

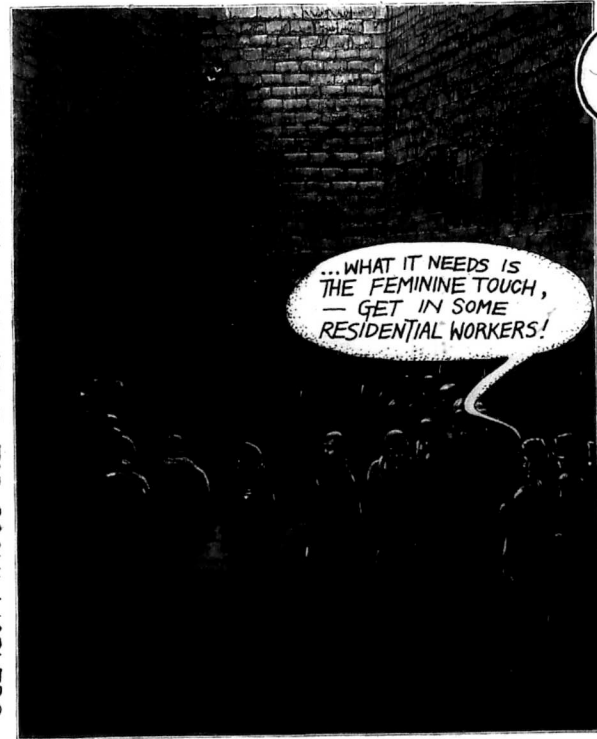
# CASE CON

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# RESIDENTIAL WORK ISSUE

## CASE-CON EDITORIAL

The present mood of "cut, cut, cut..." has put residential workers more than ever in the front line. They are the workers most immediately hit by the freezing of vacancies, the drastic curtailment of overtime and overtime payment, and the freezing of placements for children who ought to be moving on. The demands placed on them rapidly escalate to the intolerable. In such a situation it is more than ever essential to develop our understanding of the nature of the residential job, and to build the needed links between residential workers and their colleagues in the traditionally better organised areas. It is hoped that this issue can help to make that possible, particularly if a real effort is made to get it into residential establishments which often do not see CASE-CON from one year's end to the next.

Steve Landey's article shows how institutional care, with the shift away from emphasis on the caring role of the family that it involved, developed as a response to the changing needs of capital, and how it is now being cut-back as part of the same pattern. A running theme throughout the issue is the way in which the needs of residents are consistently sacrificed to the needs both of the caring institution itself (one instance of this is documented in great detail in 'Halfway to Nowhere') and of the network of social institutions of which it is a functional part. Not only are the voices of residents not heard, but they are not even considered worth listening to. If social work is an agency of social control, then this is even more clearly true of residential than it is of field work. Residential work has a built-in 'authority problem'. Not only is authority intimately in the nature of the work itself, but also junior staff find themselves working all too often within rigidly hierarchical structures, which demand of them the same passive obedience that they are encouraged to exert from charges. Fieldworkers all too often collude with this by agreeing to deal only with superintendents and matrons. To attempt to change these structures, as the article 'The Levelers - Flattened' demonstrates, is felt to threaten the real basis of the whole enterprise.

The value base of residential work, and the values into which children in particular are being rigorously socialised, are alien to the great majority of working-class institutional residents. Yet the potentially productive contradiction within the situation is that residential care, as a group experience alternative to the closed experiential boundaries of the family, COULD be a genuinely liberating experience. This paradox is explored in Abi Goodden's article 'Who Cares?'. As a flexible and freely-chosen alternative to the confinements of the nuclear family, the slogan

"A Children's Home on Every Estate" could be a truly radical demand. But residential care as it at present practised is most decidedly NOT a flexible and freely-chosen

community provision. The man who writes on 'Life in an Old People's Home' does not feel that he has had a very real choice or presented with any genuine alternatives. The legislation covering the admission of children into care is framed very clearly to protect the interests, not of the child, but of the propertied class the law exists to defend. This theme is developed in the article 'You're Only Going Away For A Little While...'. The held-out promise of discharge from care can itself be a very subtle form of social control. It is commonly known for social workers to promise parents that they can have their children back when they have proved their credentials as respectable citizens by finding and keeping a job.

What to do, and how to organise? Residential staff are a highly exploited group of workers. They are still on a 42-hour week, and even that figure cloaks the reality of what in fact can be as much as a 120-hour week. Their salary levels are minimal - for taking overall responsibility for the total lives of up to 20 children, you will be paid less than a basic grade social worker. Training prospects for residential workers are miserable - see 'Second Class Training for a Second Class Job'. All this is largely a result of residential work having been seen for years as 'women's work' and therefore inferior and of diminished significance. The issue of sexism in residential work is explored in 'Sugar & Spice'.

One aspect, however, which we have still not been able to go into is the issue of Gay workers in residential situations. Gays are the most vulnerable and oppressed part of a vulnerable and oppressed workforce, and we have not been able to find a gay worker prepared to run the risk of writing, even anonymously, for this issue. We recognise that this is a major omission.

Clearly change will only be achieved if, first and foremost, the workers in the service, perhaps in solidarity with their clients, are able to organise for it. Trade Union organisation has in the past been seen to offer little to residential workers, but news reports in this issue from Essex, Camden and a victimised group of workers from a large children's home in London indicate that this CAN be changed.

The difficulties are enormous. This issue carries two articles on a trade union organisation which try to point to some of the ways forward. Residential work is the Cinderella of the Social Services; but if Cinderella had been a NUPE shop steward, the Ugly Sisters - Residential Management and the Big Bad Council - would soon have seen some changes.

Editorial Collective

## THE FUNCTION OF TOTAL INSTITUTIONS IN CAPITALIST SOCIETY

In modern capitalist society the services offered by the State have two broad inter-related functions. Firstly, they offer direct support and service to the productive system by maintaining the efficiency of the labour force. Secondly, they control the labour force directly or indirectly and produce a conformity to the needs of the capitalist system. Though this division is, to an extent, a heuristic one only, it does help to locate certain institutions into an overall framework. Examples of the former kind of service are the Public Health provisions, Housing and Public Transport. Examples of the second are the Prison System, the Police and the Personal Social Services. Some provisions, such as education, fall equally into both categories.

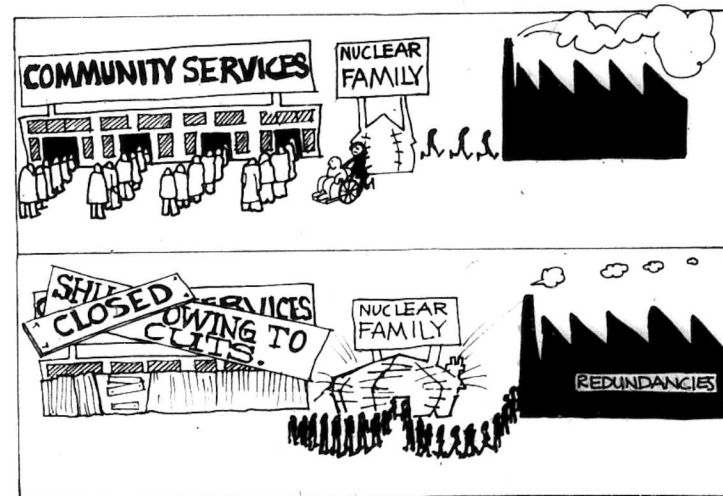
This article sets out to locate the provision of residential (or total) institutions in such a framework based on a Marxist analysis of society. Engels argued in the Preface to 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State' that 'the determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life'. He went on to argue that this was of a two-fold character - the production of necessities, such as food and shelter, and the production of the species itself - reproduction.

In pre-capitalist societies both these functions tended to be concentrated in the family. The family was the basic unit of economic production as well as the unit of species reproduction. However, Engels also argued that the structure of such institutions as the family is determined by the particular set of economic relationships that obtain at a given historical point. In the case of capitalism the family assumes a nuclear structure reflecting the wider economic structures. For example, the nuclear family expresses the pattern of dominance exerted in the capitalist mode of production in the dominance of the husband over his wife. It also expresses the increased division of labour and the dominance of commodity production. This means that in the same way in which the family sheds all of its productive functions to increased specialist and concentrated units of production, it also sheds some of its 'social' functions, which are taken over by the State. The impact of the increased division of labour on the family means

that it becomes a more specialised unit - its primary function being the reproduction and servicing of labour power.

However, in order that the family can perform this task most effectively, it has to be freed to some extent from extraneous burdens which contribute nothing to the reproduction of labour power. In practice this means that the care of the elderly, infirm, chronically sick or mentally or physically handicapped person is a burden which interferes with the family's primary economic function. The establishment of the workhouse system in the first half of the 19th century, for example, represents a move away from support by communities and families of non-productive individuals, support moreover in the community, toward a concentration and institutionalisation of these non-productive people in a closed and managed setting. Institutions such as the workhouse also had an important control function. As society became more specialised and complex its ability to tolerate deviance became less. Thus throughout the 19th century we see a growth in the institutional poor-law provision, the development of the modern prison system and an extension of these control systems to a wider variety of non-conforming individuals.

In the 20th century we see a further extension of these sorts of provisions within the Welfare State. Such an increase in state provision does not mean, of course, that the capitalist system is being liberalised, but that a certain degree of surplus wealth is available to pay for - and the increasing complexity and alienation of life demands - more sophisticated control and support systems. The state in capitalist society appears relatively autonomous, as Pelantzas has argued, because the capitalist class is unable to organise itself into a coherent political force. The state then steps in to protect the long-term interest of the capitalist class against the short-term anarchy of the capitalists themselves. As capitalism develops the state has to assert its hegemony more and more because of the trend toward anarchic relationships developing both within and between classes. It is important to note at this point that the bulk of such expenditure benefits people active in production and their children whose subsistence is part of the value of labour power.



It is within this framework that the wide range of total institutions provided by the state can be seen as part of an integrated whole. Basically, it is in the interests of the state, acting in the long-term interests of the ruling class, to provide facilities for the family to most efficiently exercise its prime functions of producing and reproducing labour power. The care of the elderly is perhaps the clearest example, but the provision of residential establishments for children is also part of this overall pattern. Apart from the integration of children's homes into the overt deviant control process with the abolition of approved schools, they provide a fall-back service for the family which is temporarily not functioning. The model pattern of reception into care which the conventional wisdom of social work aims at is the short-term reception at crisis point, to relieve pressure and allow the social worker to rehabilitate the family back to normality. That reality tends to be a much longer stay in care and a more permanent breakdown of family structure, is testimony to the sort of pressure many working class families are under and the intrinsic instability of the nuclear family itself.

steve landey

## Halfway To Nowhere

Many social workers and Case Care supporters have voiced concern about putting kids into the care of the local authority, especially as this often means placing them in residential establishments. Aigall Gooden, for example, in Case Care 19 writes about the problems of 'institutionalised communal living' with reference to family group homes, and perhaps the basic problem for kids in long-term residential care is this problem of institutionalisation.

The child, coming into care as a result of deviating from family, social or legal norms, may spend several years of his/her life being shifted from one establishment to another. The child comes to experience life as a series of decisions made for and about him/her, not by himself or by his parents, but by a series of unrelated people, not solely on the basis of his individual needs but often for reasons of expediency and convenience, or on the basis of some sort of notion of 'character-training'. This problem of institutionalisation, and the dehumanising and incapacitating effect this has on the child has been recognised by the residential establishments themselves and has led to the formation of 'pre-release units'. This article is about some of the problems I have encountered in working in one of these places, both with regard to myself as an employee, and with regard to the actualisation of the notion of pre-release care.

### DE-INSTITUTIONALIZING

The unit in which I work is attached to a Community School. Our kids have spent some time in the rest of the establishment, and to put it in simplistic terms, a term at our place is meant to change them from institutionalised, still-'deviant' kids into self-directing, well-motivated human beings, ready to be released into the outside community.

There are several related reasons why I see this officially stated purpose as being difficult if not impossible to achieve.

First, the physical and financial situation of the unit. However different our unit purports to be from the rest of the establishment, it is, necessarily attached to it: it is on the same campus and is physically surrounded by all the trappings of the community school life which we are meant to

Day centres, too, both for young children and the elderly, handicapped and mentally ill have the function of relieving the family for the more important tasks of labour production.

At the present time, we have an interesting situation where, with the falling rate of profit the long and short-term interests of the ruling class are in conflict. The support services are being cut to release more resources for the primary production of wealth, and notwithstanding what I have said above, the development of the Welfare State has been of benefit to ordinary people and the argument does not minimise the role the political institutions of the working class has had in pushing forward these sort of provisions. The most urgent task facing all of us in social services, whether residential or field or administrative, is to defend the services from the attacks being made against them.

be moving away from. We cook our own meals as part of the plan for the kids to learn to take care of their immediate needs, but the food we eat has to be bought via the establishment: it is easier for admin. that way, and there are doubts about our ability to cope with our own budget. So the Kids don't get a chance to find out what prices are like in the shops, or what it is to go shopping for food. There are regulations regarding the types of food eaten, so there are constant arguments about the lack of chips and baked beans. The boredom of a constant diet of spaghetti on toast can never be learnt. Working kids' contribution to the 'household budget' I've haven't got one: for board and lodging is officially limited to a totally unrealistic sum. On the other hand unemployed kids cannot learn the deviations of the social security system since they are not allowed to draw Supplementary Benefits. Instead, 16 and 17 year-old kids are meant to learn about living in the community on 50p pocket money per week.

### ALIEN ENVIRONMENT

The physical characteristics of the place put further restraints on our work. The unit is full of expensive new equipment (regulations forbid second-hand stuff), the walls are painted white; there is central heating, fitted carpets (which show the dirt), Habitat-type curtains and furniture, and all of this represents a considerable financial investment which has to last a good many years, and which the powers that be therefore expect to be maintained to a reasonable standard. This has the effect of turning the staff into protectors of this expensive outfit: the kids don't come from such sumptuous backgrounds and have had little experience in respecting such valuable goods.

Indeed, such a place is alien to them. It seems to be more powerful than the kids, and for them to claim it as their own, they have to put their mark on it, wreck its ideal home image. This obviously doesn't go down too well with staff who work elsewhere on the campus, some of whom are jealous of the amount of money spent on the unit, and this only heightens the tension surrounding keeping it clean and in one piece. We have a daily domestic to help us keep the dirt under control, yet when she is on holiday the place stays relatively tidy and seems to belong to the kids more, they come to know, briefly, their ability to manage on their own.

Other facets of life in the pre-release unit are governed or influenced by the rest of the establishment. Regulations regarding clothes allowances, money spent on outings, hair-cuts, bus-fares for home visits etc have to be managed through the establishment's administration system. However much we try to create a flexible atmosphere, however much we try to push the kids to be responsible for their own lives, all these factors pull in the opposite direction, and confirm the management control and hierarchical nature of the place and underline its institutional basis.

The system of divide and rule which is the hierarchy extends to the kids; they perceive differences in the status of the staff and make the most of them. They know, and the staff know, that those higher up have the ultimate authority over their lives (jobs) and this can lead to a resentful attitude all round. Further, it creates an unbalanced and unhealthy basis for relationships where authority is not always born out of respect but is attached to official position and in some cases may stem out of fear.

### SORTING OUT MEN FROM WOMEN

Our unit is staffed by fairly inexperienced people. This is partly to generate ideas that are different from the rest of the establishment but also because the money is not there to attract 'more experienced and more mature staff'. Even in a new place without a potentially stifling tradition, it is difficult to inaugurate new ways of approaching things because of suspicion and because these ideas are weakened by the old order of which this new unit is still very much a part.

For example, I am employed as a housemother (a mother of 23 years!). My role as defined by the old system is not to 'direct' the kids but to take care of their immediate physical needs. Happily, we women are allowed to participate on a fairly equal basis with the men - due solely to enthusiasm on our part as we get no more money in our wage packets which leads to a tendency to feel guiltily over-involved because one is doing a job one is not paid for. But this concession seems to me to be rather more than mere goodwill on the part of the upper echelons. If we women were to adhere strictly to our housemother roles, then the officially endorsed idea of the kids learning, by doing, to take care of themselves would be seriously impeded.

The general result is that new ideas are acceptable insofar as they suit the management, but are unacceptable if they really challenge the old order of things. My lowly position as a housemother is constantly and subtly brought home to me: I am not to change the attitudes of the kids towards the sexes but if I can 'direct' their attitude away from nicking then that's O.K.

Incidentally, women are virtually always recruited into the lowest grade whereas men of the same qualification enter the ladder at the senior grade with correspondingly higher pay and more officially recognised responsibility. If I was on the senior grade the degree qualification I hold would be recognised in an increment. As it is, Avon has ignored it.

### COMMUNITY CARE NOT SHOWPIECES

All these factors mean the continued institutionalisation of the day to day lives of the kids. Not only does the set-up at our unit affect the kids in practical terms and in the very areas where they should be leading lives as real as possible, but as I have indicated it also distorts relationships with staff, and pulls away from the kids being able to achieve self-direction. If the idea is to reintegrate the kids into the community, then put the money and effort there, in Southwold and Knowle West, and not necessarily in the form of a residential unit.



If a residential unit is deemed necessary (which it is when kids can't, for one reason or a other, go home) then this deinstitutionalising unit should be as autonomous and as self-governing as possible, and sited away from large residential establishments. Residence should be voluntary, this would remove to a very great extent the negative aspects of the control/management function of staff, it would remove a lot of the kids' anxiety and would be conducive to constructive working together by creating an entirely new basis for living, away from the old order which places the kids firmly under the many thumbs of the hierarchy. Such a place would also require a staffing system carefully thought out to fit in with its needs, with all workers having compulsory and regular sabbaticals.

jane davies

# WHO CARES?

Let me give a rather simplified example of the kind of thing I want to look at. In how many local authority homes are kids not allowed or anyway discouraged from being in the kitchen or helping to cook on the grounds that it is dangerous, when these very same kids are allowed to indulge their fancy for sweets, perhaps even being rewarded with sweets for 'good behaviour'? Medical research has proved without doubt that overindulgence in sugar, especially processed sugar, is harmful - a decayed tooth is extracted for every . . . Accidents with hot cookers or sharp knives, however, are more immediate and obvious and therefore more fearful. Burning and/or accidents like electrocution or first degree burns which can happen to anyone, a cut or a burnt finger is in the long term far less dangerous than decayed teeth. Cuts or burns however are the kind of accident which show, which might make news in the local press, while false teeth at the age of 45 does not. I think, therefore, that in protecting kids from short term danger, we are protecting ourselves as much as we are them. We won't all be living together when the false teeth come along. On similar lines maybe we should give more of an attitude towards the areas of exploration and experiment. Obviously no-one wants to encourage accidents, but I think we are often over-protective and this in itself

can encourage accidents as much as a totally laissez faire attitude. We must try to provide an environment sufficiently secure for the child to experiment without exposure to actual harm. How often, for example, do we see a gate across the top of the stairs 'to stop the baby from falling', perhaps it might be wiser to sit with the baby while she tries to crawl down and to give her a warm and secure cuddle if she does fall? She would probably learn to use the stairs more quickly. It is our panic reaction to mishap or accident which is more harmful often than the actual accident itself, and again it is often ourselves we are protecting rather than the kids.

I think this fear or uncertainty goes much deeper than in relation to accident. It covers far less tangible areas concerning social and cultural differences, material standards, and authority. Children come into care for a variety of reasons (see p. 16) and from a variety of cultural and racial backgrounds, but very often insufficient credence is given to these differences. It is fairly commonly known for instance that many people from non-European cultures eat with their fingers but how often have kids experienced being told that such a practice is dirty or nasty? We could well remind an Indian or African kid that in England it is often less hygienic to conform and use a knife and fork but never say it is dirty or wrong - maybe try to remember that it is in strict Muslim culture equally 'wrong' to use the left hand at all while eating. Of equal importance are the class differences in the kids we care for. All too often such words as 'good' and 'nice' are defined in relation to 'professional' i.e. middle class standards, and not in relation to the kids' or 'clients' needs. Jeremy Weinstein in CC16 sees this in particular relation to the search for foster parents but obviously it applies equally to children's homes where the material standards and social expectations are high. While pointing that obviously we do not want homes with leaky roofs, he then refers to the struggle a group of staff had to get some comfortably shabby chairs for the T.V. room. In this case as in so many others the reason given by management for not immediately providing the chairs was that they might offend visiting dignitaries who are, of course, of far more importance than is the comfort of the kids. Who did you say we were caring for?



If we are really going to care for the "whole child" then we must include everything that is meaningful to that kid and so try to adjust our own attitudes and those of the kids and their families to see that local authority care and kids' own homes do not necessarily cancel each other out, and so should not be seen as absolute alternatives. Ideally I would like to see a kids home for every neighbourhood in much the same way as I would like to see a real expansion in day care places so that kids and their families could move easily between the community home and the individual home. For the present though, friendly caring contact should be the least we can aim at. This means making every possible effort to break down the 'professional' barrier and meet people on an equal footing. I am not advocating a total breakdown of roles, merely a revival of them. Kids need us as adults in all sorts of roles besides staff and parents, we have a wider experience simply by virtue of having been around longer, but we also need kids for their honesty and freshness. I think there are many levels on which we do not involve the kids sufficiently. In order to provide good care for the kids the staff need good working conditions and this is an area in which we could well involve the whole group. The kids in our care are the future workforce and I think there is mutual benefit to be gained from seeking solidarity with them.

Before we reject outright the idea of active support from the kids let us look at the degree of support we already require from them, and in contrast our tolerance of their passivity. If we expect kids to do odd jobs around the house, to care for each other and to participate to some degree in decision making within the group, then it would seem logical to give them experience of participation on other levels, thus the possibility of seeking their support and solidarity on such an issue as better working conditions for the staff. We did, in fact, involve a group of kids in a recent picket in Camden (see News Flash) and hopefully they learned from the experience.

I still think, despite the bad experiences and consequent criticisms we have had, that residential care can be creative and holds the potential, at least, towards being a liberating force. If honestly and clearly accepted a kids home is an experiment in group living. This means among other things that it provides a variety of possible relationships quite outside the scope of the family and ideally it should be free from the back-log of conventional wisdom which states that "little birds in their nest agree". Not everyone likes other members of their families but it is easier to be honest about these dislikes once outside of its grip, and kids can learn to gain support from each other in discovering the complexities of relationships which contain good and bad. Furthermore, in living in close contact with a wide variety of adults, kids can gain a firmer assurance in valuating their own feelings and emotion in discovering for instance other men who are gentle and quiet, or women who are handy with a spanner and screwdriver. To make the group work well, however, we need to be absolutely honest in our assessment that a group is not a substitute "home" in the conventional sense of the word and we drop such words as "house-mother", "housefather" or worse still "auntie" and "uncle", and confront each other in cool honesty as a group of people.

**abigail goodden**

# VICTIMISATION!

A recent dispute in a large children's home in London illustrates many points about the current situation in residential work. Seven workers in a home for over forty children refused to stand in any longer for the shortage of domestic establishment, by washing up several times a day for the whole home. From April to August the home had been some 200 domestic hours short on establishment. It was also chronically understaffed on the child-care side, with no male staff, and a regular turn-over of short term, completely unvetted agency staff. The workers involved also raised a number of issues to do with child-care practice, and the way which the unit approached its stated goal of "rehabilitative" work with parents, which they saw as overly concerned with control and keeping people in their place. The response of the superintendent was a swift move to put them in their place. They were split up and moved around to different groups in the building, constantly harassed and got at on an individual level, and vilified to the rest of the staff.

Finally three of them, who had been picked out as the ringleaders, were told to transfer en bloc to a very small group home. They refused to go, and were issued with a veiled threat of dismissal for breach of contract. In addition, one of the three, who was one of the few trained workers on the staff, had her probationary period extended for her inability to get on with management.

The NALGO departmental representatives and the recently formed shop-stewards committee had by this time become heavily involved, and fully supported the workers in their refusal to transfer. A fairly reactionary Branch Executive was pushed into doing the same. A whole series of meetings with an uncomfortable Residential Management ensued, in the course of which it was revealed that at one time the superintendent had rung the Assistant Director for advice on how to proceed without making it look like victimisation. Accusations of red conspiracy flew thick and fast.

Eventually, the dispute was semi-resolved. The three workers agreed to transfer - within the iniquitous contract that most residential staff work to they could not hold out on this indefinitely - but management made a number of important concessions that could lead to major changes in the home they had left, and safeguarded the position of the three against further victimisation. The extension of probation was unconditionally withdrawn.

Work with children by definition involves the problem of authority, dealing with it and exercising it, as central. How an establishment treats its staff is one issue with how those staff are expected to relate to the children. Myra Garrett said it in an article called "By Whose Authority?" in CASE\_CON 11:

"I believe that as social workers our experiences with authority are reflected in our dealings with clients. Each instance of deference without principle to higher authority, or avoidance of conflict for personal gain, corrupts us and increases the likelihood of our demanding the same from our clients. If we are alienated in our work situation, oppressed by a powerful bureaucracy can we do other than pass this along? Being obedient, we in turn control our clients on behalf of our bosses."



# THE DUE PROCESS....

Remand homes ceased to have a specific statutory function with the implementation of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. Part 3 of the Act repealed the powers of sentencing to detention contained in the Children and Young Persons Act 1937 (section 58), but charged the local authority with the duty to provide places of security for children who could not otherwise be 'contained', and with the responsibility for developing assessment services in relation to children. The confusion of these two duties resulted in the metamorphosis of 'Remand Homes' into 'Assessment Centres'. The change was one of title only. A punitive and repressive philosophy continued to inform a fundamentally oppressive custodial system.

This article is an account of the Report of a Full Enquiry (28.2.73) into one such establishment, Larchgrove Assessment Centre in Glasgow. The enquiry came about as a result of the anger, frustration and concern felt by a supervisor at the Centre, Frank Carrigan, in the face of a system characterised by inhuman and harsh treatment of the children and by the dehumanisation of staff members operating it. He made his feelings and his complaints known by way of the 'normal channels of communication' to the highest echelons of the Social Work and Reporter (Children's Panel) Departments. When, after a year, no radical change (indeed no noticeable change of any sort) resulted from this, he took his allegations to the Press. The ensuing Full Enquiry thoroughly vindicated his action, which was commended as being 'courageous and public-spirited', and found that his allegations were substantially established. The conclusions and recommendations made in the Report were acknowledged and accepted by the Social Work and Health Committees.

The enquiry team itself was appointed by this committee on 22.1.73 and consisted of Ronald Bennett QC and Peter Righton. They regarded their remit as the investigation of not only the specific and general allegations of misconduct by the staff, but also of the administration and organisation of the Centre 'within the wider context of social service provision', and the making of recommendations for action to be taken. They emphasised that the allegations of misconduct could not be regarded in isolation from the surrounding circumstances of the staff, and that the violence they discovered, although it could not be condoned, needed to be understood in its context. 'The blame cannot in our opinion be wholly put on the staff concerned.'

## The Allegations

The first part of the report concerned the allegations made by Carrigan. They held that these could only be regarded as substantiated if proved by the standards applicable in a court of law, namely: that hearsay evidence is ignored; mere suspicion disregarded; no material fact held prove unless corroborated; and that the standard of proof is proof on the balance of the probabilities (not, as in a criminal case, proof beyond reasonable doubt).

Of 30 specific allegations they found proved:  
9 incidents of violence shown by staff to boys, of varying degrees of severity and involving 7 members of staff,  
2 incidents involving neglect, and  
2 incidents of unsympathetic handling.

They held that it had failed through lack of corroboration. With regard to more general allegations, they found 1) that 'there is ample evidence to support a clear conclusion that shouting, pushing, cuffing and shaking frequently occurred and that there was sporadic punching and kicking. This was in clear violation of Rule 25(1)(g) (Remand Homes (Scotland) Rules 1964) which explicitly forbids this.  
2) That when bed-wetting occurred 'as it did frequently' boys were not always permitted to change their pyjamas and sheets till morning, and that certain staff members did not allow boys to go to the toilet in the night.  
3) That the following breaches of Remand Home (Scotland) Rules (1964) had occurred:

- a. Medical attention which was necessary was not invariably provided for each child (Rule 14(1)).
- b. Corporal punishment in excess of six strokes had been administered, and upon the naked posterior (Rule 25(1)(f)).
- c. No form of occupation was in general provided for a boy in the cell. Such boys were often provided with comics or other boys, but the supervisors usually took these away. Rule 26(1).

d. Separation by cell confinement was not always recorded in the log book (Rule 28(g)).

It is important to note that the Remand Home (Scotland) Rules (1964) were not superseded by any rules or guidelines appropriate to the new Assessment Centres.

## Administration and Organisation

The second part of the Report is devoted to a consideration of: 1) the nature and importance of assessment services for children appearing before the Children's Panel; 2) the current situation at the Centre; and 3) the allocation of responsibility for the current situation.

### 1) The Importance of Assessment Services

The 1968 Social Work (Scotland) Act provided for the replacement of juvenile courts with Children's Panels, the function of which would be to dispense 'treatment' rather than 'punishment'. The success or failure of the treatment would depend not only on the availability of genuine alternative facilities for treatment, but also on the supply to the Panel of comprehensive and accurate information about the child, his personal history and development, his behaviour in a variety of settings, and his family situation. This kind of assessment could only be provided, it is argued in the Report, if 'there exists a comprehensive assessment service with adequate resources and organised on a teamwork basis to include all the relevant disciplines - educational, social, residential, medical, psychological and psychiatric'. It would be impossible to exaggerate, they add, the calibre and degree of skill, sensitivity and integrity needed by members of this team.

Children should only require to go to a residential assessment centre if they are in need of protection, if they are a danger to the public, or if they require more intensive observation than would be possible if they remained at home. For a residential centre to perform its functions adequately, certain conditions must obtain:

- a) Its work must be closely integrated with the work done by members of the assessment team (social workers, teachers, etc.) outside the establishment, and should not become a closed system, insulated from contact with the outside world.

If it does, the quality of the assessment possible within it would be vitiated.

b) The staff of the Centre must be highly qualified and receive ample opportunity to develop skills in observation and recording, and in child care practice. Staff also require salaries commensurate with this level of skill and adequate time off.

c) The regime must be such that, within a framework of reasonable order and security, a child is enabled to act out verbally his feelings of anger and aggression, to express his need to withdraw from intolerable pressures in his life, and to reveal to staff on a person-to-person basis his fears, hates, loves, anxieties and aspirations: that is, to reveal his 'real self' rather than conforming to a set of military style rules). For this to be possible, there must be opportunities for staff to interact with small groups of children for substantial periods of time. There must also be a wide variety of activities available for the children to engage in, and a real choice between them.

## 2) The Current Situation at Larchgrove (at the time of the Report)

### A. Defects in the Regime

The Committee of Enquiry considered that a major part of what they found unsatisfactory at Larchgrove stemmed from an inadequate appreciation by the Corporation of the importance of an assessment service, and the consequent failure to provide appropriate resources and support. They considered that it was not the staff who were to blame but the design of the regime. They were disturbed by the number of features of the regime which tended to foster rather than to reduce an atmosphere of potential violence from both boys and staff.



Such features included:

a) The Control System. They found Larchgrove to be administered as a monolithic single structure, admitting no devolution of decision-making power and responsibility to staff below the highest level, severely limiting interaction of staff at different levels, blocking information exchange between levels and severely limiting opportunities for staff to display initiative or propose new ideas.

b) Batch Living and Block Treatment. Boys are together en masse for most of the day, and the only possible role for the supervisor is one of watchdog or shepherd. When numbers are in excess of 70 (as is often the case) any form of differentiated, freely-chosen play or recreational activity becomes unmanageable; boredom and restlessness become apparent; and desultory fighting breaks out and can escalate. A key example of those features of the Larchgrove regime which are unwittingly productive of the very behaviour it is wished to avoid (ie violence from boys and reactive counter-violence from staff) are the 'line-ups' or parades which occur frequently during the day whenever the boys move from one place to another. These are natural breeding-grounds for mischief as a reaction to their depersonalising effect and their derogation of human dignity and individual significance.

c) Control Tasks and their priority over Assessment Tasks. The actual primary task is not, as was intended, that of providing assessment reports, but that of custodial control of the boys' behaviour and the prevention of absconcing. In this situation, the behaviour accessible to the staff is unrepresentative of the boys' real feelings, and consequently the value of the assessment reports submitted is seriously limited. The staff viewed themselves as custodians rather than as members of a skilled assessment team.

d) The Daily Routine and its Effects. The daily routine was ascertained to be unvaryingly monotonous, and tending to deaden feeling and to stifle initiative for both boys and staff. The extreme fragmentation of the day was such as to give little opportunity for the experience of continuity and worthwhileness in activities, and to render impossible constructive and enjoyable play. Too much time was taken up with pointless ritualistic procedures (eg the line-ups), and the total effect was drab, repressive and undermining of individual dignity, just as when Remand Homes were still considered places of detention and punishment. The situation at Larchgrove was such that everything a person did was prescribed or prohibited by a rule, and apathetic conformity or rebelliousness inevitably resulted.

e) Lack of Adequate Stimulation. The boys had little to do that was satisfying and stimulating, and few opportunities for strenuous physical pastimes (to let off steam). Not one qualified teacher was employed in the classrooms, and there was an excessive reliance on passive occupations.

f) Impersonal Contact between Boys and Staff. The atmosphere of the Centre was considered to be emotionally bleak. The system was such that relationships between staff and boys were distant and impersonal, the staff having no caring responsibility for any one person or group. The regime blocked all real emotional contact between staff and boys but paradoxically promoted a situation in which each side developed strong and often hostile feelings.

The committee pointed out that the malaise resulting from a regime with these defects was the fault of the system itself rather than that of any particular individuals (staff or boys) who were subjected to it.

#### B. Other Contributory Factors.

The Committee considered that the regime alone could not wholly account for the situation they found existing, and they indicated a number of stress-producing circumstances which they believed contributed to it.

a) Overcrowding. Consistent and serious overcrowding existed which entailed a chronically inadequate staffing ratio, and the impossibility of separating older from younger boys, or of differentiating between boys with different problems and needs.

b) Overwork. The above meant that all staff were required to work about 15-20 hours overtime each week.

c) Design of the Buildings. The buildings were found to be well-designed for control and custody but completely unsuited to the purpose of assessment. In part, this dictated the nature of the regime and the role of the supervisors within it. There was a general lack of space, the total effect was bleak and institutional, and structural features (like observation windows) conveyed the impression that the boys were never free from surveillance.

d) Lack of Women. The work was carried out entirely by men and a ground assumption seemed to be that boys are tough and aggressive and will erupt into unchecked violence if not continuously supervised by equally tough males. The Enquiry considered that this could often turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

e) Inadequate Training Opportunities and Consultancy Services. The majority of the staff were found to be untrained, and the Committee considered it improper to expect them to do such a difficult and demanding job without at least a minimum of training and preparation. However, the induction procedure for newly appointed staff was found to be haphazard and sketchy, and there existed no arrangement for any form of continuing consultation and supervision.

3) Allocation of Responsibilities for the Current Situation. The Enquiry judged that the major burden of responsibility for the situation at Larchgrove must be borne by the Corporation itself. The Corporation had taken no steps to implement any part of the recommendations of a Report on Larchgrove undertaken by the Social Work Services Group in July 1969 after the death of a boy in the Home from stabbing. The recommendations of this Report were comprehensive and explicit and their implementation would have considerably mitigated the stress-producing circumstances in which the staff had been working.

Further, the Social Work Committee, although advised by the Director and by the Social Work Services Group of the outstanding importance of carefully selecting the Head of the new Assessment Centre for his experience and skill in management, inter-disciplinary co-operation and staff guidance, failed to advertise the post and re-appointed the Superintendent of the Remand Home. The Enquiry considered this a serious error of judgement.

The Enquiry also judged that the Superintendent himself could not wholly be exonerated from blame for the situation and particularly for not displaying the qualities of leadership and initiative required by the job, for taking no steps to establish:

to establish regular staff meetings either for assessment purposes or to promote staff growth, and for not taking care to ensure that the staff did not abuse the control system by resorting to violence against boys. They considered that he bore a heavy responsibility for the continuance of the unsatisfactory regime described and for the fact that no significant changes took place after the Report of the Social Work Services Group in July 1969.

#### Conclusions

It is important to re-iterate that the Enquiry indicated that they did not find that the staff had pursued a course of systematic violence or harshness towards the boys in their charge. The Committee considered the majority of supervisors to be conscientious and hard-working, undertaking an extremely difficult task with devotion and to the limit of their ability. What the Enquiry did find was that the regime, together with other contributory factors, had brought into being a control and sanction system so all-embracing and rigid that no time or energy was available to pursue more constructive ends, and that the system itself, paradoxical as it may sound, tended to provoke the very violence and aggressive attitudes which it was set up to prevent.

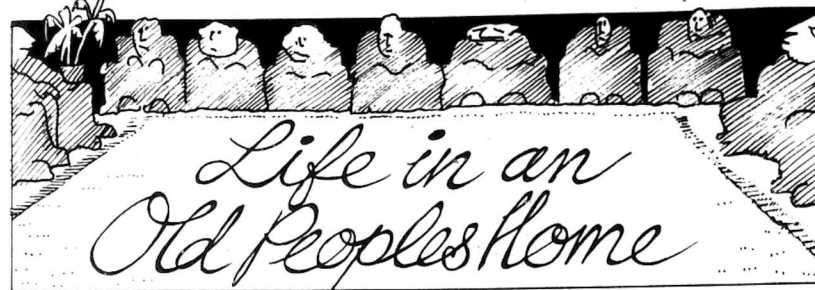
What emerges from this Enquiry Report is the picture of an oppressive and dehumanising system, whose structural properties were such as to preclude the possibility of necessary radical change originating from within it. There was something about it, as Carrigan indicated, that prevented people from speaking their minds and from speaking the truth.

Change only began to be possible when one person refused to be reduced or coerced by the regime and took the radical step of public exposition. The regime however proved to be part of a larger system which ensured that he was 'punished' for his temerity. Following the Enquiry, the Superintendent and Deputy were transferred to other high administrative posts within the Department without loss of salary; seven members of staff were charged in connexion with specific allegations of violence and negligence (but were never prosecuted), while the instigator of the Enquiry whose allegations 'both specifically and generally, insofar as they do not fail for lack of proof, have been established' by it, and whose actions were commended by the Enquiry, spent two months suspended from duty suffering considerable financial loss because of the loss of payments for compulsory and extensive overtime. Throughout this period, his wage was just under £22 per week. He was offered a job in the Department's furniture store which he turned down.

After nearly a year of enforced idleness, he accepted a job processing rate rebates forms. This job was created for him and was undertaken from an isolated office in the Department, from which he had virtually no contact and certainly no working relationships with other members of the Department. When the Department ran out of rebate applications, he spent his time working in the C.T. section, assigned such tasks as driving the van following bath aids etc.

With the local government reorganisation in Scotland which came into effect in May this year, well over two years after his story was published in the Press, and when it became apparent that the Department could not freeze him out, he has finally been assigned a job which begins to go some way towards recognising and utilising his skills, his concern and his personal integrity and which affords him a measure of job satisfaction. He is now an unqualified field social worker.

**mary hemming**



First of all I think that I am well qualified to write on this subject as I have been in three old people's homes, so I know what I am writing about. The first two I will not write about however.

I have never liked this sort of place but through no fault of my own I am here. I will not divulge the names of these homes. I have found them very dreary places to be in as there is never much to do.

I was able to get out of the other two with much difficulty and found myself a flat and even a bit of work and kept both for about a year. I was visiting in the country and hurt my right hip which started up an old case of arthritis which I had almost got over until I had that fall. I was in great pain and could not handle the job, so I had to leave it. I did my best to keep the flat but the pain got on top of me. It got so bad I had to see a social worker, who suggested I go into an old people's home. Knowing what the other two were like I was very reluctant to go into another but what was I to do? So after talking things over I decided to go if I could get me a decent place. She said she would do what she could, so the next day she came to the flat and said she had found a good home not far from where I lived. She gave me three hours to get ready, which I did. Then I was taken to a big home which looked quite nice, better than the other two I had been in. I was seen by a young looking matron and details were taken down and later I was shown to my room, which was a big double one on the ground floor. I was to be with another chap who I just happened to know. I had already told the social worker that I wanted a single room as I was a very bad sleeper, but at that time there was not one available but later on I was given a nice single room. In time I began to get better with treatment and was able to get about a bit. Having had a very active life I got very bored with having nothing to do, so I was given a job laying the table for lunch and tea. For which I got £1 a week which helped me rent a T.V. and I was given a wireless. Although I do not like eating in a large dining room like they have here I find some of the food fair. I will admit it is almost impossible to suit the taste of everybody in the way of food when there are 90 people to be catered for.

In the two and a half years I have been here I have learnt more about people than I had ever thought possible even through my journey half way around the world. At first when I came here most of the residents were fairly sensible people but with nothing to do but sit in the smoke-filled lounge with no windows open. The day room is just like a big house full of the stench of incontinent people. They mess themselves all over the place, even in the kitchen and dining room. I do not blame the old folk for this but I do blame the staff for not taking the person to the toilet.

Like all other homes this place is understaffed. They don't give two hoots in hell as my father used to say. Some of the residents here are enough to try the patience of a saint. Some of them are sick in mind as well as in body. It is pretty awful when a fit man has to stay with others that

are not even all there. I know it is very difficult to cope with. The accommodation is extremely good and as I said the food is fair but could be a lot better. There is too much of the same all the time, and too much greasy food especially for me as I have gastric trouble, but fortunately for me I have been able to get a small electric ring on which I could make a cup of tea or soup or anything I fancy.

We sometimes have a concert party come in to entertain us, but they are very few and far between. I am an old performer myself and I miss all this. I joined a very good luncheon club and there is more activity in these two hours than there is here in a year. I do a bit of magic and Indian fake tricks and I have given a demonstration of my act both at the home and the club. Last month we had a very nice folk singer who came to entertain us at the club. I had just asked the Matron if I could put on an impromptu concert if I could get the folk singer to come over and give us some of her songs. I have found a very good accordionist to volunteer to keep the show going. I have plenty of good ideas that I can work into the show, as I have given a similar show in Canada before. The matron has agreed but it all depends on the singer so as I can do something to occupy my mind for the next two months. So we will have to get busy on the show which I will call 'An Evening in a Gypsy Camp'. I will have special effects, good spontaneous acts etc.

I wish everyone here was as active as I am. For the last year I have been writing my own life story called 'My Lucky Star', just to keep my brain matter flowing. That is the trouble with this place, there is little to do and of course old people get into a rut and get worse and worse all the time in spite of what has been done for them. I have had some amusing experiences which I have written about which I hope will be published in some form or another.

I have tried to get away from here but there is no other place available at the moment, so I will have to stay put until something more suitable is found - a place where I can cook my own meals.

I have not even told you my age but I am 75 years young. Up to about six years ago I could run at a very quick pace but at present just can't. I could still kick as high as my head which is pretty good at 75.

As far as the other homes I have been in are concerned they were pretty awful. I hated to come in here, but after all what was I to do. There is one thing about Old People's Homes and that is that you have a roof over your head and are fairly well looked after, but as I am now I would rather be out of it and by myself as there is no privacy whatsoever here. As far as I am concerned I like a bit of privacy, and as I am fairly fit now this is no place for me.

To tell the truth it stinks with human body odours.

**ken revell**

# The Ex-client Speaks

There have been some tremendous changes in social work theory and practice over the past twenty years... haven't they?

When I first came before the juvenile court about 23 years ago there was a distinct lack of communication between the court, the police, the probation officer and my family regarding what the procedures were, what was likely to happen and whether or not it would be advisable to take legal advice. Consequently I found myself, after 2 weeks in Stamford House, on my way to an approved school where I was to spend the next 2 years. Similar examples of the lack of communication between one agency and another and between a service and its clients may be found in any one of a number of cases currently going through the juvenile court system.

Stamford House in the 50's presented a grim aspect - even for an aspiring 'ted'. It had the appearance of an old Victorian workhouse, was full of locked doors and surrounded by a high wall. Stripped of all personal possessions, kitted out with khaki shorts and shirt, regimented into a variety of 'make-work' routines, (e.g. sweeping 'by numbers', scrubbing the newly scrubbed, polishing the freshly scrubbed and painfully still-wet paint) and performing all tasks briskly and vigorously, 'like a man' - an assessment of one's personality was duly completed. I assume that our reactions to this alien and alienating routine were duly noted and our behaviour categorised accordingly. I remember that a psychiatrist even asked me if I heard voices, and that I hesitated as long as possible to give myself more time to calculate what the most appropriate answer should be.

Assessment procedures have become far more sophisticated since those days, haven't they? - Well, the building has certainly improved.

The Approved School was an unexpected contrast. The pleasant 'court-lady' chatted happily all the way down the A3, but I didn't take in a word she said and would probably have wet my pants had I not been 'a man'. The imposing entrance and the long winding drive did nothing to alleviate my apprehension, and my first sight of the impressively aristocratic mansion made me feel even more timid. The pleasant 'court-lady' said goodbye to smiling hosts, and I found myself smiling too, if only to cover my own anxiety. The act of smiling turned out to be the first of many mistakes made during the ensuing 24 months and led to a painful investigation into the cause of my hilarity. ... Well, those days are gone now, and the old approved schools have been replaced by an enlightened system of ... community homes.

Of course there were many positive advantages under the old system. For one thing there was no confusion about the reason for finding oneself in such a situation: I had done wrong and was being duly punished. Today's delinquents 'in care' or 'under treatment' only THINK they are being punished for doing wrong. Magistrates and Social Workers KNOW they are being 'helped'. An approved school order had a clear end in sight and the 'licence' system (a form of parole) ensured a degree of conformity to required social behaviour. Care Orders of today, on the other hand, are imposed to ensure that help is 'available' until the offender reaches his 18th or even his 19th birthday.

A trial placement at home is, however, dependent on the cooperation of the individual. The most obvious advantage

offered by the old system of centrally administered approved school placements was that those children who really did need to spend some time away from their usual environments were virtually guaranteed that such a facility would be made available to them if they were caught committing an offence.

Of course I am glossing over some of the recent changes in attitude and understanding of many dedicated staff in residential establishments, but I have also seen many potentially good workers demoralised by defenders of the conventional social work wisdoms. We are, even now, on the verge of some of the greatest changes ever known in the movement from institutional to community care. This prediction is based on the rationale for and rationalisation of the proposed cut-backs in residential services, namely getting the 'community' to accept responsibility for its own problems. Furthermore, in the treatment of young offenders we are faced with all sorts of exciting possibilities in the guise of intermediate treatment and community service orders. However, intermediate treatment, community service orders, group work projects, domiciliary support services etc., can never be operated as effective alternatives to residential treatment/punishment services, if they are not adequately funded. Cut-price services mean spreading existing resources even more thinly. This applies particularly to social workers who are often pressed on into giving up just a little bit more time to getting this or that project off the ground. My own experience leads me to believe that I was better off in an approved school, far removed from the source of my problems, than I would have been if left to cope with them under the guidance of a well-intentioned but over-stretched social worker, with no back-up resources to offer. The current trend towards converting residential establishments into day, community care projects, although laudable in intention, presents the obvious danger of increased pressure and lack of support for staff, and an inevitable deterioration of the service as experienced by the consumer. Cost/benefit arguments have always been used to justify the introduction of new schemes, but if any other benefits of a change in service are to materialise an inherent contradiction needs to be resolved, that of increasing output while decreasing input.

I have no glib solutions to offer the growing ranks of bewildered social workers. As the current economic crisis bites deeper there is a proportionate rise in the numbers of drowning clients clutching at social services straws. Like many others I will fight a rear-guard action to preserve my own working conditions and standards out of enlightened self-interest (alternative jobs are growing harder to find), and in the interests of those clients whose needs may be met to some extent. I will also continue to paper over the cracks because sometimes people can be encouraged to a fuller realisation of their situations and because eventually I want promotion? I will resist the temptation to embrace trendy new projects as harbingers of the new society, even though there may be temptations to look for an escape from the present dilemma by accepting too easily the proffered promises of new techniques. If, however, all else fails and the arguments for rationalisation of services out weigh desires to provide really effective community services, I hope at least that field staff will be given preferential opportunities for purchasing shares in the new developments.

**meddy o'kerr**

# The Levellers - flattened

This is an attempt to outline and draw conclusions from the events that took place over the first three years of the life of a Local Authority short-stay residential establishment catering for ex-psychiatric patients. The authors are ex-staff members who left the establishment shortly after proposals to level the staff hierarchy were defeated. We intend to focus discussion on the development of the hostel community and the conflicts this produced with the requirements of the Local Authority and the other agencies involved.

The hostel cost a lot to build and when it was opened three years ago it was considered a showpiece as it was one of the few Local Authority Mental After-Care Hostels in existence. Initially the hostel was run along fairly traditional lines with the hostel staff team being mainly responsible for formulating policy and the social services management acting as advisors. Staff were responsible for selecting residents and played a prominent role in all areas of decision making.

After the hostel had been open for about 18 months many residents became increasingly concerned about their prospects for securing satisfactory housing. The Director was asked to call a community meeting to explain departmental policy - the gist of this being that while no one would be put out on the street, the borough would be unable to undertake to accommodate all ex-residents. Staff meanwhile secured offers of houses on two houses, but delays caused by administrative procedures meant that these offers would be withdrawn. Staff then rendered their resignations which were to be withdrawn when this accommodation was secured and housing for the future guaranteed. After a protracted dispute these conditions were agreed to by the Social Services Committee and the staff stayed on. Residents were able to give staff some support, but many felt ambivalent about this - for if the staff did leave they would be in a very insecure position.

The dispute over housing soured the hostel's relationship with the management. Soon after this the warden left and the remaining staff proposed that a non-hierarchical staff structure be instituted. The team would take corporate responsibility and receive equal pay.

The ideas on which the decision to propose the levelling of the staff hierarchy were based were a development from the staff's experience of working together in this residential setting. From the beginning the staff had worked as a team and even for practical reasons it seemed appropriate for one person to be answerable for everyone else's actions. Quite apart from this consideration, though, a policy of democratic decision making at all levels was made at the inception of the hostel almost three years ago, and this base was gradually broadened to the point where almost all decisions were being made by the community group and, most important of all, the admissions and staff selection procedure was such that staff and residents had equal powers to decide who should come and live and work at the hostel as well as equal information about the people being considered.

The idea of a non-hierarchical staff team represented a development and rationalisation from the way in which the staff worked in the last year or so before the warden left. Similarly other aspects of policy which had been initiated while the warden was there developed and became more far reaching. The admissions policy was developed so that everyone in the community had an opportunity to participate in the selection procedure; the cleaning of the building began to be done mainly by the staff and residents as domestic staff were not replaced; the system of formal and automatic three-monthly reviews of each resident was replaced by a flexible system in which either staff or resident could suggest that a review situation be set up when considered appropriate; the staff stopped keeping individual files on residents as this was found to be unhelpful, mystifying and unnecessary; and medication was seen to be the individual's own responsibility.

The democratic decision making process and the degree of responsibility placed on residents were seen by the staff to be helping ex-patients to break down the effects of sometimes many years of institutionalisation, and to take control of decisions affecting their lives. It seemed a logical and worthwhile next step to develop this broadening of the base of decision-making to include the levelling of the staff hierarchy. (Perhaps a next step from this might have been the abolition of staff altogether).



In April and May 1975, two residents of the hostel died from drug overdoses. These were the first deaths to have occurred in the hostel and led to a feeling of panic amongst the management and councillors. Veiled allegations about the declining standards of care were made and admissions to the hostel were stopped. Little support was offered to the staff during this time of stress.

Between the time when the proposals were first made and when they went to the Council Committees there was a long delay caused by bureaucratic proceedings within the department, such as a 'review' that was being made of the work of the hostel since its inception, and the discussion of the proposals at various different levels. This delay increased both the amount of time the staff had to put the proposals into practice (although this could not be done properly until structural changes had been made) and the degree of uncertainty, inside and outside the hostel, as to what was actually happening there and what the outcome would be.

During this time a great many criticisms were levelled against the staff. Most of these were centred round the admissions policy, the cleaning of the building, the supervision of medication, the non-organisation of formal therapy groups and the keeping of individual files on residents. Policy decisions had been made about all of these during the time when the warden was still working at the hostel and these decisions were being carried out for a considerable time before he left. They were, however, looked upon by the management as being part of the new non-hierarchical regime and criticised as such. They were also inverted so that, for instance, the decision not to supervise residents' medication was turned into an act of professional negligence.

About two weeks before the proposals were due to be presented before the Personnel Committee (having already been rejected by the Social Services Committee) a new Management Advisor was appointed, who, on the basis of a two day stay at the hostel made an extremely damning report which was presented to the committee meeting, the structure of which was, as is always the case, such that the new Advisor was given a lot of time in which to present his views while the hostel staff were given practically no opportunity to state their point of view. Hostel residents were not even allowed to attend the meeting although some had made specific requests to do so. Thus, apart from a few individual Councillors who gave us valuable support when they could, the management and council were united in their opposition to the proposals and ideas being put forward.

The process of demoralisation of staff and residents which is still going on, now appeared to be made systematic and deliberate. A series of retrogressive moves were made and it became clear that the hostel's former autonomy was being completely denied. New staff were appointed directly by the management with no involvement of the hostel and they stated that residents should have only secondary involvement in the selection of new residents, the initial selection being carried out by staff and social workers. These events have led to the staff leaving in handfulls and remaining staff and residents feeling demoralised, dispirited and insecure.

Before any of the hostel staff were appointed it seemed that the management of the Social Services Department had developed some ideas about how the establishment would be run. It seemed that they wished the hostel to appear progressive and therefore acted in an advisory capacity and allowed ideas and policy to be developed and worked out within the hostel community. There was, however, no real discussion

about where the ultimate power lay in the event of conflicting opinions arising in the different groups and there seemed to be some implicit assumptions by the management concerning the staff role and also a kind of hierarchy of decision making; the residents tending to make decisions about more mundane aspects of hostel policy, staff discussing referrals and courses of action concerning individual residents in private meetings and management being involved in making wider policy decisions.

The management therefore took the position of a power group outside the staff/resident community which had not defined how or in what circumstances it would act. This created a situation within the hostel in which staff placed emphasis on the power of the residents to make decisions, but simultaneously were aware that there must be limitations to this power which had not been clarified. As this was a situation which most residents, having been in hospital, probably had more direct experience of than staff, it would seem to be one of the reasons for the general lack of involvement by the residents in the initial community meetings.

The management had originally granted a large measure of autonomy to the hostel, which had resulted in head-on conflict between management and staff. The management therefore set about withdrawing this autonomy and defining their position in much more forceful terms.

The management would seem to require a more or less unchanging basic structure through which patients can be processed: fixed criteria for admission, rigid staff roles, regular reviews and structured therapy, both group and individual. The hostel community on the other hand was attempting to achieve a direct response to its own needs.

The confusion which existed among the management as to the actual nature and potential of the hostel was shared by many of the mental health professionals, psychiatrists, nurses and social workers who were responsible for referrals and who in many cases remained in contact with the residents throughout their stay.

The hostel is a local authority establishment and therefore has a number of institutional features. The tendency, coming from within the hostel was towards self-determination at both individual and group level and an emphasis on its 'unique' nature. It was, however, seen by the professionals (and presented by them to potential residents) as inextricably linked to the institutions and relationships which existed within the medical/social services system. Features of the hospital lingered within the hostel - large domestic staff, drugs controlled by staff, confidential meetings, files on residents; and although these features were attenuated during the non-hierarchical period, the real links with the hospital system - the ones in the everyday lives of staff and residents, remained.

The hostel was often presented as a final stage in the process of recovery from an illness, a presentation which did not match up either to the real situation at the hostel, or to the

individuals' real situation in life. The influence of this medical model was to create a division among the residents along the lines of 'sick people' and 'healthy people' which proved extremely difficult to overcome, given the reinforcement it continually received from authoritative figures such as psychiatrists.

The involvement of psychiatrists and social workers was occasional and individualised; they saw their patient/client getting better/worse/maturing/coping, yet the strength of the hostel lay in the relationships which it was able to foster and group experiences it went through. This is one of the reasons why, when restructuring the staff group was suggested as a part of far reaching changes, psychiatrists and social workers had no professional reason to support them, although some did so as part of their individual philosophy.

The structure of the hostel is now very much as it was three years ago; a warden has been appointed without taking into consideration the views of the hostel community and management is involved in its everyday running.

On the positive side however these events brought about some valuable changes within the group and within individuals. The community as a whole was involved in a process of learning and development and many people now see more clearly the real situation they are in and how their lives are controlled by institutions and their agents, over which they themselves have no control.

We were grateful for the support we did get which came from some social workers, councillors, the union and outside bodies.

***martin dennington***  
***john mc nally***  
***charlotte fraser***

EASY, KID - IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD



## Catch 22.... or was it 28

Despite comfortable P.R. put about by the welfare rights pundits the most exploited group of working class people have no rights at all. Social workers know this from having to beg on behalf of their clients with Social Security, Housing or police. However Social Service departments have just as much discretion which is used in a way that is just as repressive. Four recent cases from Dewsbury, Yorkshire (collected by Batley Advice Centre for the town) illustrate some of this 'well-meaning' harassment.

(1) A homeless family with 7 kids in care, and with many difficulties - the classic 'problem family' - were told by the Housing Department that they would be housed when they got their kids out of care. They were told by the Social Services Department that they would get their kids when they (a) got a house (1) (b) got a job, and (c) showed various other signs of 'social responsibility'. Apart from the Catch 22 situation, the implication is that the unemployed are less fit to have their kids living with them. The explicit effect is that threats by social workers to keep kids in care (which is possible because parents have no rights at all), are part of the elaborate and secret system of harassing the unemployed in order to force them into low-paid jobs, and hence reduce wage rates.

(2) Social workers recently put a 28-day 'Place of Safety' order on 2 young kids. Their reason was that the kids' mother (who was on her own) had the cheek to complain about her housing conditions to the local council and the local press the day before. At court the Social Services knew that they didn't have evidence to obtain a care order, nor had they seriously attempt to get one. Instead collusion between solicitors was used to frighten the mother into accepting a supervision order, in order to save face for social services. It is true that this mother also had her problems, but in the past had always taken the initiative in bringing them to the Social Services. Clearly they were taking the kids away because, as one social worker is reported to have said, of her 'ingratitude' - social workers "were trying their hardest" to get her rehoused. It is interesting that she got a house the next week when the A.C.T. exposed the council's controlling techniques.

(3) A favourite piece of harassment is to use voluntary care to take kids away by force, when Social Services have not got a convincing case. It works like this: "of course your kids are in voluntary care, but if you insist on having them back we'll drag you through the courts and that will be bad for you and the kids, won't it." In a recent case A.C.T. advised a single mother to tell Social Services to get stuffed when they wanted to collect her kids after their monthly visit to her. There was no case to take to court.

(4) Finally a case from Batley (next door to Dewsbury). A mother who has just separated from her husband in Essex (where her children were in voluntary care, was recuperating at her sister's house in Batley after a serious operation. When she felt well again she wanted her kids back, and A.C.T. said she had every right to go and get them. She now had nowhere to live because her sister did not have room in her house. So she was homeless - and the attitude of the Council was that the A.C.T. were "irresponsible" in advising her that she could fetch her kids because the Council had then to find her a house. Social Services Deputy Chairwoman steered a motion through a full council meeting condemning A.C.T. - So how long will it be before Social Workers are running Concentration Camps.

**richard laver**



# YOU'RE ONLY GOING AWAY FOR A LITTLE WHILE ....

It may seem strange, in a CASE CON concerned with residential and day care, to find an article concerned with something which residential child care workers have traditionally regarded as the field worker's prerogative - the process whereby kids come into care in the first place. But some such piece is essential to this issue, because there is a wide spread myth around these processes, and this myth has crucial consequences for the way residential workers perceive their task, particularly so far as it is understood to contain any element of rehabilitation, and understand and relate to kids and their families. In turn it has immense consequences for the way the kids come to understand themselves and their situations.

Broadly stated, the myth is that "residential provision is generally only needed when the family or other informal social organisation has failed" (1). Within the casework theory that the most "radical" of social workers find it difficult to avoid relapsing into, this failure is conceived of in terms of parental inadequacy and more specifically often as a failure in their own early lives to learn what "good" parenting is, in their experiences with their own parents. This is the insidious "cycle of deprivation" theory. In a residential unit operating within the assumptions of this kind of global theory about the causes of deprivation, children are conditioned in spite of all the good intentions of their carers, to despise the backgrounds from which they come, their "failed" parents, and thus, inevitably, themselves. In most units that attempt to "work with parents" towards the goal of rehabilitation, the assumption is made that in order to learn to be good parents, they must first learn again how to be children - with the result that parents are integrated into the work of the unit as additional, slightly overgrown, kids.

The reality, which needs to be counterposed to this myth, is quite different. The failure is predominantly that of the formal social organisations which are supposed to provide social service and support, most children in care are there under circumstances which are a denial of the civil liberties we are all supposed to have for granted, the legislation which governs admission into care continues to hide its primary purposes of punishment and the "protection of society" under the comfortable euphemism of "care", and the major institution through which that legislation is implemented, the juvenile court, is an integral part of a punitive judicial system, operating independently of most major judicial safeguards, to railroad children into care on the basis of rigid class values and assumptions.

## Voluntary Care

Under Section 1 of the Children Act 1948, a local authority has a duty to receive a child into care, where it is necessary in the child's best interests, if it has no parent or guardian or is abandoned or lost, or if parents are prevented from providing for the child's proper accommodation, maintenance or upbringing. The second category accounts for vastly more children than the first. In 1969-70, there were 28,910 "section 1" admissions into care, excluding those caused by short term illness. Orphaned, lost or abandoned children accounted for only 965 of these. Crudely material circumstances, on the other hand - homelessness or bad home conditions - accounted for 5,767, in addition to all the other cases to which they were a contributory factor. And 9,467 of the rest came from one-parent families (2). This is not because one-parent families are genetically more inadequate than others - it is because a profit-oriented society cannot spare them the resources they need to sustain their own lives.

The Finer Committee estimated that over half of all children in care come from one-parent families - even though such families are only 10% of the number in the population. It is the economic and social organisation of our lives, and its values and priorities, that is inadequate, not the parents of these children.

## Section 2 Care.

Under section 2 of the same act, local authorities can turn a voluntary stay into a compulsory one by taking parental rights over a child already in their care. This is done, not through a court, but simply by resolution of the Social Services Committee - the major grounds being "that the parent ... has so persistently failed without reasonable cause to discharge the obligations of a parent ... as to be unfit to have the care of the child". The umbrella nature of this formula, and the utterly subjective nature of the judgements it shrouds under legal terminology, make appeal, though legally possible, virtually impossible to win. Such a resolution, phrased and communicated in these terms, is the ultimate stage in the stamping of the parents, in their own and their children's eyes, as irredeemably inadequate.

## Commitment to Care by a Court.

Under the 1969 Children and Young Person Act, a court can make a care order only if one or more of the primary conditions is met. These are:

1. That a child's development or health is being avoidably impaired or neglected, or that he is being ill-treated.
2. that the first condition has already been proved in relation to another child in the household.
3. that he is exposed to moral danger.
4. that he is beyond parental or guardian's control.
5. that he is not receiving required full-time education.
6. that he is guilty of an offence punishable in the case of an adult with imprisonment.

1. may seem unexceptionable, but needs special attention in the light of the current witch hunt for baby batters. 2 is guilty by inference, 3 can only be interpreted in the light of any particular morality, and the criteria for the juvenile court is, of course, the morality of the established order. Is a gay youth of 14 in moral danger if he seeks the company of adult gays? Or a girl of 15, if she wishes to explore her own sexuality with a number of boyfriends, with the aid of the contraceptive precautions available? Many juvenile courts would answer yes, we cannot tolerate that sort of thing. 4 incorporates a whole body of questionable assumptions about the proper place of children as dependent appendages. 5 is a straightforward penal sanction against truancy - "If you don't go to school we'll put you away". Few could argue that a child is more likely to receive an effective education by being sent away, a resentful prisoner, to a special school where "education" is most likely to mean "pending several hours a day doing the garden". 6 is the point at which the law in this field comes closest to admitting its true function of social control, with any pretensions about care or welfare going out of the window.

The crux is that, for the first five conditions, the court is also required to be satisfied that the child is in need of care or control which he is unlikely to receive unless the court makes an order. This requirement is treated as a joke in most juvenile courts. It is systematically flouted, and consequently many care orders that are made are strictly illegal. It is in any case the Home Office view, propounded without any legislative authority, that in

non-school attendance proceedings the requirement may be treated as irrelevant. The Home Office Guide to the Act endorses the view that a child "of compulsory school age, who, despite the action already taken, is not being educated, is clearly not receiving the care and attention he needs." (3) Not going to school is a crime - and the penalty laid down by law is compulsory removal into care. One wonders if the Home Office has considered Ivan Illich's view that the enforcement of compulsory education amounts to "age discrimination" which should be outlawed in the same way as race and sex discrimination.

So far as the offence condition is concerned, I would only say that if the law wishes to punish juvenile offenders, as it obviously does, then it should do so through a legally constituted juvenile penal system - not by making false connections between crime and some supposed individual pathology which renders the offender in need of "care". If the hypocrisy is dropped, at least we can identify more clearly the enemy we have to fight. Under no circumstances should the commission of an offence be grounds for a care order. It might also be noted that the 1969 Act empowered the Home Secretary to raise the age at which a child can be prosecuted, to 14. In 1975 it is still 10 years.

## The Child Abuse Condition.

Many people would argue that it is perfectly legitimate to remove a child into care for the protection of life and limb. I would agree - if the proper safeguards exist. But the conduct of most juvenile courts is so flabby in regard to the rules of evidence, the burden of proof, and the proper representation of the "accused", that many

children at the moment are being rushed into care aboard the baby-battering bandwagon, not because any properly constituted court would accept it as proven that the child was a risk, but to satisfy the paranoia of a locally eminent medical consultant or the press-phobia of a Director of Social Services. Many solicitors advise parents to accept charges of baby-battering based on the flimsiest evidence, in the hope that a kindly social worker will allow them to keep the child at home even under a care order. It is not changes in the law, or its more stringent application, that will eliminate those situations in which people feel so trapped that they can find no better means of expression or action on their situation than assaulting their children. It will be changes in our society, in the values that arise from its distinctive way of organising the production and distribution of wealth.

## The Juvenile Court.

The juvenile court benches are predominantly composed of representatives of the local moneyed classes, with the odd token labour representative thrown in. The magistrates, by and large, have no understanding of the situations in which most of the kids who appear before them have grown up. Many of the most common juvenile crimes - joyriding, shoplifting, burglary, - are felt by them as such a threat to their own life-styles that they are quite incapable of tempering their outrage with any concern for child welfare. The clerk, who is supposed to be there only to advise on points of law, frequently rules the court with a rod of iron. Many clerks seem determined to create the impression that they have gravitated to their positions out of a perverse delight in the helpless suffering of others. All prisoners are helpless, just kids doubly so. The Home Secretary has laid down rules for the conduct of juvenile courts, but in most cases they might as well not be there. The charges are supposed to be phrased in language the kid can understand. Many clerks seem to expect children to appreciate without any explanation the difference between the finest legal categories. They seldom bother to explain, for example, the difference between theft of a vehicle and taking without the owner's consent - even though it could have major consequences for eventual sentencing. In many situations there is a difference between "guilty" in lay terms and guilty in law, and the clerk is supposed

to ensure that this is understood by the defendant in each case. It is a fact that it is common practice for a long list of legalistic charges to be read out with only the slightest pause between each one for some poor kid to mutter "guilty" or "not guilty". Whether a juvenile stands up straight, calls the magistrate "sir" or "Ma'am", how honestly he speaks of the manhandling he has received from the police - all have been seen to affect the way he is dealt with by the court very significantly. Residential workers dealing with juvenile offenders need to understand very clearly the processes their clients have gone through to end up in their care. **Parliamentary Report on the 1969 Act.** (4)

I include a note on this because it is such a classic and topical example of the way legislative thinking in this field evolves. The report accepts that there is no evidence for most of the reactionary criticism that has been made of the Act. There is no evidence that a higher proportion of crimes are committed by juveniles now than in 1969 (Para 4); that there has been an increase in juvenile recidivism (Para 13); that children on remand in care, or on care orders commit more offences than did children subject to the different, more restrictive type of orders made before 1969 (Para 25). They do not question the proposition that "a proportion of children in community homes could be as successfully or even more successfully treated in the community", - estimated by the NCCL as 70% in some homes (Para 99). But all their major recommendations are concerned to make concessions to calls from magistrates or police for severer measures - calls based on opinion, emotion and punitive frustration. They recommended the introduction of a new "secure" care order (Para 25) and that "when a care order is made agreement should be reached in court between the magistrates and social workers concerned on what should be done with the child. If the agreed course should prove impossible or undesirable, the social worker should notify the court." (Para 30).

On the other hand evidence which would support the extension of the child's or parents' rights - pointing out, for example, that there is no appeal against a decision by the care authority as to where to place a child - is merely cited. Any recommendation is conspicuously not forthcoming. Why? Because the committee have accepted that their mandate is revenge on punishment. "Some recent research shows that methods of treatment have very little effect on recidivism rates. If this is true, and if it is true also of juveniles the problem could be that of satisfying society's wish to punish the offender and prevent him, for a time, committing further offences, at reasonable cost and in the most humane way." (Para. 13). And they are talking of kids of between 10 and 17, remember.

## Conclusions

There is no list of programmatic conclusions. This is not a manifesto. But I hope that residential workers reading this will be encouraged to look again at the kids they care for, and ask why are they there, and what implications it has for the way they work with them, to help them to interpret and understand their history and situations. But others have sought to understand the world - the point now is to change it. No reference supplied.

## References John goldup

- 1). Christopher Beedell, "Residential Life with Children," RKP 1970, page 1.
- 2). A. E. Leeding, "Child Care Manual for Social Workers," Butterworth 1971, page 16.
- 3). Quoted in the Eleventh Report from the Expenditure Committee, Social Services and Employment Sub-Committee, HMSO 1975, para. 137.
- 4). Eleventh Report, as above.

Since this article was written, the Children Bill has become law. This makes some changes to the legislation governing admission to care, assumption of parental rights, etc, but does not materially affect any of the points raised in this piece. For more on the Children Bill, see "Smash the Family - Whose Family?" in Case Con 19.



# CAMDEN.....



## .....workers and kids unite

The photo records an occupation of some significance in the history of public sector militancy. It shows children from Camden's children's homes looking out of the window of the Director's office, which they had just liberated, at a picket of residential and other social service workers called to protest against the Council's new ruling to residential staff - you must work twice as long and twice as hard, but we will only pay you for (in some cases) less than half of the hours you put in.

Faced with the need to make massive cuts in its current spending programme, the Council immediately put a two-pronged policy into operation. On the one hand, all staff vacancies were immediately frozen - which for residential workers inevitably means an enormously increased overtime commitment, as fewer and fewer people remain available to provide cover and care for the residents. On the other hand, the Council issued an instruction that overtime payments were to be kept to a minimum. What this meant in practice was brought home to a number of residential workers when they received, in mid-October, their overtime payments for the previous month. One worker, having worked over 200 hours overtime, found that she was to be paid for less than half of that amount. The background to this was a series of negotiations going on between management and representatives of Camden's Family Group Homes to try and establish an agreed

pattern for overtime payments. In a situation where 2 out of the 3 staff on an establishment are sick or on leave, the one remaining member would have to work 126 hours over a week or abandon the children. Management's proposal was that the worker in that situation would be paid for just 63 hours - 42 hours basic plus 21 hours overtime. This, to put it mildly, was not considered as satisfactory by the workers.

A departmental NALGO meeting held in early November called for a picket of the administrative offices at lunch-time the following day, to coincide with a meeting one of the workers whose overtime had been slashed was endeavouring to arrange with the Director. Despite the short notice, over 70 people turned up - workers from children's, old people's and mental health establishments, field and administrative workers, and about 20 kids from children's homes involved. The Director eventually agreed to a meeting with a representative from each of the residential and day care centres present. The outcome of this was that most of the overtime outstanding to the individual workers who had complained was paid in November. On the general issue, negotiations and, unfortunately, prevarications are continuing, but the most important thing was that a hitherto isolated group of workers took action on their own behalf, with the full support of colleagues elsewhere in the department, won some victories - and are now raring for more.



In this issue we are considering aspects of residential care. By the time this magazine is distributed it is likely that current legislation against sexual discrimination will be finalised. It seems timely therefore, to consider the whole question of sexism within the residential sector.

In residential work as in many jobs within the hospital system, there is heavy emphasis on the concept of 'care', both physical and emotional. This is reflected all too often in distorted and pre-conceived attitudes towards the roles and jobs allotted to both workers and residents. In particular relation to residential work with kids this process is accentuated by attempts to superimpose upon the residential unit ideas and structures which originated in the nuclear family.

While it is obvious that kids' homes held the potential to break down many of these attitudes, in fact the reverse is often the case. The reasons for this are complex. Firstly, both pay and status within residential work are low, the work-force tends therefore to be mainly female which gives further visual reinforcement to the caring/domestic image attached to female residential workers. If there are only women around, then it is to women that the jobs of cooking and sock-sorting fall, and since this is often the expected image it is this that sticks. Furthermore, many of the kids in residential units are insecure and tend to have low self-images, and one of the simplest and most direct means of creating a secure atmosphere, of showing that we care, is through the media of food, clean clothes, damed socks etc. In my experience this is a difficult cycle to break out of. The conventional wisdom, the popular image, leads many kids to look to the women, who predominate in the lower grades of the residential structure, to provide these things, and in this our 'domestic' image is reinforced. The career structure within the social services tends to give the higher grade jobs, those of decision-making and management to men, which again further emphasises the lower status of women in the day to day work schedules. This situation creates a self-perpetuating cycle wherein the more active and forward looking women leave the residential sector for jobs where we are free to express ourselves in non-sexist work roles, and so, yet again, leave the work to be done by temporary staff or those who want jobs which express the conventional female image.

In many kids' homes, especially smaller ones, it is common for the house-mother to be a married woman, living in a staff flat with a husband who goes out to WORK. This further emphasises the 'family' image on which the vast majority of such units are based. Often these men play a very real part in the evenings and week-ends, but inevitably it is the conventional father image that is presented: the man out at work in the day and relax the kids in the evening, while it is the housemother - her female assistant who will cook and serve tea or the kids to bed.

It is difficult to see a clear way forward. Obviously one way is through Union participation which would improve work conditions and might thereby increase the job status, thus evening up the man/woman ratio in the lower grades. As other articles in this issue point out it is often very difficult for residential workers to participate fully in union activities. It is often physically impossible to attend union meetings, therefore our voices go unheard, therefore our situation is slow to change. There are things we can do ourselves if we are strong enough. Radical change is threatening. In a stressful work situation we tend to avoid that which is threatening, but if we are to change images within the work-place, and thus show the kids the way forward, we must be prepared to offer a very real support system amongst the staff group. As women we must be more than ever prepared to take an active role in the decision making - at least within the unit, and to support the men in situations where the kids, parents or other workers find it curious or derisive to see them in 'menial' roles. If we can support each other through these situations, our newly found strength will extend to the kids who may then have a chance to work at overcoming their own sexist attitudes.



abigail goodden

# NEWPORT HOUSE

In September 11 women workers at Newport House Reception Centre went on a 24 hour strike. The following day management promised to meet all their demands. What was the background of such a successful action? How far have management kept their promises?

For two years the position at Newport House has steadily deteriorated. 40 staff have left and there is gross understaffing and a lack of qualified or experienced staff. Besides the officer-in-charge, his wife and the deputy, there is only one qualified worker (part-time), although several have applied and been turned down.

The rest of the caring staff are from non-social service backgrounds, yet there was no in-service training, no supervision and no regular staff meetings. Assessment reviews were conducted by posting names and asking for written comment. There was, in this process, no explicit decision, no feedback and no treatment plan. This the staff felt to be too subjective. Because of the lack of communication with the officer in charge any idea of thorough and deep assessment through a living situation was a fraud which the staff no longer wished to collude in. In theory the longest stay at Newport House should be 6 weeks, but the complete lack of suitable placements for the more screwed-up adolescents means that these particular girls are often left there for considerable periods without being told how long they are to stay or where they are to be taken, thus creating a core of individuals who have just grievances against their 'protectors' to add to their previous injuries, and a violent situation which the care staff received no help or guidance in handling. Neither field workers nor management saw it as a situation which warranted any action on their part, and despite a report to Kensal House (Social Services Dept., Head Office) from the deputy, the staff were left to feel that no one but them really cared about the residents as long as they continued to carry problems that had defeated others.



It was no surprise when 5 of the girls decided to set light to the house. This at least precipitated action. The staff called a meeting and asked to see management. Management promised that they would reduce the staff/girl ratio and find permanent placements for these 5 girls who would not again be returned to the uncertainty of Newport House. They did not make any move towards a more thorough investigation of conditions there, or of the reasons for girls being left there for long periods.

In September two of the girls were returned without prior consultation, having spent the intervening period in a not-yet-functioning children's home where they were beginning to cause a problem as other children were admitted. Could this really have been a carefully considered permanent placement which unforeseen went wrong, or was it a makeshift arrangement for disposing of a problem? Again a meeting was called, but this time staff decided that a walk-out was their only chance of showing the county its responsibilities towards both staff and clients, they notified the Essex County Branch of NALGO of their intention. The Service Conditions Secretary, John Whitefield, obtained a weeks grace, and he and the two workplace representatives, Kelly Drew and Mary Duxbury, tried in vain to negotiate. After an ultimatum given on the Friday for 6pm on the Sunday, the walkout was staged, pickets manned and press notified on the Monday. The following day management agreed: (1) to remove the two girls, (2) not to return them, (3) to reduce staff/girl ratio, (4) to provide consultation and communication channels and improved professional support, (5) and to provide suitable training opportunities.

The Social Services HQ NALGO has regretted the action despite the many other groups that supported it. BASW has accused them of being uncaring, but the staff say that it is BASW members at Kensal House who should examine their actions and their inaction. Many people at Kensal House like to think that it was a communist-inspired plot, thus avoiding the real issues. This attitude perhaps explains their inability to consider the real grievances of the staff.

So far the first three promises have been kept, and the deputy director now presides over a regular staff meeting in order to try and fulfill the last two. However staff are understandably reluctant to bring into the open criticisms which might bring down wrath from on high.

The deputy director seems to have noticed that the difficulties are not only skin-deep, but seems unable to suggest any reforms to the Newport House structure or that of Essex Social Services (which Newport House merely reflects) in order to help those employees who hope to do their jobs with a minimum of damage to others. They have put the management of Newport into the hands of a committee - (it seems too much of a responsibility for one person), but they are unwilling to make a more permanent arrangement, perhaps they are hoping that staff actions will make the decisions for them.

**kelly drew**  
**alison lamb**

## Second Class Training Second Class Job

CASE CON has few illusions about "professional" training. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that recognised qualifications are essential for any kind of job prospects in most areas of the social services, in addition to any value time off for a period of training may have for the individual concerned. In this respect, as in many others, residential workers are a grossly underprivileged group. Well over 60% of residential care staff have no form of qualification or training at all (1). And their prospects of getting any are becoming increasingly worse. The one year residential child care course is being phased out and all existing courses will close in the next couple of years. This is happening because the place of these courses is to be taken by the new Certificate in Social Service. Yet only six pilot projects for this are running at the moment and there is no prospect of the scheme being generally operational for at least another five years. So one opportunity closes and there is nothing to take its place.

Meanwhile, residential workers are finding it increasingly difficult to get on to social work (C.Q.S.W.) courses. Not only are they the first workers to feel the pinch of the present drastic reduction in secondments, - because the employers are not prepared to replace them, yet cannot do without them - but also the balance of the intake to C.Q.S.W. courses is changing, very much in their disfavour. Two years ago about 65% of students entering on these courses were non-graduates and 35% graduates. This trend is now being reversed as more and more non-graduate courses close. This is part of the drive to "professionalise" social work and clearly discriminates against residential workers. The miserable pay and conditions offered have never been calculated to attract the job-hungry graduate, even if that were a desirable objective.

In their discussion paper on "Training for Residential Work" (February 1973), now abandoned, C.C.E.T.S.W. committed themselves to the view that the C.Q.S.W. should be the standard qualification for both field and residential work (Para. 81). Consequently, and rather piously, they recommended that a common salary scale should be applied to both field and residential workers (Para. 112). They proposed a new Certificate of Qualification in Welfare Work for those less- or no-graduates whose work involved, rather than social work, "other forms of service which ensure the welfare of clients" (Para. 7), but emphasised again and again that the discrimination in terms of training opportunities was not to be on the basis of working situation. However, the crucial distinction between "social work" and "welfare work" was never defined. Instead, C.C.E.T.S.W. relied on the ingenious gloss that "the use of the term 'welfare work' is favoured because it is familiar and in use by the general public who will readily understand the kind of service that will be offered by a 'welfare worker' (Para. 79). In the form in which the C.Q.S.W. has been revamped, as the Certificate in Social Service, residential workers have been reclassified more or less en bloc as 'welfare' workers - hence narrower training, less of it, and less pay at the end of it.

The C.S.S. is quite explicitly to be an inferior qualification to the C.Q.S.W. Otherwise, C.C.E.T.S.W. would hardly take such pains to point out that "Those who wish to become social workers should not be encouraged to consider a course leading to the C.S.S. as an alternative to a professional training in social work. Clearly this is undesirable and could lead to a dilution of standards" (C.C.E.T.S.W. Paper 9-1, A new form of training: The Certificate in social service, March 1975 Para. 64). So the question of for whom

the training is considered appropriate is all important. It is designed for assistant staff in residential, field, community, domiciliary and day services "who carry substantial responsibility in relation to clients but are not charged with overall responsibility for them" (ibid Para. 8); and for "those who require some of the knowledge and skills which have been developed within the social work profession, combined with substantial knowledge and skills of other sorts" (Para. 7) - for example, senior staff in residential and day care establishments. If this is what is considered to be good enough for the senior staff, what on earth is lined up for the plebs? The answer, of course, is nothing.

The C.S.S. course is to consist of three units, to be completed on a day-release basis over a period between two and five years. The "common" unit, which can be taken on a pre-service basis for the other two - the student must be in social services employment - will be a broad base-line introduction. The "standard" unit will involve one of four options: children and adolescents, adults, the elderly, or communities. For the "special" unit the course narrows down still further. It is "designed to prepare students for a defined range of tasks". The whole is designed as a narrowly vocational course to mould the student to fit the needs of his employer. It is described by C.C.E.T.S.W. themselves as "narrowly focussed" and "pragmatic" (Para. 63). Lip service is no longer even paid to any broader educational purpose. The aim of the course is solely to teach the student to fit the right pegs into the right holes, in an extremely limited field. With this kind of qualification the opportunities for job mobility will be non-existent. As the course involves almost exclusively day-release study, thus enabling the maximum amount of labour to be squeezed out of the student/worker while in training, the employers will control the content and direction of the courses for more than is the case at present. "The employers, in consultation with the Council, the training bodies and the professional associations, will ultimately determine the relevance of the new form of training and the appropriateness of particular sets of units for their staff" (Para. 6). It is obviously not envisaged that those staff themselves, the potential students, will play any part in that process of determination.

Residential workers will not get wider opportunities to train, the career opportunities and improved conditions that go with training, or the chance to shape training to their own needs and demands if they just wait for C.C.E.T.S.W. to serve it all up on a plate to them. They will only get what they push for through their departments, their Training Officers, their associations and their unions.

**Reference**  
[1] Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, Discussion Paper on Training for Residential Work, February 1973, Para 25.

**john goldup**

Footnote: an alternative view of the C.S.S.

"It seems to combine the best of Rousseauian liberal client-centred philosophy with the best of Baconian philosophy, where knowledge is linked with action."

David Lennox, Social Work tutor, in Community Care, 5/11/75.

# Trade Unions Care!

Residential workers, who are undervalued in terms of pay and status for the important and difficult job they perform, are largely unrepresented in the unions. To start with there is confusion over which is the appropriate union - NALGO will accept Care "Officers" which includes most of the care staff in childrens homes, homeless units and homes for the recovering mentally ill, but only the senior staff (ie. matron and deputy) of old people's homes. Care "assistants" must join NUPE, while for those residential workers in voluntary organisations there is only a general union which they can join. Thus, the strange situation of workers doing broadly similar work for similar pay, spread out over at least three unions, arises. Many residential workers are aware that the union has little knowledge or interest in their situation, and, as yet, have done little to organise themselves in order to force the union to take notice.

Some of the reasons why residential workers are not unionised are entirely practical. Departmental representatives find it difficult to get round to all establishments for recruitment purposes, especially as many are situated in isolated rural districts. Residential workers have frequently complained that their officer-in-charge does not distribute literature to the staff unless he/she personally agrees with it, so much NALGO propaganda is thrown unread into the waste bin. Residential staff work shifts, concentrated into unsociable hours - so it is almost impossible for a full staff group to meet at work. Union meetings - at both general and executive level - tend to be at a time when the residential worker is most busy. There is great difficulty for residential workers from different establishments getting together to discuss their situation as there is no common time of work or place of work. The residential worker, therefore, tends to find herself/himself extremely isolated, and thinks of her/his problems as individual ones stemming from her/his inadequacies. In these circumstances the union seems totally remote and unconnected with the worker.

In the small staff groups of "caring" establishments there tends to be an administrative hierarchy, as is shown in the titles "officer-in-charge, Deputy, third in charge" etc. Many basic grade residential workers see the difficulties of their situation as entirely the fault of the person in charge. When first asked to articulate their problems they moan about the Matron, her treatment of them - they cannot see beyond the personal issues to the structure of which they are a part. Many officers-in-charge take upon themselves the task of interpreting management to the staff, and unite with the management against the staff. In some homes the Officer-in-charge and deputy are a husband/wife team with only two or three junior workers. Often the basic grade workers feel powerless and vulnerable when all decisions are taken regardless of them. In these circumstances it is extremely difficult one worker to go against the boss as he, she has little support from his/her fellow workers.

Conflicts among the staff tend to become personalised and tend to be avoided, either from fear of reprisals or in order to avert an unpleasant and tense atmosphere. A happy and congenial atmosphere is very important in residential work, so many staff will not bring up issues which they know are important if they think it will lead to ill feelings. This is further complicated by the fact that many residential workers actually live on the job and therefore must try and "keep the peace" for the sake of their own sanity. Personal conflicts are inevitable between people living together in a strained situation, spill over into the work situation - all issues become personal and highly charged, making for a tense and unhappy atmosphere, very unsuitable for "caring" work.

Junior staff tend not to mention their problems and frustrations. Individual workers are isolated and vulnerable to staff pressure to conform or get out - one of the reasons for the high turnover of staff. If residential workers from different establishments could get together to talk freely, they would realise that many problems can be solved, and they would endeavour to bring about these changes knowing that they have the support and encouragement of their fellow workers.



THE CARING WOMAN.

Residential work traditionally involves a fair amount of domestic chores, which are an integral part of living in a "home". Some workers see this "domestic" component as an undervaluing of their skills; others, perhaps more typically, see their role more in domestic terms - "caring" involving good standards of food, clothing and cleanliness. Residential work is typically a low-pay, low-status, female job, as society has cast the burden of "caring" on the woman. "Caring" is an extension of the woman's role in the family home for which she is unpaid, and has been persistently undervalued by society. The argument "if you really cared for the kids you wouldn't begrudge a couple of hours unpaid overtime" has largely been internalised - the residential worker, and as a result she accepts a low rate of pay, unsociable hours and little prestige. This, added to the fact that in most homes the basic grade worker is not included in the decision-making process, means that she/he soon views him or her-self and the work negatively - as an unending, unspecified task of "caring" in response to other people's needs. The ideology of "caring" forces the residential worker to unconsciously acquiesce in his/her own exploitation.

Residential work needs sympathetic, intelligent, positive people to care - and it needs them at a basic grade level where they are involved with the "clients". At the moment residential homes are largely staffed by the inexperienced and the apathetic - those with guts and intelligence have got on or got out. "Getting on" in residential work, as in social work and teaching, means becoming more involved in administration - the delicate task of filling in forms in triplicate. Unless residential workers can get together within the union and demand a decent wage for those who want to stay involved in the "caring" process, and also demand that they are consulted about and involved in decisions affecting their work, the situation will deteriorate.

## HOW TO BECOME A REVOLUTIONARY RESIDENTIAL WORKER— Lesson one: join a trades union.

I am a committed trade unionist and a residential worker. I am aware that I am at present in a minority among my fellow workers. There would appear to be several possible reasons for this. The fact is that residential establishments are usually isolated either physically from the community or are regarded as "different" because of the way they cater for a select segregated part of society: "children in care", "the elderly", "the mentally or physically handicapped". Staff are either regarded as saints or in some way inadequate for putting up with the un-social hours and considerable emotional commitment that the work demands. Most establishments are run on autocratic and hierarchical lines which in the long term institutionalise residents and staff alike. There is often a deep division between young and old staff that has little to do with the generation gap but a great deal to do with the organisational structure that may have been highly relevant ten years ago, when introduced, but is no longer. New staff may question or even challenge the system. They are either seen as rebellious children, wet behind the ears, and faintly tolerated or as a direct threat to the personal integrity of the Superintendent. Within a few months they leave or the Superintendent calls in the Homes Adviser and has them sacked. Few residential workers would, until recently, have thought to involve a trade union in what they may feel to be a situation only pertinent to them. They would be wrong on both counts. Trade Unions are able to offer the moral and legal support that their members need when they are subjected to intolerable working conditions or a personality clash with their superior officer.

You may be in the more fortunate position of having a radical, or at any rate sympathetic, Superintendent, or even being one. In that case the difficulty probably lies somewhere in the nebulous bureaucratic machinery outside of the establishment. Hassles with planning and maintenance section over the number of broken windows, unrealistic budget for food or toys, forced to take children even though you're three staff short. You may be able to go direct to the Director or you may be able to get the support of a councillor who visits the Home. More likely the Director cannot be approached directly or you haven't seen a councillor for six months. What can you do then?

If you have received an unsatisfactory answer from the person you report to the Union via your Departmental representative (shop steward) a branch secretary may be able to take the matter further with management, or through the branch executive pass a motion of support if for example, you refuse to admit any more children until you have more staff. If you work for one of the more reactionary local authorities that receive children into care on the grounds of homelessness, you should seek the support of the union to put an end to this.

Which Union?

If you now recognise the need as a revolutionary residential worker in the making, to join a union which one should it be? Ideally there should only be one union for all local government employees, and the differences between 'aiders' and 'manual workers' should be swept away. Unfortunately we have a long way to go to achieve this. Residential workers belong mainly to either NALGO (National Association of Local Government Officers) or NUPE (National Union of Public Employees). The majority of Social Services department employees belong to NALGO but in a number of local authorities the majority of residential workers belong to NUPE. Unless your branch is ultra reactionary - generally call themselves "Guild of Officers" and have the Town Clerk as president) and known to be anti-social services, I would advise you to join NALGO.

In order to fight and win radical issues (let alone revolutionary ones) we need to be collectively strong. Neither is it sufficient passively to join a union and then do nothing. Next year assuming the government forces through the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Amendment)

Bill against the wishes of the House of Lords, many local authorities will introduce a trade union shop where as a condition of service new employees will have to join a union. NALGO will be calling on its members to refuse to work with non-unionists. Unless branches prepare for this now by an effective education programme, we shall be swamped by thousands of apathetic, reluctant members. I would rather have a hundred militant members than a thousand captive ones.



How to Join?

Make contact with your nearest departmental representative (or shop steward) by asking any social worker who visits or by telephoning an Area Office. Failing that write to NALGO Branch Secretary c/o Town Hall. In well organised branches within two weeks of being employed you should have received a letter from the membership secretary followed by a telephone call from your departmental rep.

Find out from the rep. if there is a Shop Stewards Committee and whether departmental general meetings are held. Also ask if there is a local Case Con or NALGO Action Group. If none exists make contact with two or three like-minded radicals and convene a meeting. I would suggest holding it in a room above a pub or in a community group meeting room rather than on council property. A lunch time meeting would probably be best for residential workers. I would not rule out holding meetings for residential workers perhaps on an ad hoc basis but would prefer that all social services members should meet regularly together.

ken terry

## Radical Canada

'Challenging Social Work' was the title of a week-end conference organised by the staff and students of Carleton University School of Social Work in October of last year. They were able to invite and pay for a member of the Case Con E.C. to attend. I was the lucky one who went.

The opening session was a paper presented by Howard Bookbinder of York University Canada to a large audience of Canadians, including many French Canadians. Some people had travelled several thousand miles to be there. He clearly articulated the intention of the Conference - to pose the question as to how radicals in social work "could translate their antipathy to capitalism into action against capitalist institutions". His analysis was clearly Marxist - describing revolutionary socialist strategies for social workers who largely work in small and diverse situations in a country with little or no labour traditions and a very unorganised revolutionary movement.

### TRADE UNIONS - COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Saturday (yes, the opening session was on Friday night) consisted of two sessions running concurrently in the morning and likewise in the afternoon. In the morning I was on a panel with John Coates, President of the Federation of Children's Aid Staffs (FOCAS). This took the form of a discussion of the significant struggles that social workers had engaged in on both sides of the Atlantic, and organisations that had been thrown up. It was only in the last year that unionisation has begun to grow rapidly in social work. The two most significant struggles were the Big Brother Strike and the Catholic Children's Aid Society Strike. Both of these strikes were in Toronto - centre of the largest industrial area in Canada. In both cases the issue was one of trade union recognition.

Trade Unionism in Canada is underdeveloped in comparison with Britain and the immediate priority is to win a firm foothold in social work. The structure of the trade unions - no one union has achieved dominance - is actually being determined by the struggles out of which they grow because they are relatively new. This differs from the British experience where social workers were grafted onto an ageing, almost immovable trade union where change could only be effected by creating new structures from within and kicking them into life. It is the difference between making a trade union and making a trade union work.

### BUYING RADICALS?

The afternoon session which I attended was composed of a panel of people drawn from various radical pressure groups such as the Mother-Led Union and the Committee to Abolish Training Schools. The question posed by the chairperson was to ask to what extent these groups are bought off, by what often amounts to substantial sums of money being pumped into them by various government agencies. However, most of the prepared speeches did not incorporate an answer to this.

### DISPARATE VIEWS

At the end of this, the main day of the conference, it was clear that there was a disparity of views as to what it meant to be radical. Those who argued the view that to effect change requires purposeful collective organisation and that social workers first had to organise themselves, seemed to be cutting against the grain. A loosely articulated view that seemed to have a lot of currency was that of identifying closely with clients and client groups and getting it together with them by doing "radical" social work, preferably of the community work variety.

By the beginning of the final session on Sunday morning the scales were beginning to tip more in the direction of the marxist view. Some of the credit for this must be taken by the screening of an excellent film called 'The Organizer' - a marxist documentation of an industrial dispute in Italy in the 1930's.

### ASSOCIATION of SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS

The final session was kicked off by a panel consisting of myself and several leading members of the Association of Social Service Workers, a Toronto based organisation. This group has been in existence since June '74. They have a statement of principles which is similar in its general thrust to the early CASE CON statement of aims; in fact the CASE CON document served as the basis of a discussion paper leading to their present formulation.

They organise around public meetings and working committees of members (paid-up membership has reached 50). Initially their committees were concerned with social issues and radical practice as well as trade unionism. When they were six months old trade union issues burst upon the scene. The two strikes described earlier were both in Toronto and they were also involved in opposing the cutbacks in hospital staffing levels. These experiences have given a tremendous boost to the struggle to unionise social workers and the Association was able to use these to facilitate the politicisation of a significant number of social workers. Those radicals who had previously wept copious tears over the poor circumstances of their clients, were now able to wipe their eyes clear and start doing something about challenging the system which creates these conditions.

### NEWSLETTER

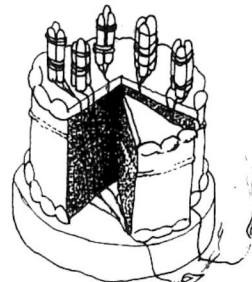
There were sharply opposing views as to what, if anything, should come out of the conference. Most felt that any sort of national or state organisation was not on the agenda at present. It was felt that people should concentrate on working in their localities.

A minority argued for a newsletter to be produced but this was opposed on the grounds of anomalous communication difficulties in Canada - both cultural and geographical. It was also opposed for the same reasons given above in opposing the national organisation.

My view was that they were missing the boat and that a publication could be used as something to organise around: to pass on the hard-won experiences of those who had engaged in action, to demonstrate the possibilities, to create a presence of trade unionism, to give confidence to isolated militants, etc. Waiting until the time is right to launch an organisation is perhaps waiting for Godot. But I was arguing from the British experience, they said - but what about Lenin?

## Media Con

At last the previously "suspicious and exclusive" Case Con faced up to the opportunities and pitfalls of being featured in the glossy eighteen-month old social work mag, blandly titled 'Community Care'. Couched in luridly cosy social work jargonese, the central analysis in their article is contained in the patronising title: 'The Maturing 5-Year Old'. Predictably, given the milieu from which Community Care arises, the metaphor laboured yet again is that of child development (suggesting perhaps that Case Con has now reached schoolage and is ready to attend the BASWit school of Real Life?). Socialist ideology, specifically that of revolutionary socialism, is seen from this self-appointed 'adult' stance as essentially infantile and often "hysterical and paranoid" (sic - Community Care). Bravely and unashamedly Community Care is able to judge Case Con Magazine from the point of view of "realism" and sees the "establishment of a worker's state" as "a panacea" which can sustain radical social workers through the rigours and hardships of their daily working lives.



The "growing and maturing" theme was superimposed by the author of the article; this overlay diverts attention from the analysis the four Case Con E.C. members were attempting to convey, which needs reiteration. CASE CON does not renounce the tone or recant the analysis of its earlier days. The second metaphor employed, of the basic Marxist political analysis as the foundation of a structure of which the bricks are the theme-based magazine issues on particular aspects of social work, is far more appropriate. Indeed the experiences and struggles of social workers since the advent of Case Con and the Seaborn reorganisation have tended to bear out the "correctness" of the lead given by the early Case Con. Social Workers have progressed further and in greater numbers into the arena of trade unionism and collective action as Case Con has always urged.

Most of the criticisms of the article could be grouped under the heading of a less than full comprehension by Community Care of Case Con's political analysis, for example, the journalist's extraordinary hypothetical notion of a "revolutionary social worker": "if such an animal existed, he would be forced, in order to remain theoretically correct, to stop himself from offering practical help to a client to avoid blunting the contradictions he believes are inherent in the economic system". The particular fallacy which underlies the congratulations on Case Con's growing maturity is that Case Con is seen by this journalist as now concentrating on radicalising social work practice rather than on bringing more and more social workers to (a) an understanding that the problems of consumers of the personal social services are rooted in the structure of the society in which we live

(not in supposed personal inadequacies), and that until this society, based on private ownership, profit and the needs of a minority ruling class, is replaced by a Workers' State based on the interests of the vast majority of the population, the fundamental causes of social problems will remain; and (b) to join the struggle for this Workers' State. Is Community Care attempting to project Case Con as a red BASWIT, a ready source of controversial quotations to fill their copy and titillate their readership?

Editorial Collective

## Right to Work

Twenty thousand workers, employed and unemployed, marched through the centre of London on Wednesday 26th November 1975, to protest at the Government's economic policies. They marched in spite of every effort to stop them by the official trade union leadership.

At a meeting beforehand called by the London Nalga Social Services Liaison Committee (a body of representatives from shop-stewards committees), 150 social services workers from a number of London Boroughs heard speeches on the cuts including details of attempts to resist them. Some information was exchanged on the nature of the cuts in different areas, but people were itching to get out onto the streets.

This small group of people walked along the street to the side of Euston Station where a great mass of people were jammed into a road - it was almost impossible to get into the tightly-packed, seething ranks. There were numerous trade union and rank-and-file banners, including many from the Nalga Action Group. 400 local government workers were there from Islington where the Nalga branch had called a half-day strike in support of the March. The whole march was speckled with numerous placards provided by the 'Right to Work' Campaign.

Before moving off the marchers were addressed by a number of speakers, including Ricky Tomlinson the freed Shrewsbury Picket, who had attempted to occupy TUC headquarters the previous night to protest at the TUC General Council's lack of action in the fight for the right to work and in the campaign to free fellow Shrewsbury picket, Des Warren. Most of the press coverage was devoted to Len Murray who declared that the best way to tackle the problem was for the TUC to work together with the Government - not by taking part in anti-government demonstrations. The 700 Chrysler workers from Coventry, on whom Murray's exhortations had no effect - indicated in many and varied ways their disagreement with this view as the March wound its way past the TUC Headquarters.

This march must be seen as the first step to the building of a rank-and-file organisation around the initiatives taken by the National Right to Work Campaign and all other bodies taking an active stand on the right to work. Local committees should be built whenever possible and preparations made for future mobilisations. We must be involved in this process now - it will be too late when redundancies are announced by our employers.

\* For further information ring Pete Feldon or Ron Wallace at 01-555 0542 (office hours)



## CUTS! WHERE?

On 22nd November the Government announced the details of the Rate Support Grant for 1976 - 77 upon which so much of local government expenditure depends. The news contained few surprises. The level of the grant will be reduced by 1% of the amount that was provided for 1975 - 76. This is all the money that local authority can expect from the Government next year, and if they overspend there will be no bailing out. Local authorities will be faced with two choices next year: either they cut-back on services, which is clearly the Government's intention, or they increase the Rates. With the strident demands of Ratepayers Associations for no increases in the rates, and a well-orchestrated press campaign for cut-backs, it is no guess as to which alternative most authorities will lean towards. With an estimated increase of 10% in the Rates, and with a rate of inflation of 22 - 25% we calculate that cuts in real terms will be in the order of 15 - 20% - THERE ARE BOUND TO BE CUTS IN SERVICES.

It is of course up to each authority to decide where it will make the cuts and this will vary department by department from council to council. All these cuts must be imposed as forcefully as possible in whatever department they occur. BASW's myopic view that only the cuts in social services are of any concern to us ignores the fact that cuts, wherever they happen - in housing, the NHS or social services - represent a decline in the standards of service available to working people.

### WHAT THEY SAY

One of the crucial problems facing workers in local authorities at the moment is the question of where and how in any particular department the cuts are being made. In the first place council policy in explaining and publicising the cuts differs from area to area. Wandsworth, in fact, bravely announced - before the Rate Support Grant announcement - that they are making no cut-backs anywhere. This appears to be exceptional and there are unlikely to be many new Clay Cross martyrs. Most authorities will cut. Some, like Islington, have openly announced where their cuts are being made. Others, probably the majority, are making cuts but have no policy of making open declarations of the facts. Newcastle upon Tyne is an example of an authority which has produced a glossy little publicity leaflet for public consumption detailing its cuts. These include such significant money savers as reductions in lighting for Christmas decorations, and in expenditure on Parks and Cemeteries. Their publicly announced cuts - held up by such vanguards of the proletariat as the Daily Express and the Daily Mail as shining examples of the way forward - nowhere near add up to enough and since there will be no massive rates increase the full story had obviously not been told.

Every NALGO branch must demand the fullest information BEFORE any decisions are made. Not only is the N.E.C. taking upon itself the responsibility for advocating a policy of flexibility regarding non-filling of vacancies, it is also arrogating to itself the task of the "vigorous campaign" in defence of services mandated to it by National Conference. One doubts that it is either capable or willing to do this.

Moreover the officials in local branches often appear to be less than willing to take up the issue in a forceful, militant way. Where they do, of course, local authorities are not exactly bending over backwards to let them into their secret. Newcastle's idea of consultation is not untypical. Firstly, a branch was told that there would be no non-filling of vacancies but, in the same breath, that all vacant posts were being reviewed!

Secondly, when consultation finally arrived it consisted of a meeting between some of the branch officers of NALGO and the authority's Chief Executive. The NALGO delegation was presented with a document detailing some of Newcastle cuts proposals as they went into the meeting; this document was taken back from them as they left.

### CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

Some things can be said for certain. One thing is that capital expenditure will be the first casualty. Between 1974 and 1977 it is to be reduced by 38% (CIS/CDP Special Report - Cutting the Welfare State). Since many new capital projects are already underway this cut in costs will largely mean that no new projects will be started and that all plans will be stopped. In Northumberland, for example, this means that a hostel for the mentally handicapped, a day nursery, an adult training centre and an old people's home are casualties.

On 20th November Islington Social Services Committee decided to scrap plans for one children's home, two day nurseries, one day centre for the elderly and two homes for the mentally ill.

In May Kirklees sacrificed plans for a community home, an old peoples home and a centre for the physically handicapped.

The seriousness of these reductions cannot be over-emphasised. Firstly, it is criminal waste that, when there are 160,000 unemployed building workers and a stockpile of 700 million bricks, important capital projects are scrapped. Secondly, these cuts will not be felt immediately but have implications for the quality, quantity and nature of social services provision that extend well into the next decade.

### STAFFING

A large proportion of all government expenditure, both local and national, goes in repaying interest charges. As far as local government is concerned, for example, 90 p of every pound of council rents goes to repaying interest charges. Roughly about 30% of all local government expenditure goes on interest charges. More than another 50% is spent on paying salaries, which leaves only about 20% for all the other services. It is quite obvious that the banks and money-lender are not going to suffer. It follows therefore that much of the saving in local government expenditure must be made on staffing.

If NALGO ever does take any kind of stand it will only be on the question of redundancies. Nevertheless, Warwickshire for example has already stated that its contingency plans include 10% redundancies. So don't be fooled by reassuring noise from NALGO: the possibility is not that remote. At present however local authorities are using other methods of reducing staffing levels short of creating redundancies. By and large this means non-filling of vacancies and NALGO branches are being encouraged by the NEC to be "flexible".

One method is that of deferring the filling of vacancies practised, for example, by Newcastle who openly boasted of the money thus saved. This involves tactics like only getting round to filling vacancies after some delay.

Waltham Forest workers were recently told that the delay in advertising for a missing management post was because 'undue haste' would have been disrespectful to the previous occupant of it! In Newcastle this meant that a deputy matron was acting matron at her home for several months before she was officially promoted, and now she's waiting for her deputy. In Bradford this particular policy has already resulted in savings of £116,700.

Waltham Forest indulges in the practice of redesignating posts in the so-called interests of efficiency. For example if two posts become vacant only one of them is deemed necessary; the job of the other is divided up amongst other posts which are also redesignated. The result is that more work is heaped onto decreasing staff and that another job has been thrown out of the window - and at a time when unemployment is nearing 15 million!

Most authorities already have an extensive procedure for vetting posts. In Camden, for example, all vacant posts are frozen until they are approved by the chairman of the Staff and Manpower Services Committee. In this context the use of O & M studies is likely to increase, and be used, as in Gateshead recently, to justify the scrapping of jobs or the imposition of heavier workloads.

### SERVICES

Ultimately the crucial issue is what is actually happening to the standard and range of services. Lack of staff is obviously going to mean that services are bound to decline. In Bradford for example, one Day Centre and two Hostels for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped have no staff. In Camden, Day Nurseries are filling vacancies for matrons but not for deputies; in one nursery there are three vacancies and only one is being filled; one children's home has already been closed and two more will go when a new one opens. In Islington the organiser of a mental health health fair for about a dozen people is in her eighth week of having no time off at all because she has no staff apart from one domestic. Meanwhile the queues for places in day nurseries and hostels continues to grow.

Many other insidious cuts are being made. Provisions of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act are certain to be drastically reduced. Bradford, for instance, is only allocating 10 telephones a year, and Camden is not providing any family holidays.

Furthermore, if the ratepayers are not going to pay any more the consumers certainly are. In Northumberland social workers are being urged to encourage recipients of services to pay more for them. In Camden day nursery charges were more than doubled overnight in September to a maximum of £1.90 per day.

### WHO TELLS THE TRUTH?

In view of the unwillingness of many authorities to come clean, someone is still going to tell potential recipients that they are wasting their time asking for services and that they will have to find some way of telling them why the queues are so long. As far as social services are concerned this thankless task will fall to office receptionists and social workers. The last word can go to the Director of Bradford Social Services Dept., who said in a recent circular:

"guidelines as to the level and kind of service that can be provided in different situations will reduce the number of inappropriate demands made. This will in turn reduce the time spent assessing need for services which cannot be met."

In other words tell people they can't have telephones, aids etc. any more and they won't apply for them.

## Howway the Lads

In November the Newcastle Trades Council organised a Conference in Newcastle-upon-Tyne on Unemployment, Wage Restraint and Cuts in Public Expenditure. It was the launching pad for a determined campaign of local opposition to the Labour Government's economic policies. Activities within individual unions are highly important but it is absolutely vital at the same time, that campaigns on a national and local basis become as broadly based and as closely co-ordinated as possible. Unemployment and cuts in services affect the whole of the working class. In Newcastle the aim is to line unions with tenants' organisations and the unemployed in order to develop a wide united front. Over 350 people attended the conference. There were delegates from all the major unions including A.U.E.W, T & G., NALGO and NUPE, as well as representatives from local Claimants Unions, tenants' groups and all the political groups of the Left.

The important thing about the Conference, as an A.U.E.W shop steward pointed out, is that it was not just another conscience salving talking shop but that it has produced two important action committees that will plan strategies and formulate action.

The first of the Committees is the 'Right To Work Committee'. One of the main speakers was Tommy Healey from the Liverpool Speke Committee. He described how this committee, which brings together shop stewards from all the unions in the area, has been able to provide quick and effective support for a number of local disputes. It has been able to organise pickets, co-ordinate sympathetic action from other unions, promote publicity and give financial assistance. It is hoped that the Newcastle Right to Work Committee will be able to provide the same kind of organisation on Tyneside where already 1 in 10 of the male workforce is unemployed.

The other committee is the 'Working Party Against the Cuts'. Its work was started during the afternoon session of the Conference which divided into 4 workshops on Health and Social Services, Housing, Transport, and Education. In these discussions a start was made to formulating campaigns of action and isolating important areas to be attacked. Because of the wide cross-section of attendance at the Conference, the Working Party Against the Cuts should be able to bring the issues of cut-backs to members of all unions even though their particular sectors superficially may appear not to be affected. It was significant, for example that the sub-group on cuts in Health and Social Services was chaired by a member of AUEW from the Scotswood Vickers works.

The first test of what appears to have been a highly successful conference will come on December 10th when the Right to Work Committee and the Working Party Against the Cuts meet again for the first time after the conference to begin their work in earnest. What can be said, however, is that it is only by these broad based united front campaigns as well as by militant activity within individual unions that Government's policies will be effectively resisted.



## Nalgo and the cuts

At the last NALGO conference a motion was proposed by the Islington branch instructing the NEC to undertake "a vigorous campaign" in support of a policy of maintenance and improvement of services. This motion was opposed by the NEC but passed by conference, thus endorsing it as NALGO policy. The NEC is now attempting to reverse this policy by gradually changing emphasis until any commitment to defend services becomes a dead duck. This is quite unconstitutional and a wholly improper role for an Executive Committee.

The National Local Government Committee sent a circular to all branches on the 24th September wishing the "branches to continue their opposition to local authorities pursuing a policy of the non-filling of vacancies, but where this is likely to conflict with the need to ensure job security for existing staff then priority should be given in negotiations on this issue of maintaining job security.... In this connection it is clear from

the reports received from branches that in some instances it has been possible to secure this objective while at the same time adopting a flexible approach to the filling of vacancies'. Crudely put this means quiet deals to keep existing members in jobs are all right, even if you agree to cuts in services to do it. NALGO is coming dangerously close to publicly announcing that it is not at all concerned with the level and quality of social services or other local government services, or with the level of unemployment outside the ranks of its own members. Our capital projects are building workers' jobs. In line with this is Geoffrey Drain's letter urging branches not to support the N.W. regional TUC's lobby against unemployment on 26th November. Public Service for November, while making no mention of any action that branches have taken locally against cuts sums up this position, under the ironic heading of "Vital role of branches" - "the main priority, however, should be the maintenance of job security while continuing to oppose the non-filling of vacancies with a measure of flexibility". Neither the NEC nor the NLGC has any mandate for the inclusion of these last five all-important words.

39 vacancies throughout the department at any one time. This proposal has been rejected by the Social Services Shop Stewards Committee but is likely to be accepted by management in some form or another.

At present there are 25 posts frozen in the department, of which 8 are residential. As a result of the freezing of two senior posts it was decided at a departmental meeting to take industrial action commencing from 24th November. At the same time workers and their seniors were asked by management to discuss the BASW code-of-practice which hammers home again the heavy responsibility that society and the "profession" places on them and the freezing of senior posts didn't help to alleviate anxiety about workload.

The type of action chosen was that of 'No New Work'. In practice this means that in unionised area teams clients not previously known to the department are not being dealt with but are being referred (or taken to) Headquarters or local councillors. Unionised administrative staff are not undertaking any work related to new clients; some of the Day Centres have stopped admissions of new clients and so have two children's homes.

The meeting at which the decision was taken was a difficult one and it is creating rather heavy emotional strains on individual social workers, seniors and team leaders. One of the problems in making the action successful is the failure to achieve 100% solidarity within the department. Some new work is still being undertaken by a few teams and most of the children's and old people's homes are still admitting.

Although the form of action chosen is not having an immediate effect, in the longer term it is bound to have a significant impact on and become a source of serious aggravation to social services management and to elected representatives. If necessary, however, escalation of action will be considered by the workers.

It will require a great deal of mutual support communication and feedback to keep the action going but the general feeling amongst staff involved is that they have to take a stand right now if they want to protect both jobs and services in the very near future.

## Islington - Strikes Again

Since 24th November the NALGO members of Islington Social Services have been taking industrial action, again. But this time it's all very different from last year's happening, when the Social Services came out on strike with the whole of the Branch in the struggle for London Weighting. That was a clear-cut issue, but matters are not that simple this time.

On the surface it may appear as if the issue is clear: no cuts - in services or in staffing. In reality it is difficult to point to any specific instances of these.

The Islington Labour Council from the beginning has been willing and eager to consider possible cuts but implementation has been slowed down partly because of confusion and disagreement within the Council as to what that and where, and partly because of considerable opposition almost from the beginning. A campaign against the cuts, backed by the Trades Council has been in operation for several months. The Nalگو Branch has started opposition to any kind of cuts. Two area teams threatened industrial action over the non-filling of a vacancy and won their case. Information has been issued to the public about reducing telephones and holidays for the elderly. The major problem about fighting back is the confused and inconsistent information the workers receive concerning the Council's policy and decisions. A few months ago the Council assured the workers that there would be no cut-backs in staff either by natural wastage or redundancy. Messages from the Town Hall have changed since from the actual freezing of the odd post, to the establishment of a Special Committee to vet and decide on yes or no to the filling of all vacancies, to a current proposal, which if implemented, will result in reducing overall staff of Day Nurseries from 190 to 184, the disestablishment of 9 posts in children's homes, and the maintenance of

## Amazing Standby Adventures

### STANDBY - THE OLD CHESTNUT

Standby has become the hoary old chestnut of social work in the post-Seebohm era. As an issue its significance tends to be at times over-emphasised. I doubt whether many social workers have been propelled into lasting militant trade unionism as a result of stand-by struggles. Indeed, after the initial phase of struggle the issue tends to be left with the departmental rep. or local 'militant'. This has been the experience in various inner London Boroughs (such as Tower Hamlets and Islington), where stand-by has been a dead issue for years and social workers have gone on to take up less peripheral issues.

Unfortunately, the experiences of the Inner London Boroughs have few lessons to offer to social workers taking up the stand-by issue. Similarly, Haringey represents an isolated success for militants. There social workers withdrew from stand-by and Management agreed to establish night duty team.

Until recently no attempt had been made to generalise the lessons of rank and file struggles. Indeed in the isolated actions in Leicester and Newham matters nearly went disastrously wrong. In Leicester the NALGO branch executive attempted to suspend social services reps. and officers for withdrawing from stand-by. Newham social workers had to mount a one-day strike when the employer's response to the withdrawal from stand-by was to establish a night-duty team by cutting the day-time establishment.

The increase in rank-and-file action on stand-by over the last year seems to have made some impact on the mandarins at NALGO HQ. Clearly they are worried by the implications of the 1975 NJC agreement being challenged by so many struggles at the local level. They have now attempted to recapture the initiative by writing to all branch secretaries seeking 'comments' on the annual review of stand-by due in early 1978. Unless rank and file presents a united front to the NALGO negotiators then the result will inevitably be another sell-out. As a first step the London NALGO Social Services Liaison Committee will have met (by the time this issue appears) to discuss a common front. However this London-based initiative must be extended both through the pages of NALGO ACTION NEWS and a possible day conference.

Nationally social workers have been extremely slow in putting over their views. In terms of developing a perspective and publicising this, we are a long way behind the Junior Hospital Doctors. Yet in terms of struggle, social workers had far more experience. Twice we have been fobbed off with the argument 'there's a pay freeze on' and been forced to accept trifling settlements. We have been expected to accept that it is out professional duty to carry on doing stand-by duty in addition to our day time work. As trade unionists we should be against this enforced overtime. Standby is not a part of "other duties as may be specified". It is always work carried out in addition to the normal

working week and is specifically excluded from job descriptions submitted for job evaluation. The employers have succeeded in morally blackmailing us into providing a cheap and easy solution to meet their responsibilities. We must be clear that we will no longer continue to do this and that they must meet the cost of additional night-duty staff without detriment to day-time establishments.

## ELACAC

### EAST LONDON ACTION COMMITTEE AGAINST THE CUTS

Here is an example of how rank-and-file trade unionists have got together at a local level to try and organise a fight-back against the cuts.

The committee's roots go back over a year, to when the struggle developed to oppose the closure of the Poplar Hospital in the East End of London. It was promised at the time that people in its catchment area would be served by a new general hospital soon to be built. A lot of people believed this, so it was difficult to mount a campaign. That same Area Health Authority has now announced plans to close seven other hospitals in the area - all of them in working class districts that have always suffered from chronic under-provision of hospital places. In the first six months after the closure of Poplar Hospital's casualty service, 3,000 less emergency cases were seen elsewhere from its catchment area. Where did they go? Of those that were seen the majority were under 30, if the old and chronically sick were able to organize there would certainly be a massive demonstration. It is for these people as well as workers who are losing their jobs that ELACAC is fighting. Poplar Hospital was lost but prompt support from ELACAC has helped in a number of specific instances. For example in one hospital, not only were attempts against cuts in ancillary staff resisted but the management was forced to increase the number. ELACAC has delegates from many NUPE branches as well as a small number of NALGO branches, shop-steward committees and Trades Councils. The close links developed through the Action Committee have proved invaluable in mobilising people to demonstrations and meetings about hospital closures, giving a tremendous boost to the morale of the workers fighting inside.

The importance for non-health service union bodies of affiliating to ELACAC is to drive home the arguments about the extent of the cutbacks in a very real way and to engage in a fightback against them. This low-level, basic solidarity work is an essential precondition to any larger campaign that must develop if we are going to turn back the tide of increasing cuts.

For those of us in the more reactionary NALGO branches - that may very well be prepared to send money to and pass motions of support for local campaigns against the closure of a specific local hospital - the question of affiliation to such a committee raises the perspective of opposing cuts in general and not picking out one cut as being particularly pernicious, implicitly accepting that some cuts are necessary.

# CIS CDP SPECIAL REPORT

This report, loaded with ammunition for the battle centering on attempts by the capitalist class and state to oppress and increase the exploitation of the working class, traces the origins of the recession to a crisis of profitability faced by capital - which is receiving a decreasing return on investment. Cuts in spending on welfare and a wage freeze would permit a reduction in the rate of inflation, a rise of profits, and would enable more state support to private industry. This increased exploitation is enabled by the kinds of political mind fogs such as "One Nation", and the "Social Wage", which this publication goes a long way to demystify.

The report shows how Healey defines 'social wage' by dividing the total public spending by the numbers of the population - although over 50% has very little to do with direct public spending. "The introduction of the social wage concept encourages people to take personal responsibility for the public spending deficit and prepares them to make personal sacrifices by accepting cut in the services." Similarly the mirage of a state acting in the interests of the "nation" is eroded by explanations and evidence of the extent to which the City thrives on government borrowing and private industry is propped up by subsidies and services. This expose is not restricted to the central government, for example: "The only broker which publishes accounts, R.P. Martin, attributed its £150,000 increases in pre-tax profits to the combined growth of the local authority business." The report shows how the 'line of command' via the new social services 'inner cabinet' and its 'Think Tank' is being strengthened to control the spending of the local authorities "to co-ordinate the slashing of the welfare services."

In the demystifying of the content of social expenditure the report draws out relationships between state and capital that make the idea of 'social wage' absurd, for example, "overall capital spending by local authorities in the past has left them with a massive £22b debt. Interest payments go up every year, in 1972 interest was £1,170m, in 1974 it was £1,878m." The restrictions on council housebuilding are particularly striking: "Camden council estimates that it costs £28,000 to provide a two-bedroomed flat, the interest charge on this amounts to £76 a week". "There will be massive efforts to raise council rents, to put more of the burden on working class tenants".

So far the cuts to pay for interest repayments have been on capital expenditure and reductions of the public sector wage rates in real terms. For example, for social service departments "capital expenditure is to be the main casualty. It rose by 143% between '69 and '74. Between '74 and '77 it is to be reduced by 38%." The report stresses that the next step is cuts in current expenditure: "70% of NHS current expenditure is on wages and salaries. Cuts in this mean that nurses, hospital workers, junior doctors, health visitors etc will be forced out of work." Already in Portsmouth "60 trained student nurses have been forced to look for factory and office jobs." In education "already teacher unemployment in 1975 has reached 5,192, and estimates for this winter are around 7,000."

The report shows the implications of the erosion of the welfare state by examining the individual services and by using studies of geographical areas - noting that the areas hit hardest are those offering the least resistance, those areas that are already 'deprived'. "It is a geography of inequality, of class, for those who live in the casualty areas the implications of public spending cuts are devastating." "The cuts open the way to further discrimination and further divisions within the working class" - there is no longer any hope of a compensatory increase for declining areas.

This documentation of the siege of the welfare state is invaluable (though perhaps the report could stress more how these services have evolved partly as concessions gained by the working class movement.). It is the erosion of working class militancy and strength by mystifications of 'social wage' and 'one nation' that the authors are attempting to combat. The public sector workers must form an increasingly important and effective bloc opposing cuts in social expenditure as a solution to the crisis, and this report contributes to this opposition.

**linda harvey**

\* This report is the first in a series of a major investigation into the economic crisis facing Gr. Britain Ltd. The next report in the series will look carefully at the economics of unemployment and indicate the next section of the workforce that may be forced to join the growing dole queue.

- Available from good bookshops and Counter Information Services, 9 Poland St., London W1. Tel. 01-439 3764

## NALGO ACTION NEWS

produced by and for rank-and-file members

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## "inside welfare"

"INSIDE WELFARE", the Australian group of revolutionary welfare workers on which CASE CON reported in one of its previous issues, has now brought out a booklet called "Working Papers No. 1."

As the preface tells us the booklet covers three main areas: 1. It looks at the capitalist state and within that context, at the character and function of social welfare policies and programs. 2. Examines the ALP-

# MCAPP

The Labour Government's attack on the Welfare State is clearly demonstrated in the threat to the National Health Service. Not only are the Junior Hospital Doctors being refused adequate overtime payment because of the Government's £6 pay limit, but at the same time plans are being made to 'rationalise' the whole service by closing hospitals and by paring facilities to a minimum. The Junior Hospital Doctors issue is complicated because it coincides with the Consultants' reactionary campaign to preserve private practice within the National Health Service. There is a great danger that the two campaigns will link together and that the junior hospital doctors will support the pay-bed demands of their superiors in return for support for their own and justified campaigns for proper overtime pay.

In order to fight the cuts in the NHS and to abolish private practice, the Medical Committee Against Private Practice (MCAPP) was formed.

On October 11th 1975 MCAPP held a conference which drew over 150 delegates from Trade Unions and other organisations from all parts of the country. The conference resolved to set up local action committees and to call regional conferences to consolidate the fight back against cuts in the whole public sector.

Even NALGO's National Executive Committee has given its official backing to MCAPP and has recognised its importance by sending a full-time worker to the MCAPP Committee.

CASE CON has also given its support to MCAPP by passing a resolution at the National Conference which pledged affiliation to MCAPP and promised to publicise it in future publications.

This fight against these cuts deserves the full support of ALL Case Con supporters who are urged to participate in local MCAPP initiatives. It is also important that NALGO's participation in this campaign is maximised and that MCAPP is raised within local branches.

Further information can be obtained from:  
Dr Paul Stern, 55 Bridge Lane, London NW1.

Government and the role of various welfare policies in its overall plan for Australian Capitalism.  
3. Poses the question of how to politically relate to organizations of welfare dependents.

Interesting reading both for Australian and English social workers ..... \$ 1.00  
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