

# brotherhood action

Brotherhood of St Laurence

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## ACTION & RESOURCE CENTRE FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

The Action and Resource Centre for Low Income Families in Fitzroy continues to be a bright new concept in welfare. It is a Centre run and staffed by low-income families for low-income families. The feelings that ARC members have towards ARC are summarised by Gladys Shears in the introduction to the special conference Bulletin ARC contributed to the Social Work Conference in Adelaide this year:

"The Action and Resource Centre aims wherever it can to fight to bring about social change in the whole community for low-income people.

Also it is an organization that enables low-income people to be the Captains of their own lives, to say how they feel about things, what they want to say and to think for themselves. Not to be marionettes whose strings are pulled by professionals and the bureaucracy."

ARC's attendance and contribution to the 15th Biennial Conference of the Australian Social Workers Association in Adelaide is only one example of ARC sharing its ideas and new methods for tackling the problem of poverty with other members of the welfare field.

The ARC workforce, made up from the low-income family members, has recently expanded following a decision by the ARC Council to take on resource assistants for training. These new assistants will help other low-income families with problems related to housing, income, consumer rights, employment and savings and loans.

The Support Work (job training) Program has received a shot in the arm with the employment of a trade instructor and education officer



*The Resource Room at ARC.*

who help the young and long-term unemployed learn new skills to increase their chances of rejoining the workforce.

The most significant recent event is the move to start up a new "Mini-ARC". Maureen Wolf, with two resource assistants, will open the doors of ARC's first regional office in the Western Suburbs in mid-September. A steering committee has been elected to assist Maureen. Everyone is excited at the prospect because we can now offer resources and support for low-income families in another area.

Following the outstanding success of the Savings and Loan Program reported in the March "Action", ARC has now joined with the Fitzroy City Council and other local organisations to form a Fitzroy/ARC Credit Union. Although commencing on a small scale it will be supported by experienced volunteers such as Harold Shaw, secretary of the Australian Broadcasting Commission Housing Co-op. and Rick Fairhall, from Andersons Credit Co-operative.

Volunteers are used extensively in ARC's work, assisting with book-

keeping and typing as well as transport, holiday hosting for children and a Wednesday night activities program for children. Business people are also helping to examine the future funding needs of the Centre.

Another quote from the Conference Bulletin sums up one aspect of the knowledge that ARC members can share with the community:

"When it comes to the subject of poverty, being low-income people, we believe we have more authority than anyone else to speak about it, because experience is the best teacher in any field."

The principles of helping people to help themselves is being put into practice by the Brotherhood in its support of ARC.

If any readers are interested in contributing some expertise or regular time they could contact Mary D'Aprano on 419 7055.

Further information on ARC can be obtained from our publications office, Brotherhood of St. Laurence, 67 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, or by ringing ARC on 419 7055.

## VOLUNTEERS AT SALVAGE

Barbara Lynch is one volunteer who really looks forward to her two days a week at the Salvage Headquarters in Lygon Street, Brunswick. Barbara has a severe muscular disease which has meant long periods in hospital. "I couldn't find any work which was suitable for me to do and so I just sat around home for about a year. Sheltered workshops aren't my scene either. But it's good here. The doctor is really pleased and he thinks it's helped me a lot." Barbara folds plastic bags from Salvage's home collections and wraps them ready to be used again. This work helps to strengthen her muscles.

Barbara knew of the Brotherhood through the social worker at the hospital. A number of hospitals and other institutions refer people who are looking for voluntary work for various reasons, but who would not be suited to a sheltered workshop. In one program just starting, up to twenty elderly people from Mount Royal Geriatric Centre will be involved each day, mending toys to be given away at Christmas and doing minor repairs on furniture.



Volunteer Barbara Lynch (left) with Volunteers organizer Dorothy Brusey.

About forty people help regularly at Salvage, doing all sorts of jobs including answering telephones, filing and office work, and sorting clothing. The Fitzroy Auxiliary, formed in 1937, also help, with some of the original members still coming each week. A small group sort stamps each week, headed by Mr. Stirling Parker who has been coming since 1937. Two retired electricians spend their time at

## FALL IN DONATIONS Are You One of the 10,000?

The size of the Brotherhood means that an increasing number of people are dependent on the welfare services the Brotherhood provides. These services are, in turn, heavily dependent on the donations we receive from friends of the Brotherhood.

Our sources of income are the Salvage Division which depends on gifts of clothing and household goods; legacies which are obviously an uncertain source of income; the fundraising auxiliaries and cash donations.

It is disturbing to discover that our general donations dropped by some \$19,000 in the financial year just ended. There was also some reduction in the response to the two special appeal letters we send out each year.

Perhaps some people feel that the Brotherhood is so big that it would not be affected whether or not they make a donation of \$10, \$20 or \$50.

That is not so. Leaving aside the service charges to residents and the government benefits and subsidies for our accommodation for the elderly, we rely on donations for 69% of the money required to maintain all our other services as well as the deficits on our services for the elderly.

Most of our donations come in small or modest amounts from about 10,000 people. This is good because it shows that the Brotherhood has a wide base of public support but we would like it to be much wider. This would increase our ability to extend our services to the growing number of people in need and also give us a 'membership' of people who are interested in and show their concern for social problems.

If you are already one of the 10,000 please continue to support us and, as many already have, increase your support to make up for the effects of inflation on the cost of our services.

If you are not already a donor, would you consider 'joining up'? I have just read that the National Trust of Victoria has 20,000 members who support the preservation of old buildings. The Trust has been remarkably successful in developing support for the need to preserve our history and improve our environment. Surely the Brotherhood can enlist as many or more people concerned at the increasing economic and social pressures on the aged, low-income families, unemployed and vulnerable minority groups whose needs tend to be neglected unless organizations like the Brotherhood can provide services and generate community support.

The problem about reliance on donations is that one can never be sure of their amount or frequency. This makes it difficult to guarantee that services can be maintained. It would be very helpful if supporters were prepared to pledge a certain amount of money each year to help the work of the Brotherhood and notify us of this intent.

**David Scott**

Salvage mending small appliances which would otherwise be scrap as they cannot be sold if not checked and in working order. A number of schools have social service programs with students helping for anything from half a day to a week.

Because of the increasing numbers involved, the Brotherhood decided to create the position of volunteers organiser. Dorothy Brusey who joined Salvage in June has already been able to place a number of new volunteers referred by hospitals. "The challenge is in helping people to find a satisfying interest and it's important that each person finds the right job for them."

## BROTHERHOOD FAIRS

### MARKET FAIR

Melbourne Town Hall  
Friday, November 18  
at 10.30 a.m.



### COUNTRY FAIR

St. Laurence Park, Lara  
Saturday, November 5  
at 12 noon, BBQ lunch



### G. K. Tucker Park, Carrum Downs

Saturday, October 15  
at 10 a.m. BBQ lunch

## A NEW SCHEME TO HOUSE LOW-INCOME PEOPLE

A new scheme to house low-income people has been inaugurated by the Victorian Minister for Housing, Mr. Geoff Hayes. The Fitzroy Collingwood Rental Housing Association is the result of three years' planning and organising by a small group of people interested in preserving housing for low-income people in areas where they wish to live.

Four years ago, the Brotherhood's Executive Director, David Scott returned from a visit to England, convinced that rental housing associations which have been active in the U.K. for the past 80 years, could make a valuable contribution, providing a new form of housing management in Australia. The idea was taken up by SHELTER and a Rental Housing Association Sub-committee was formed.

Executive Officer in Melbourne is architect and town planner, Andrew McCutcheon.

Housing Commission staff and representatives of the Association inspected more than 100 properties and, so far, have purchased 15. The Committee has developed a method of assessing need which takes into account family size and income, current housing situation and the applicant's need to live in the Fitzroy and Collingwood area. The Association stock of housing will include rooming houses for elderly and single people of all ages and 2, 3 and 4-bedroom flats and houses.

One of the first applicants to be offered a tenancy is a family from Lebanon with 10 children who have been sharing a 2-bedroom house with another family with 7 children.

If the Rental Housing Association is successful, it could lead to the



In November 1976, a proposal was made to Mr. Hayes for the establishment of a Fitzroy/Collingwood Rental Housing Association which would acquire and manage properties to provide accommodation for low-income people who were being displaced by the increase in property values. Mr. Hayes agreed that the Housing Commission would purchase approximately \$1m. worth of properties in Fitzroy and Collingwood and lease them to the Association for a trial 3-year period.

The Association is now formally constituted with a committee of management which will comprise one representative from each of the two Councils, eight elected by tenants, one representative of the Housing Commission and four others with skills and experience in finance, housing management, architecture and planning. The

formation of other associations providing low-income people with alternatives to accommodation in high-rise flats or in outer area Housing Commission estates.

It is hoped that tenants will see the Association as a co-operative in which they have involvement in decision-making and that it will lead to tenant co-operation in reducing renovation and maintenance costs. The Victorian Housing Commission is co-operating fully in the experiment. The Commonwealth Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development will provide places in its Housing Allowance Voucher Experiment to enable tenants to meet the difference between 25% of their income and the market rental of the houses or flats.

It is a housing 'first' that the Brotherhood is proud to be associated with.

## What We've Been Doing

Two social work students, working with Brotherhood research worker Graeme Brewer, have recently completed a study of people who have been taken off unemployment benefits. They have examined their circumstances, the information available to them and what happens when they appeal against termination of benefits. Another project has been started by students to gather information about the problems faced by single fathers.

In June the Brotherhood was host to a two day consultation organised by the Australian Council of Churches in relation to the formation of a Commission on Church and Society. The meeting, chaired by Rev. Peter Hollingworth, discussed a critique of Australian society by Melbourne sociologist Peter Dwyer which will be published shortly.

Hugh McNally recently retired after nearly 12 years with the Brotherhood. "Mac" started as Activities Officer for the geriatric services, and for the last five years was Manager of Laurence Industries Sheltered Workshop. Geoff Norman from Geelong has taken over from "Mac" at Laurence Industries.

ARC has a SWOP programme and now has swapped people. Peter Gogorosis, Deputy Superintendent from the Western Region Office of the Social Welfare Department, is with ARC for three months. Bob Williams, ARC staff member, is at the Western Region Office for three months. Bob has a chance to learn about bureaucracy from the inside and Peter will gain from his time at ARC.

Although this kind of staff exchange has not taken place before the Social Welfare Department was keen to try it. Both the Department and ARC worked together on planning the exchange so it became a practical demonstration of co-operation between a government department and a self-help programme.

### WANTED COOKS FOR THE MARKET FAIR

Can you make a cake or biscuits for the Fair on November 18? If you would like to, please contact Mrs. Thelma Tuxen on 419 7055.

# FAMILY DAY CARE

The Victorian Family Day Care Association was formed in Melbourne in August with Jennie Hollander, co-ordinator of the Brotherhood's FDC being appointed President. Other office bearers are from St. Kilda, Hamilton and Springvale FDCs.

Australia's first Family Day Care program was started by the Brotherhood in late 1971 as an alternative way of caring for children. There are now about 100 programs throughout Australia with 23 in Victoria. They have all been funded through the Federal Office of Child Care or through local councils.

Our Family Day Care in Fitzroy has an average of 20 child minders who care for a total of about 55 children. They are chosen for their skills as mothers and care for the children in the minder's own home. This makes the service extremely flexible as the families involved can fit in with shift work and other problems which can prove difficult in other forms of child care.

The responsibility for the care of the child is accepted by the Brotherhood and Jennie Hollander as co-ordinator gives all the support necessary to the families. She advises on child care and a multitude of other problems which often arise. Families can also borrow from a small but growing library of equipment such as prams, pushers, bassinets, toys and books.



Jennie says that Family Day Care should not be seen as being in competition with other forms of child care but as a further link in the community. It caters mainly for babies and very young children who are not generally accepted in commercial centres and it is also an excellent form of care for children with problems as they can form a close relationship with one adult. Family Day Care also can help families where the mother is not working but for some reason needs to have her children cared for, either for short or long periods.

A recent survey of our childminders showed that they had worked for the Brotherhood for an average of nearly 4 years. They all said they enjoy being at home but that they think of childminding as a responsible job.

Family Day Care supports the total family, not just the working mothers. Both the minding and working families are encouraged to help each other and they often become good friends. This is particularly so in new housing areas where families can make friends and become part of the community.

## 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

Social Issues and Research

Services for the Aged

General

Name (Mr. Mrs. Miss) .....

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**CUT OUT AND MAIL YOUR GIFT**

Brotherhood of St. Laurence,

Head Office,  
67 Brunswick Street,  
Fitzroy, 3065.  
Telephone: 419 7055

Coollibah Centre and  
Accommodation Service, Fitzroy;  
Carinya Nursing Home, Box Hill;  
G. K. Tucker Park Settlement  
for the Active Elderly,  
Carrum Downs;  
St. Laurence Park Settlement for  
the Active Elderly, Lara;  
Keble Court Flats, North Fitzroy.

Family Centre Fitzroy;  
Family Day Care, Fitzroy;  
Material Aid Service, Fitzroy.

The King Street Job Centre,  
181 King Street, Melbourne.

Research and Social Issues  
Department, Fitzroy.

Laurence Industries Sheltered  
Workshop, West Heidelberg.

Salvage Division,  
240 Lygon Street, Brunswick.  
For Collections:  
Telephone: 387 4333.