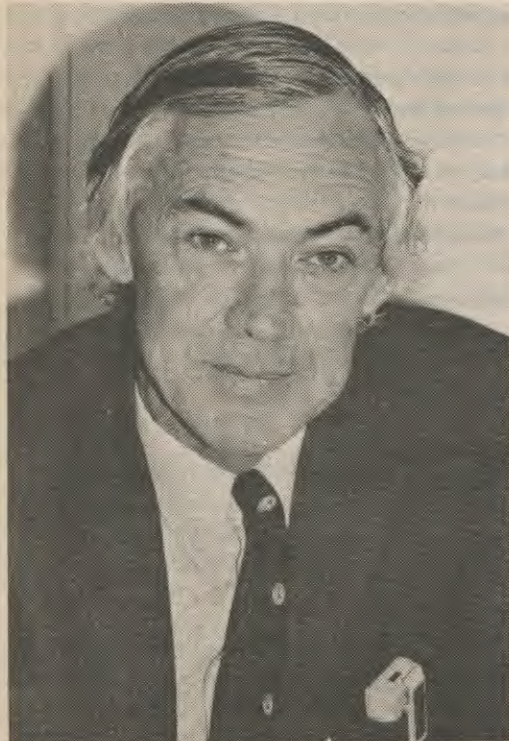
These are some of the things that distinguish the Southern Memorial Hospital in Kooyong Road, Caulfield, from other hospitals.

'People have been talking about this for 50 years. Now we are trying to put it into practice,' says Dr J. Combes, the Director of the Community Care Centre and Family Medical Service at the Hospital.

'We could be setting the pattern for future hospitals. The experiment is being watched with interest by other metropolitan hospitals and some of the ideas are already being adopted.'

'It is a true community hospital with the General Practitioners in the area joining specialists on the permanent staff,' he says. 'In this way all the facilities of the hospital are automatically available to everyone. When a general practitioner joins the staff he joins all committees of the hospital and looks after his own patients.'

'There is no differentiation between public and private patients, they all get the treatment they require. If a public patient needs a private room then he gets one just as a private patient has one if it is necessary. All patients gain. The private patient gets all the benefits of a public hospital, such as having 24 hour diagnostic treatment available and a resident doctor on call all the time. A public patient has his own doctor caring for him and exactly the same treatment as a private patient.'



Dr J. Combes



Domiciliary care

Services are also available on a domiciliary basis for people who find it difficult to travel to the hospital.

Sister Jenny Lewis is Collection Sister for the pathology department and a typical day for her might include visiting a patient at Clayton at 8.30 a.m. to take a regular weekly blood test on her way to the hospital, attending to any out patients who are waiting, then out to East Malvern to do an electrocardiogram for an old man of 87 who has had a suspected heart attack, on to Bentleigh to do a blood test for a woman who is just finishing a course of treatment and another stop in Caulfield for a blood test for a heart patient who has just come home from hospital.

The afternoon might then be spent at the Elanora Hospital for the elderly blind in Brighton doing a similar round of tests. As well as visiting the Elanora Hospital once a week, Sister Lewis also goes to Mount Eliza Geriatric Hospital twice a week.

Other services available on a domiciliary basis are physiotherapy, occupational therapy and dietetic. Three district nurses are also attached to the hospital.

These domiciliary services add tremendously to the effectiveness of the hospital in caring for the people living in the area. For instance, if Sister Lewis, on visiting a patient, feels that person needs help at home she can ask the District Nurse Assessor to visit them. In one case she was asked to visit an old lady of 83 for a blood test.

She found that since the patient's husband had died several years earlier she had been living alone. Through not eating properly she was

suffering from malnutrition and she was inclined to go without baths as it was too difficult on her own. Now she gets meals on wheels every day and a district nurse calls twice a week to help her have a shower.

Home conditions

Because a patient's own doctor is caring for him there is a greater knowledge of home conditions and the hospital's beds are used more effectively and efficiently. Case conferences are held every morning and each patient in the hospital comes up for discussion once a week.

The discussion covers medical developments, possibilities of home treatment, when he goes home and any other factors affecting the patient. Those who have gone home, but are still in the care of the hospital are also reviewed at these conferences.

This means patients do not have long stays in hospital unless it is absolutely necessary, basically because their own doctor is caring for them and knows more about the patient and home conditions.

The average length of stay for a patient last year was 6.8 days and the bed occupancy rate is 95 per cent. Dr Combes points out that this is a higher percentage than usual and is made possible by the treatment of the patient at home until a bed is ready for them and because beds are freed more or less to plan.

'We have excellent quality control,' he says. 'Detailed records are kept of all patients. We assess the home situation when a patient is ready to go home and keep an eye on those at risk by visiting them regularly.'

The hospital, which opened three years ago, is

Hospital for the future

believed to be the only public hospital in Australia which actually involves the general practitioner. In three years the staff of general practitioners has grown from 19 to 75 and there are 15 specialists. A 48-bed unit dealing with major medical and surgical problems and catering for both elective and emergency cases, the hospital needs the full co-operation of all staff to handle the complex organisational and logistical problems and this it certainly has. As Sister Lewis said: 'Everyone is so enthusiastic about their work.'

Although the Caulfield Southern Memorial Hospital is only a 48-bed hospital as yet, it cared for 1740 in-patients last year and 6140 out-patients. It is hoped to increase the number of beds to 160 initially with the aim of a minimum of 200 eventually.



Sister Jenny Lewis, collection sister for the Pathology Department does an electrocardiogram for a patient in his own home.

A good budget for the aged, But...

by Neville Brooke

Each year, before the presentation of a Federal Budget there is considerable speculation and discussion regarding what should and should not be done with the monies available. For those who are not directly or greatly affected by the measures introduced, this interest largely disappears once the Budget is brought down and many are not aware what has happened outside their own area of concern.

The focal point each time as far as the community is concerned is the amount by which the pension is increased. This year the increase of \$1.75 could be classed as insignificant but, to be fair, all provisions for the aged should be considered.

On the plus side there are several measures which will combine to make things better for elderly people generally, particularly those who are dependent on the age pension or a limited fixed income. The liberalisation of the means test makes a far greater number of retired people eligible for the pension and it has been promised that it will be abolished altogether over the next three years.

More people will receive help with their rent. Supplementary assistance which previously stood at \$2 per week and was restricted to single pensioners in rented accommodation who had little in the way of assets and virtually no income has been increased to \$4 per week, as well it is now available to married couples who are renting and eligibility relating to income and assets has been extended.

There were also provisions for the sick and those needing various levels of support. The Domiciliary Nursing Care Benefit is designed to

encourage people to look after their parents by providing an amount of \$14 per week for their care where this offsets the need for a parent to be placed in a nursing home. Another measure intended to help elderly people to remain in their own homes is the improved subsidies to organisations such as the Royal District Nursing Service.

Nursing Home Benefits have been increased in Victoria by an additional \$22.40 per person, per week, providing the patient's contribution does not exceed \$18 per week. As a result elderly people dependent upon the pension and in receipt of supplementary assistance should have little difficulty in obtaining suitable nursing home care and will at the same time be able to retain \$6 per week for personal requirements. And for the frail aged living in personal care hostels, the weekly subsidy has been doubled to \$10 for those over 80 years of age. To encourage the establishment of additional accommodation of this nature, a three year programme has been introduced to provide special grants for organisations who sponsored such accommodation in the past without the assistance of Government subsidies. This could lead to the establishment of more than 5000 additional hostel beds.

These measures will do much to reduce the insecurity of those elderly people who are concerned about what will happen to them if they should become dependent as they get older. There will be less financial burden to carry if institutional care should be required and they will not have to scrape and save against this eventuality.

However, in some instances the Budget could

fail to achieve its objectives. The supplementary assistance which was originally introduced to help those in rented accommodation should have been extended to those living in their own homes. People on limited fixed incomes are often forced to sell their homes because of high rates and maintenance or else live below the poverty line. If they do sell and move into subsidised accommodation the cost to the Government and the organisation sponsoring the scheme is far greater than \$4 per week.

With the Domiciliary Nursing Care Benefit and the extended Nursing Home Benefit the payment of both will be dependent on the assessment and approval of the Department of Health. In view of the numbers involved it is questionable if cases can be dealt with without considerable delay which could neutralise much of the benefit. Many will not be prepared to wait for a long period for an interview on the off chance that their application will be approved. The extended nursing home benefit will without doubt encourage the establishment of new units in both the voluntary and private sector and could possibly lead to a larger number of elderly being prematurely admitted at this level of care.

Whilst the Hostel program will provide a large number of urgently needed beds it is unlikely that suitable trained supervisors will be available to co-ordinate the service and immediate steps should be taken to establish appropriate training programs.

In general the budget has provided unprecedented support for the aged but it must be reviewed and amended where necessary to ensure that its intentions are realised.

What's happening in welfare

* The most important recent event in welfare has been the establishment of the Commonwealth Commission of Inquiry into poverty under Professor Ronald Henderson of Melbourne University. In broad terms the Inquiry will be investigating the extent and distribution of poverty in Australia, and its causes. It will also look at current alleviation programs both public and private, alternative methods of reducing poverty in Australia and associated matters relevant to the objects of the Inquiry.

Assisting the Professor on the Inquiry will be social worker, Hayden Ray Smith; housing expert, Andrew Burbidge; agricultural economist Warwick Papst; statistician, Bruce Buraston; economist, Ian Manning; administrator, Maurice O'Keefe and secretary, John Gibson.

The Inquiry is calling for submissions by April 16, 1973, and has offered to assist where necessary in the preparation of these. The Victorian Council of Social Service has also appointed a staff member to help prepare information and

any organisation or person wishing to contribute to the inquiry requiring assistance should contact Mrs Judy Morton at 654-3822 . . .

* The recent Child Care Act provides for direct subsidies for the provision of day care facilities for the children of working mothers. Capital grants will cover the cost of land and building and there are subsidies for equipment and staff. Staff subsidies are paid at the rate of a full salary for one nurse for every 10 children under three years, one for every 20 children between three and five years and for one teacher for every 15 children between three and five years. Grants for research are also available. Information regarding these can be obtained from Mr Fitt, Department of Labor and National Service, Melbourne, or Mrs Marie Coleman (654-3822) . . .

* A two-day seminar marked the 100th anniversary of the Prisoners' Aid Society of Victoria. An impressive line up of speakers from New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia

and Victoria spoke on a wide range of related subjects including; a prisoner's viewpoint, the family dilemma, the welfare officer, the police and prisoner's aid, the halfway house, consequences of a prison record and the female offender. Guest speaker at the wind-up dinner was leading woman jurist, the Hon Justice Mitchell of South Australia . . .

* Over 3500 objections have been received by the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works regarding their latest planning scheme for Melbourne. Amongst the first to be heard by the Board will be the Victorian Council of Social Service who want guarantees that social needs will be met by the plan. Other general objections to be heard have come from the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria, the Town and Country Planning Association, the Royal Australian Planning Trust and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, as well as from two concerned individuals closely associated with planning, Ruth and Maurie Crow . . .

* Social Services Action Group is the new name for Action for Income which was mentioned in this column in September. The Group, which consists of pensioners, beneficiaries, social workers and others who are concerned about a wide variety of problems in the welfare field including the inadequacy of welfare payments, will be reporting to the poverty inquiry and wants to hear from people who have had first hand experience of dependence on Commonwealth and State Welfare payments. (Secretary, Mrs N. Smith, 1/203 Palmerston Street, Carlton).

What we've been doing

IN SEPTEMBER . . .

Michael Liffman was appointed as Research Worker with the Family Centre. This means that for the first time the Brotherhood will be able to evaluate a service from the start — a rather unusual occurrence in the welfare field. Michael has just returned from England where he completed his MSc degree in Social Administration at the London School of Economics. While in the United Kingdom he spent some time working with an alcoholic rehabilitation unit

and with an agency doing community development work.

IN OCTOBER . . .

The closure of the Wednesday evening clinic reduced the number of weekly sessions held by the Brotherhood's Family Planning Clinic to one. The Tuesday morning clinic will continue to operate until December 19. In phasing out the service over the past six months patients have been referred to the most appropriate clinic. The closure of the Brotherhood's clinic coincided with the opening of a clinic by the Fitzroy Council in November. This clinic is held in the Infant Welfare Centre in Young Street, Fitzroy on Monday nights between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. and will be staffed by Dr Helen Church who has been the medical officer for the Brotherhood's evening clinic for the past five years.

Appointments can be made by ringing the Fitzroy Town Hall (41-5037 or 41-5321).

IN NOVEMBER . . .

At the end of the month the new Family Centre moved into its quarters in Fitzroy Street,

Fitzroy, and became fully operational (see article page 3). This will be a three year project working to improve the social and economic conditions of a group of 70 poor families and replaces our Family Services and Youth Services in Fitzroy. At the same time we opened a new material aid centre at 75 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy. The organisation has always distributed clothing to those in need but on a requisition basis rather than self selection. The new centre will be for both low income families and age pensioners and people's needs will be worked out with the welfare worker in charge. Furniture will be available on the same basis. Referrals to the centre will be accepted from other organisations and welfare workers.

Fred Wallace was appointed as the male social worker in the Family Centre. Fred first started working for the Brotherhood in 1965 as a voluntary in the youth centre in Fitzroy. In this capacity he worked one night a week in the senior youth centre and helped to staff mobile adventure camps throughout the year. He also ran the January day outing program for the Children's Centre in 1970. Since Fred graduated in 1971 he has been with the Social Welfare Department's Regional Office in Preston.

Protection for the consumer

A growing concern for the consumers on fixed and low incomes prompted the appointment of Andrew Grove, solicitor and social work student, to the staff of the Victorian Council of Social Service in mid-November. During his three-month appointment Andrew will be examining the effect of consumer credit operations and practices on fixed and low income groups in Victoria.

The council is particularly concerned about the question of consumer sovereignty among the people in this group.

'Two problems are apparent. Firstly, the lack of cheap and adequate financial credit bodies able to service this group. Secondly, the current credit sources for this group of the population appear to have several shortcomings in both their manner of operation and suitability as credit bodies for fixed and low income groups' (extract from Victorian Council of Social Service Position Paper on Credit Practices in Victoria).

They are advocating bolstering of credit unions and making credit union facilities available to people on fixed and low incomes where the interest rates would be approximately five per cent at call on savings and one per cent a month reducing on loans. These compare more than favorably to the 33 per cent charged by the credit firms and its related retailing outlet which has the highest percentage of low income consumers.

The council considers that further protection is needed for the consumer in Victoria through stronger legislation which should extend greater powers to the Consumer Protection Bureau and the Registrar of Money Lenders to enable them to adequately investigate the activities of the finance companies and the door-to-door retail

selling practices in this State. Improved educational facilities are also necessary to make consumers aware of their rights, the legislation and the responsibilities which finance companies and retailers have to their customers under existing legislation.

Such legislation should be aimed, they say, at increasing the consumer sovereignty of the relatively poor by providing them with the

knowledge, time and initiative to make effective choices of their consumer needs and wants.

Information regarding the practices of door-to-door salesmen and the effect of door-to-door selling techniques used by these salesmen should be forwarded to Andrew Grove, Victorian Council of Social Service, 107 Russell Street, Melbourne.



The Brotherhood's Executive Director, David Scott receives a cheque for \$41,167.82 from Andrew Mohl on behalf of the students of Melbourne Grammar. The boys raised the money in a poverty week held at the school in November, Edward Shackell (from left), Graham Allen and the headmaster Mr N. Creese look on.

Letter:

'The commission isn't heartless'

Dear Sir,

I refer to the article by Concetta Benn under the heading 'Blaming the Victim' in your issue of BROTHERHOOD ACTION for September, 1972.

The majority of readers, including myself, would accept the story of Ocka Smith as factual and referring to a real family, and it is difficult to believe that Mrs Benn intended her readers to think otherwise.

The statements, 'Ocka's wife is well known to us. Ocka we never see, he is too ashamed to come begging for charity', can only mean to

the average worker that this is, in fact, a real family.

My purpose in writing is to draw attention to the statement —

'When the wife was sick after having one of the kids they got into arrears with the rent and were evicted from their Housing Commission home.'

I believe this statement would leave the reader with the impression that the Commission is completely heartless in dealing with families in arrears and that it is normal procedure to

evict families who get into arrears for such reasons as medical costs, etc.

I can assure all your readers that the Commission would never evict a family where this is the sole reason for arrears, and I believe experienced members of the Brotherhood would agree with this statement. I should be obliged if you would publish the above in the next issue of ACTION.

Apart from the above reference, I personally support the balance of Mrs Benn's article.

Ray Burkitt,
Commissioner,
Housing Commission of Victoria

Education for what?

● Continued from Page 1

They believe in this way that we might overcome the dangers of deciding that our schools have to serve some other outside purpose. They are alarmed that western society has been suffering so long and so deeply from a sinister educational purpose.

They suggest that plenty of failures under our competitive academic emphasis have been a guarantee of cheap labor, mindless conformity, infatuated consumers and a great mass of citizens easily scared into voting one way rather than another.

In concentrating on the intrinsic value of learning and discovering activities according to each child's and each community's expressed interests they hope that we will be able to avoid the perils of a manipulated school system and at the same time be able to enjoy educational opportunities without ideological conflict. It becomes truly democratic when these higher questions of purpose or political objectives are kept out of our curriculum planning and our centralised controls.

So they say. And there is much truth in what they say — but it does seem to be the sort of radical idealism that ignores the persistent influence of social structures and group traditions and unexamined basic assumptions. These powerful influences don't stop flexing their muscles or tying our schools into knots just because the question of purpose has been philosophically discounted in the circles of higher learning.

The questions of educational policy making, questions of objectives, 'education for what?' are being asked and answered every day in spite of philosophical objections. Simply as a matter of practice.

The practitioners

Everytime a Treasury cheque is written within the Education Department accounts branch, every time a brick is laid, every time a trainee teacher sits down in a lecture theatre, everytime a parent meets a headmaster or a teacher enters a room or marks an exam, choices are being made in favor of one sort of education against some other sort of education.

There is a daily process of education which goes on endlessly asking and answering the questions — 'What sort of education are we choosing?' 'What learning outcomes do we intend?' 'What unintended outcomes can we by our negligence guarantee?' — but never explicitly or analytically. They are being asked and answered existentially, implicitly within our decisions and choices and existing policies.

The upshot of busy — even frenzied — daily routines is that we decide our problems 'as they arise' in terms of 'what will work' with 'what we've got'. We settle problems by expediency, as a matter of administrative

convenience, as a sort of habit or a surrender in the face of bureaucratic momentum. Too busy to think. Too busy saying that we are too poor. Too poor to spend just a little money on the sort of thinking and analysing which could save us an enormous amount of money and prevent perhaps the disasters which seem to flow from our present unexamined busyness.

Rather like a flooding bathroom. We are just too busy mopping up the mess to switch off the tap or pull the plug out.

If that represents much of our professional practice within the schools it seems to be matched by a widespread popular acceptance of the idea that our schools are just places for minding the children anyway, places of protective custody.

The scientists

Here is an earnest faith, a grim determination.

Let's be precise, scientific! Let's provide a master strategy! We have done it with rats and pigeons; we can do it with the kids in our schools. It was not the decision of our behavioral scientists that our schools should look like chicken batteries — but they do aspire to mastering the egg-laying approach in education.

First you have to say exactly what the students have to learn, what maze to run, what mastery to achieve and we shall devise the teaching machine, the electronic aid, the response reinforcer which will make every test run a success.

You mustn't talk about such nebulous objectives as maturity or character or tolerance or self-reliance — they just won't punch on to a card. We must not embark upon anything we cannot be sure of mastering; we must not be asked to endure uncertainty or ambiguousness or subtlety of any kind.

The educational technologists hold out such a promise as this without recourse to any other sort of evaluation or priority than their functional criteria — we can make the learning process work. Our education is for the mastery of data; personal relationships, commitments, celebrations, exertions, ambitions, collective sentiments of any kind are not the proper business of a school. We need resource centres of the most complex kind, the individuation of every program, in Skinner's own words, 'beyond freedom and dignity' to efficiency and mastery. On such terms as these our 'needs survey' approach to public education lifts the price by some hundreds of millions and doubles the size of our schools.

Since scientific mastery has produced such ambiguous results already in manipulation of nature and the exploitation of resources perhaps we should judge rather carefully just how far purely scientific techniques should be allowed to dominate educational management.



The campaigners

We have long been familiar with ideological factors in education, with denominational schools and social class blocs, with patriotic movements and united grandmothers for decency.

Much of the argument from campaigners proceeds by way of cliché and slogan.

Whether such a group is seen as a battalion of belligerent self-interest or as a significant sub-culture it will lay claim to some simple educational objective. Our schools are for 'the cultivation of scholastic excellence within a social elite.' Or our schools are for 'the nurture of children into baptismal fidelity.' Our schools are for 'the preservation of decency and the cultivation of patriotic loyalty.' Our schools are for 'the maintenance of democracy within the spirit of a common citizenship,' and so on.

There is some quaintness here, a good deal of vagueness, placard wisdom, plenty of inconsistency and a rather reassuring degree of confusion and contradiction.

Providing the campaigners never have the chance to settle the question absolutely, never split into warring camps, never unite to conquer, but are kept in lively debate, then our question 'education for what?' may have an important function to perform.

It may keep the process of education alive and even the process of democracy.

It is a question that should be asked continually by ordinary people within their own local community as a means of representing their point of view and testing the ordinary daily processes of schooling against that point of view.

The question needs to be asked more explicitly and more insistently within the intimacy of each school community about what is actually being done and what is actually being built and what is actually being spent in the school.

The question should involve us all as campaigners, should provide us with our agenda, our opportunity for establishing procedural agreements without need of ideological consensus. It may lead to a natural and easy dissolution of denominational or seminarian schools.

By this means, if by no other, our schools could be rescued from the powerful politics of a

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Talk about AUXILIARIES

Over 300 members of the Brotherhood's 31 auxiliaries attended the Annual Combined Auxiliaries Meeting on November 27 when cheques totalling nearly \$47,000 were handed to the Executive Director, Mr David Scott.

Guest speaker at the meeting was Mrs Concetta Benn, Co-ordinator of the new Family Centre.

Camberwell Auxiliary held a successful luncheon in October at the home of Mrs Nicholas O'Donohue in Camberwell. Nearly 100 guests enjoyed seeing this beautiful home and garden and hearing the guest speaker, Mrs Stuart Esnouf, who gave a most fascinating talk on her recent trip to Moscow and East Germany.

Waverley Auxiliary's shop has moved house from the old garage in Stephenson's Road to smart new premises at 11 Hamilton Walk, off Winbourne Road. Business has been brisk and the shop is well stocked by local residents.

Springtime is fairtime, particularly at the Brotherhood. St Laurence Park at Lara and G.K. Tucker Park, at Carrum Downs both held theirs on November 4th. They had something for everyone — at St Laurence Park there were shearing, spinning and pottery demonstrations, and at Tucker Park a huge air balloon for the children. The usual well stocked stalls included, at Tucker Park, pottery made by members of the Pottery Club. The Market Fair took over the Melbourne Town Hall on October 20th and was a colorful occasion with all the stalls laden with toys, materials, kitchen ware — you name it — and resulted in the record amount of \$4098.



Right: Mrs Concetta Benn, (left) Co-ordinator of the Brotherhood's Family Centre, and guest speaker at the Combined Auxiliaries Meeting, is pictured chatting with Mrs R.W. Gardiner, President of the Preston Auxiliary.

Education for what?



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centralised school system, from the manipulators and the ideologues, from bureaucratic indifference, from the high-powered and very militant educational technologists, from popular irresponsibility.

This question nevertheless is a closed question to the parents of State School children by virtue of departmental policies on staffing, building and funding arrangements. That is a major part of our crisis.

I have suggested no answer to the question with which we began, but I have tried to show that it is an important question and that it is everybody's question and that we must go on asking it and trying, however clumsily, to answer it. In our families. In our street. In our local school.

It should not be ruled out by idealists, it should not be taken over by scientists, it should not be ignored by practitioners. It must be struggled with.

It lies at the heart of democracy. It is that quest known at other times and in other places as the exercise of faith.



Above: The new Brotherhood Shop at Lara, run by the Lara Auxiliary.

Young Ashley Johns, son of Noel Johns, manager of St Laurence Park, looks bewildered at all the bustle at the opening of the Lara Brotherhood Shop.



A necessary part of life

Over the past 10 years family planning has gradually become accepted as a necessary part of life and today most people do plan how many children they will have and when. In many countries family planning advice is readily available for all, often at a nominal cost, and attending the clinic is as natural an activity as taking the baby along to the Baby Health Centre.

In Australia there is a limited number of special clinics in some of the capital cities but most people have to rely on their family doctor for advice. This is not always satisfactory as the average general practitioner often does not have time to sit down and thoroughly discuss and explain the methods available. Also, some women are too shy to ask and some doctors themselves are not prepared to provide information or advice on anything but the ovulation method. Others simply can't afford the medical fees involved.

Although Family Planning has made great strides in Melbourne since the early sixties when there was only the Roman Catholic Clinic advising on the ovulation method; a clinic at the Queen Victoria Hospital for patients of the hospital; Singleton's Health and Welfare Clinic in Collingwood, also for patients; and the Family Planning Association Clinic in St Kilda Road (which closed down in 1962 after just a year in operation),* we still have a long way to go.

Much of the credit for the fact that we now have 22 clinics operating in Melbourne should go to the Victorian Council of Social Service as it was their concern which prompted the

Brotherhood of St Laurence to open a clinic in Fitzroy in 1967.

The purpose of this clinic was to demonstrate the need for family planning to be made easily available to low income families. Since then several hospitals and councils have established clinics and in 1970 the Family Planning Association of Victoria was established and now operates two clinics, one at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the other at the Queen Victoria.

After a long wait the association has finally received written advice that it will be incorporated as a company with the Attorney General's Licence and registered as a charity by means of an order in Council. The association can now go ahead as an established, legal body and one of the first aims is to obtain a suitable headquarters.

"We badly need a place where there are facilities to run a clinic three times a day, five days a week; and space for a small lecture room for training clinic staff; a book shop or library; and administration and records," says Dr W. Vorrath, the president of the association. "With such a base we could then work towards expanding our work and achieving the association's aim of making family planning advice readily available to all who require it."

*** The reason given for the closure of this clinic was lack of support owing to poor publicity, location and the fact that it was operated from Sydney. It is also likely that its title 'Racial Hygiene Clinic' did nothing to encourage people to attend. Ed.**

RE-CYCLING WINS IN BENTLEIGH

Tremendous enthusiasm on the part of both contributors and processors ensured that the Brotherhood's Home Collection Service in Bentleigh got off to a good start. In the first three months of operation the service collected and recycled approximately 1911 dozen bottles, 105 tons of paper, 37 cwt of steel cans and 1562 tea chests of clothing.

Poverty and pollution are two big problems in the world today. Pollution increases as consumer spending grows and poverty increases as the 'have nots' in our society drop further and further behind.

The Home Collection Service is designed to attack both these problems. By collecting steel and aluminium cans, bottles, unwanted clothing and household goods for recycling it conserves general resource materials. Materials which more often than not would be dumped as waste. By recycling them to the manufacturers or in the case of good clothing and household articles to the general public, it is gaining extra finance for welfare service for low income families, elderly people on fixed incomes and young people living in the inner suburbs.

The initial pilot project operates from 14 Ardena Court, Bentleigh over an area containing about 8500 homes. It provides a reliable four-weekly collection service for householders of all recyclable materials.

If the service is successful it is hoped that it will eventually be extended to cover the whole of the Moorabbin Municipality which would involve approximately 40,000 households.

The Brotherhood has been assisted in this project by the full support of the Australian Paper Mills and the steel can people (Containers Limited, J. Gadsden Australia Limited, National Can Company Pty Ltd, The Broken Hill Proprietary Co. Ltd, United Packages Ltd). APM has made a truck available for the collection of the paper from Ardena Court. The steel can people subsidised a collection program of cans from the football grounds during the winter months and also removes the storage bins from the depot when they are full. More recently an arrangement has been made with Comalco Limited for the recycling of aluminium cans and they will also be co-operating fully with the service.

Interest in the scheme has been high and a number of people from outside the zone of operation are delivering goods for recycling to 14 Ardena Court themselves. There have been also numerous calls from individuals living outside the zone asking if we can extend the service to their area.

brotherhood gift

Send to Brotherhood of St Laurence, 67 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, 3065.

Donations of \$2 and over to the Brotherhood are deductible for Income Tax purposes.

I enclose my gift of \$ _____ towards

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Family Services | <input type="checkbox"/> | Carrum Downs Village | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Services for the Aged | <input type="checkbox"/> | St Laurence Court, Bendigo | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Youth Services | <input type="checkbox"/> | St Laurence Park, Lara | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you would like a bag for used clothing for salvage, please tick this space.

Name (Mr. Mrs. Miss)

Address

Postcode

CUT OUT AND MAIL YOUR GIFT