

brotherhood action

Brotherhood of St Laurence

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Changes in Brotherhood Services for Unemployed

Despite a slight decrease in the number of unemployed people, unemployment remains at the high rate of 6% of the total workforce. High unemployment always first affects the most vulnerable groups in our community; the unskilled worker and the young inexperienced worker. The Brotherhood is concerned that as the numbers of these people increase, so do the numbers of people in poverty because the unemployment benefit rate is well below the poverty line.

Early in 1977 the Brotherhood started the King Street Job Centre in the hope that jobs could be found for people if some concentrated effort and resources were applied. During 1977 it became apparent that extra job seeking efforts were not the answer to high unemployment. Consequently the Job Centre looked for other ways to help unemployed people. Gradually the Centre became an information and advice centre and by the time it was closed in June 1978 its main activities were: assisting unemployed individuals to obtain the benefits and services which are their rights, producing a monthly broadsheet on unemployment, and an outreach program in Flemington.

The King Street Job Centre was an experiment which the Brotherhood staff hoped would show them the best way to help unemployed people. Before the Centre was closed a formal review of its activities was held by the Brotherhood and Job Centre staffs; resource documents used in this review were several progress reports and a research report which evaluated the work of the



(Photograph courtesy David Spratt)

Centre. Several new initiatives were recommended by the staff to the Board and have since been approved.

It was assumed that high unemployment would not be a short-term problem, but because of its structural nature would affect the

community over the long-term future. Therefore it was decided to set up within the Brotherhood, an Unemployment Rights Service, which would offer an advocacy and advice service for individuals. This will open soon at the Fitzroy headquarters.

(continued overleaf)

(from front cover)

It was also decided to continue to fund the Job Centre worker who had started the outreach program in Flemington until the end of the year. The program is located in the Flemington Health Centre which will supervise it and seek funds for its continuation next year.

A third initiative was to strengthen the Brotherhood's community education program which regards unemployment as a poverty issue. A plan to focus the Brotherhood's community education efforts in a Poverty Education Resource Centre is now under discussion.

The Brotherhood's work in the area of unemployment and its

effects on low-income people was recently recognised by the State Government through the Department of Social Welfare. On July 18, the Minister for Social Welfare, Mr Brian Dixon, announced that the Brotherhood had been asked by his Department to examine whether the resources which were available for programs to assist unemployed people could be better utilized by disadvantaged groups.

A grant of \$25,000 will be used to employ a team of four people with experience in the area of unemployment for a period of six months. The team will prepare a report for the Minister which will not be written in isolation but in

consultation with other concerned groups in the community. Unemployed people, voluntary organisations, employers, trade unions and municipal councils will be canvassed for their ideas. If time allows a draft of the report will also be discussed with community groups for feedback.

Mr Dixon said when he was announcing the grant that the Brotherhood's work, together with consultations about youth employment currently being carried out by the Youth Council of Victoria, "would provide Victoria with new options and a broader scope for dealing with the structural unemployment situation".

WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING

SWOP, the Action and Resource Centre's job creation and training scheme, has received further funding from the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations. A remedial teacher, a work supervisor, and 15 trainees have recently started.

★ ★ ★

Frank Keating has been appointed Manager of Laurence Industries Sheltered Workshop in West Heidelberg. Frank has been supervisor of the workshop for the past four years. 'Kevin', aged 20 years, who spent two years as a rehabilitee at the workshop, has been the first to move into outside employment. He was originally referred to the workshop by the Commonwealth Employment Service as a 'slow learner', but has now been a fitter's assistant with an engineering firm for four months.

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Our Salvage Division is now offering a 'next day' home collection service for donors who ring before 1.30 p.m. each day. This means that our trucks will be calling in every suburb every day. The Brotherhood Bins have reduced the number of house calls so making the new schedule possible.

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Graeme Brewer, the Brotherhood's Senior Research Officer, is editing an oral history of poverty in Australia for Melbourne publishers Hyland House. People from

different groups in poverty, for example, rural, unemployed, aboriginals, lone parents, have been interviewed about their lives. The book will be published early next year.

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A 'Guidebook for the Unemployed' was produced by the staff of the Job Centre before it closed. It is an excellent reference for unemployed people telling them the ins and outs of what is needed before receiving benefits. The Guidebook can be obtained from Publications, Brotherhood of St Laurence, 67 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, 3065, price 50c plus postage.

THEY HELP US

"Serendipity" means "happy accident" but it was certainly more than a happy accident for the Brotherhood when the Serendipity and Heyfield Spinners had an exhibition and sale of their magnificent handspinning and weaving at the ANZ Bank's Town Hall branch. Nearly 200 articles were on show and a percentage of their sales gave a donation to the Brotherhood of \$290.

★ ★ ★

Lara Shop Auxiliary have moved to new premises in the central shopping centre. This was officially opened by the Shire President on July 10, and will sell donated goods as well as craftwork produced by residents of St Laurence Park. The shop has been mainly built by voluntary labour.

Shop President, Mrs Edna Neagle, said in her annual report

— "When I was elected President a year ago I realized that I had so much to learn. I am still learning about the Brotherhood, the community and our place in it. I have discovered that the Auxiliary is not just the band of ladies who come to our meetings, but all who are involved and using their talents for the B.S.L. shop.

I have learnt to value the enthusiasm, dedication and love of people that I have found among our members. People have confidence in our shop, not always for the bargains, but for the friendship that goes with them."

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A dinner auction in June raised nearly \$4,000 for the Brotherhood. It was organized by a small committee headed by Mrs Shirley Lowthian and Mrs Memory Grecian, and guests enjoyed an excellent dinner as they bid for items ranging from a box of jelly snakes to dinner at the Hilton.



Maureen West (left) and Meg Finlay, both from Bulleen, had their spinning and knitting on show at the Serendipity and Heyfield Spinners Exhibition.

Coolibah Day Centre

"It is a great personal achievement when someone who has had a severe stroke can once again eat the scones they made themselves".

Some of the elderly people attending the Brotherhood's new Day Centre in Fitzroy perhaps never imagined that happening. Sister Lyn Bathurst and her staff have developed a wide variety of therapeutic activities for people who have been in hospital suffering from strokes, arthritis, or similar conditions. Once they have left hospital and the concentrated therapy they have received, the Coolibah Day Centre will help them to stay at that level. The Centre is an extension of the Coolibah Club for pensioners and has been funded by the Hospitals and Charities Commission.

"We have about 50 coming each week for cooking sessions, gardening, discussion groups, and just simple occupations to keep them interested and busy", Sister Bathurst said. "For so many elderly people the main problem is loneliness. We want them to stay independent, in their own homes, instead of relying on hospitals or other institutions."



Coolibah Day Centre Stall Elfrieda Sullivan (left) and Betty Bradbury show a group how to make hanging baskets and bottle gardens.



Sister Lyn Bathurst (left) and Coolibah Club member Miss Bishop wind nylon offcuts in the Day Centre.

DOWN THE GARDEN PATH

Michael Barrow, aged 16 years, from St Joseph's Marist Brothers College in North Fitzroy, spent an afternoon at Limurru Cottage, the Brotherhood's Fitzroy child care centre, and this is the report he wrote for his Social Action Group at school.

"When I arrived at the building I was greeted quite warmly. I was introduced to several people and then I was led out the back — up the garden path. They asked me when the others were coming, if I wanted a drink or something to eat; then basically they said get down to work. They had it all worked out, what they wanted the 'menfolk' to do — sand down the doll's furniture and possibly repaint it all later.

So I leaned over and picked some sandpaper and for two hours I sanded, scraped, worked, sweated, wore down my knuckles, and got fragments of green paint all over my clothes, in my eyes, ears, nose, and hair. I never finished all the sanding that they wanted done, but I tried. They had at least eight different articles of furniture there and I finished one wardrobe and half a dresser — I did a very thorough job. I also tried to replace a leg to its old position on a dresser, but unfortunately I was not very effective with a 'hammer and nails' job.

The organisation cares for little children while school is on,

and other children also after school hours; this gives mothers in the Housing Commission area it is, an opportunity to work during the day. I helped make their furniture a different colour, nothing spectacular — but probably essential. All the way through my two hours and fifteen minutes I explained at least ninety-seven times to ninety-seven different kids what I was doing.

From this experience I have learnt that there still is people who centre their lives around helping others. And I have also found that (although it is limited) I have a general capacity to make other people happy."

SAVINGS AND LOANS PROJECT

Many ACTION readers have supported the Action and Resource Centre's Savings and Loans project since it started early in 1977, by either loans or donations.

Thirty individual members of ARC have been able to borrow through the scheme. They all had to save \$32 before a loan was made and to have a reasonable record of repayments before further loans were made. No interest charges were made.

The total amount loaned to low income families has been \$5,969. A Loans Committee of two family members and an accountant have kept a close watch on the project and now that it is running under its own steam, all supporters who have made loans are being or have been repaid.

The main objectives of the project have been to introduce low income people to a pattern of saving, to counter the influences to "spend", and to indicate that loans could be made to and repaid by low income people.

Everyone who has taken part has had a lot of enjoyment with Chat and Chew Committee meetings, special awards for good repayers, and with complete control and involvement by ARC members.

Are You One of Our Earliest Readers?

The first issue of ACTION's predecessor, the "Brotherhood Notes", written by the Brotherhood's founder Father G. K. Tucker, was published in January 1932.

One hundred copies were printed and they were sent mainly to people living in the Adamstown Parish of Newcastle, where the Brotherhood had started in the previous month.

The Brotherhood remained in Adamstown only two years before moving permanently to Melbourne. Father Tucker continued to send his notes to interested people in Adamstown and other parts of N.S.W. for many years.

John Handfield, who is preparing a biography of Father Tucker's life and times, would be very interested to hear from anyone who might have seen that first issue and to see who has the longest record of readership. There are still many people in Melbourne who have been active supporters of the Brotherhood since the earliest times and John would like to make mention of them. If you can help please contact Merron Rusden on 419 7055.

TOYS FOR CHRISTMAS

The Brotherhood's Christmas Toy Club hopes this year to provide toys to about 2,000 children from low income families. The Club is run in keeping with the Brotherhood's philosophy of distributing aid in a way that is dignified and gives as many choices as possible.

Each family pays a small amount depending on the number of children and the parents are invited in small groups to choose three toys for each child. The toys are all of shop quality and cover a wide range of age groups. While Church groups and individuals do an excellent job making and repairing toys, each year it becomes harder to provide for all who apply. The "Sun" Toy Fund gives a large number of new toys and the Brotherhood also buys in bulk from donations given for that purpose.

Psychology student Paul Butler will be working for a half-day each week organising the Club this year, and he would be glad to hear from anyone who can help by making or repairing toys or dressing dolls. You can ring him on 419 7055.

Voluntary Helpers Shop Gives Again

The Voluntary Helpers' Shop was started in 1953 by Mr and Mrs Ralph Wilson and a small group of friends. Their aim was to raise money for charities from the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian and Jewish faiths.

Little did they think that in 25 years, over \$1,500,000 would be distributed. Of this, the Brotherhood has received \$320,000, with the latest grant being \$80,000 towards the new Clifton Hill hostel for the frail aged.



Mrs Ralph Wilson, President of the Voluntary Helpers' Shop, presents a cheque for \$80,000 to Neville Brooke, Director of Services for the Aged.

brotherhood gift

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

I enclose my gift of \$ towards

Family Services

☐

Social Issues and Research

☐

Services for the Aged

☐

General

☐

☐ Please Tick here if you do not require a receipt.

Name (Mr. Mrs. Miss)

Address

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-----CUT OUT AND MAIL YOUR GIFT