

# *Die* **Kinderversorger**



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILD CARE WORKERS  
NATIONALE VERENIGING VAN KINDER-  
VERSORGERS**

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**Child Care Workers:  
Multi-skilled People**

Sitting at the editorial desk, not only of this journal but also for the book *Today's Child — Tomorrow's Adult*, which is published this month, one cannot help but admire the child care workers of this country for the sheer range of work which they undertake for children who experience personal or family difficulties.

In this issue alone the reader will meet child care people who have travelled 500km to teach at or attend a training course in Kamieskroon — or half-way around the world to learn from colleagues at the International Conference in Washington; child care people who are learning sophisticated treatment methods while on an overseas exchange programme in America — or teaching destitute street children in Johannesburg basic life skills to enable them to hold their own in the reality of the job market; child care people who are setting standards and designing curriculum for improved training courses — or pioneering a brave new practical programme to rehabilitate families.

The variety of skills and interests which child care workers pursue is impressive. More so, is the fact that while knowledge is gained and methodologies sharpened in specific practice areas, the daily work goes on. After a morning of in-service training, programme planning or staff consultation/supervision, the children arrive home from school, and the focus moves to them. It is perhaps this which makes child care work so much more stimulating and demanding than purely academic pursuits: every day, after the reporting, discussing, philosophising, innovation, learning and planning, we have to go out and do. Theories developed over morning cups of coffee are put to the test during afternoon tea — and likely find themselves back on the drawing board next morning.

The book *Today's Child — Tomorrow's Adult* is a case in point. As we read some 35 presentations which reflect the creative thinking and development behind specific programmes and methods to address specific problem areas and needs, so we realise that all this has taken place against the background of daily work in children's homes where, all the while, all of the demands of child care work have had to be attended to.

The first lights in children's homes come on at 05h00; the last last light is often put out after midnight. The hours in between are never quiet and never idle. Yet out of this busy-ness and activi-

ty there comes the commitment of those who build new models and methods of helping troubled children, and the generosity with which they share these with their colleagues in the printed word.

South Africa does not have the well-differentiated child care career which we read of elsewhere: the practitioners, the teachers, the researchers, the writers. Here, child care people fit all this into their '25-hour day' themselves. A word of appreciation is due.



**A.C.V.V. Moreson Kinderhuis**

**HOOF**

*Bogenoemde Kinderhuis het 'n vakature vir 'n voltydse inwonende Hoof. Maatskaplike werk opleiding sal in aanmerking geneem word. Geldige rybewys 'n vereiste.*

*Salaris volgens ondervinding en kwalifikasies. Datum van diensaanvaarding: 1 Oktober 1988 of so spoedeig moontlik daarna.*

*Aansoek sluit 18 Mei 1988. Volledige besonderhede en aansoekvorm beskikbaar by Die Hoof, ACVV Moreson Kinderhuis, Posbus 68, George 6530. Telefoon 0441-74-4798.*

*Christelik-Maatskaplike Raad  
VRYHEID, NATAL*

**Maatskaplike Werkers**

*Aansoek van twee geregistreerde maatskaplike werkers word ingewag vir voltydse betrekking. Rig aansoek aan Die Voorsitter, CMR, Posbus 35, Vryheid 3100.*

Annie Starck Village is seeking a **Locum Social Worker**, preferably with child care experience, from June 1 – September 30. Also a **Senior Child Care Worker** with the qualifications (at least BQCC) and experience for this senior post. Also a qualified **Full-time Teacher** for new post. Contact the Principal on 021-638-3127.

**Annie Starck  
Village**

The Child Care Worker reported on this new programme in 1987, but considers it so important in terms of necessary change from traditional care models to shorter-term family service models, that this update has been requested after six months

## Six-month Report:

# The Ethelbert Family Programme

### Introduction

Ethelbert Children's Home was a long-term residential facility for 60 boys and girls. A new programme, reported in *The Child Care Worker*, September 1987, was launched to provide long-term residential care for up to 16 children and short-term residential treatment for up to 44 children. The long-term programme would cater for mostly older children for whom alternate care seemed improbable. The short-term programme aimed at securing the best possible placement for a child within two years, and for reaching clear decisions about children and their families within that time frame.

### Phase One

In retrospect this was a very demanding, complex and emotional stage. Major changes to existing philosophy, to attitudes towards children and their parents, to staff's perception of themselves as caregivers and to management, were some of the important issues addressed. This phase included:

- *Meetings of the Board of Management.* Numerous meetings of the Board were held to clarify and agree upon the changes envisaged. The programme was recognised as having obvious benefits for families, whilst it was acknowledged that extra staff expenditure would be incurred in its implementation.
- *Staff meetings and interviews.* A series of meetings were conducted to inform, explain and modify the new programme. Staff members were given an opportunity to evaluate their own strengths and preferences before final selections were made as to who would work in each programme.
- *Family meetings.* Prior screening of children had taken place in order to es-

tablish a working group for each programme. Nevertheless, wherever possible all families were interviewed. The new programme was explained and parents' and children's co-operation sought in a serious attempt to bring about a family reconciliation within a specified period of time.

- *"Open" meeting.* A meeting with representatives of the Department of Health Services and Welfare, all referring agencies, Commissioners of Child Welfare, local schools and other inter-

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### **Attitudes towards Ethelbert and towards staff have changed overnight as parents are encouraged more and more to be responsible for their children.**

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ested organisations was held. Support for the programme was pledged by all.

- *Physical changes.* The programme, having been introduced and explained to all, was now put to the test as children and staff changed cottages, and two separate facilities — the Home (long-term) and the Hostel (short-term) — were created on the same campus. The implementation of the new programme proved to be an extremely stressful time for both child care workers and children. The changes which were required threatened the security and safety of everyone. Child care workers were asked to detach themselves from children, to form new and different relationships with other children, to adopt different attitudes towards parents, to begin seeing themselves as not the sole providers of children's needs

and to allow parents once again to fulfil their parenting functions. Inasmuch as this was unsettling to child care workers, many children felt equally threatened by the changes which were taking place around them. Uncertainty about what was to happen created both excitement and fear.

A great deal of time was spent in allaying fears, explaining new procedures and policy, providing reassurance, and praying that this was in fact the right way to be going. The December school holidays provided a timeous and much-needed break for everyone.

Parents generally welcomed the opportunity of participating in a programme aimed at greater involvement with their children, and one which set definite and attainable goals for them and their families. Parents were asked to provide materially for their children and informed that certain support from Ethelbert would be withdrawn. All clothing, sports kit, school requirements, pocket money and toiletries would have to be provided by parents. Parents were expected to keep regular contact with their children and with members of staff, and wherever possible, arrangements had to be made for children to spend weekends and holidays at home.

### Phase Two

This phase saw the implementation of all that had previously been spoken about. Child care workers were introduced to some of the concepts which formed the basis of the programmes. Time was spent with individual team members clarifying issues and developing skills in preparation for the next stage of development. Staff training was a major priority. Most of the children adjusted quickly to their new circumstances and soon settled into the changed routines and procedures.

Apart from the courage, growth and determination shown by the staff, and the flexibility and adaptability of the children, the greatest change of all was noted in the attitude and involvement of parents.

Parents accepted their new responsibilities with a sense of purpose and responded with eagerness to the new roles they had to play. Most have met all the requirements of the programme, and are making adequate provision for their children's needs. Attitudes towards Ethelbert and towards staff have changed overnight as parents are encouraged more and more to be responsible for their children. Focus families were identified at the beginning of the year and every effort is being made to restore these family units by the end of this year. Focus families are those in their second year in the programme, who have been through the stages of holding (initial support and clarification) and goal-setting (during which the exit

plans are built, and strengths discovered and developed), and are now actively working towards the reality of reintegration of the family.

### Phase Three

The foundations have been laid, the programmes are under way and now it's down to the real hard work involved in short-term, purposeful services for children and families. Meanwhile, the long-term care programme has been through a consolidation of our previous care programmes which aim at providing a high standard of all-round care.

### Conclusions

Since the introduction of these programmes, many observations have been made and some valuable lessons learned. These include:

- A programme of this nature would not be viable if reconstruction services were to be rendered (as required) by the referring agencies alone. Parents have needed vast amounts of support and guidance. Two to four visits per week have had to be made by Ethelbert social workers and child care workers. (The home employs one full-time and three part-time social workers).
  - The programme is expensive to run. Subsidies are hopelessly inadequate for such intensive work with children and their parents.
  - Many parents have (for the first time?) begun to see some hope of having their children returned to them.
  - Children have responded with appreciation and a greater sense of responsibility to clothing and books given by their parents than to those provided by Ethelbert.
  - By being held responsible for providing for their children, and by having increased responsibility for their care, parents have been made to feel important and of worth.
  - Management and staff attitudes towards traditional residential care have had to change as parents have been allowed to be the most important people in their children's lives.
- Change of such a radical nature is not without its share of pain, hurt, frustration and anxiety, but the prospect of a 50 percent turnabout in children at the end of the year makes it all worthwhile.

### Situations Wanted

*Youth Worker, 46, married with one son (12), with six years experience of working with deprived children and adolescents, seeks position as Vice-Principal or Programme Director. Has strong administrative background suitable as Administrator in a children's home. Please write to J.N Waldegrave, P.O. Box 14072, Farrarmere 1518 or telephone 011-54-1725.*

## Children's Village, New York

# Personeelstruktuur en Behandeling

Lynette Rossouw

### Organisering van die wooneenhede

Die oorspronklike model wat in die Paul Revere eenheid geïmplementeer was, was dat elk van die ses wooneenhede essensieel 'n outonome entiteit was. Een maatskaplike werker (gevallewerker) was toegewys aan elke woonheid en sy of hy het as die primêre terapeut vir al die seuns in die huis, en hul gesinne, gedien. In sommige gevalle het 'n senior maatskaplike werker die posisie van behandelings supervisor (treatment supervisor) beklee.

### Die kinderversorgers evalueer daaglik watter mate van sukses die seun gehad het met die bereiking van sy doelstelling.

Benewens al die verantwoordelikhede van die gevallewerker, was die behandelings supervisor ook gemoeid met die supervisie van die kindersorgpersoneel en die oorkoepelende administrasie in die wooneenheid.

Die implementering van die model het 'n paar probleme tot gevolg gehad. Die grootste hiervan was die gebrek aan roetine kliniese dienste aan die seuns en hul families van 'n sekere wooneenheid in die afwesigheid van die maatskaplike werker, bv. gedurende vakansies, siekteverlof, ens. Die probleem het meer akute geword wanneer die maatskaplike werker die inrigting verlaat het en 'n plaasvervanger nie onmiddellik gevind kon word nie.

'n Ander struikelblok was die inkonsekvente implementering van behandelingsplanne. In die wooneenhede met behandelings supervisors was dit moontlik vir die maatskaplike werker in sy of haar posisie as supervisor om programme te koördineer en behandelingsplanne op 'n konsekvente basis te implementeer. In die wooneenhede met gevallewerkers was daar geen manier om, op gereelde basis, die kwaliteit van die lewe in die wooneenheid te verseker nie.

In 'n poging om die probleme te verminder, is 'n tweede model ontwikkel waar daar 'n behandelings supervisor in elke wooneenheid was. Dit was on-

suksevol, onder andere, omdat dit nie 'n oplossing gebied het vir die gaping in kliniese dienste in die afwesigheid van die maatskaplike werker nie.

Dit het gelei tot die ontwikkeling van 'n derde model, die "Sister Cottage" model wat huidige in werking is. Die ses wooneenhede in die Paul Revere eenheid vorm pare, bv. "Rose" en "Bradish". Elke paar wooneenheid het 'n behandelings supervisor en 'n gevallewerker (albei beskik oor 'n meestersgraad in maatskaplike werk). Die gevallewerker het gewoonlik pas gekwalifiseer terwyl die behandelings supervisor langer ondervinding het.

Elke maatskaplike werker is die primêre terapeut vir die helfte van die seuns in elke wooneenheid. Albei is bekend met al die seuns en families in die twee wooneenhede. Dit maak kontinuïteit van dienste, te alle tye, moontlik.

Deur die toewysing van die administratiewe en toesighoudende verantwoordelikhede vir die twee eenhede aan die behandelings supervisor, is meer konsekvente programmering in al die wooneenhede moontlik gemaak.

Die kinderversorgers van die eenhede ken ook al die seuns in twee wooneenhede. Dit maak o.a. meer effektiewe hantering van krisissituasies moontlik.

Direkte supervisie van die kindersorgers van elke wooneenheid en dag-tot-dag bestuur van die roetine en programme is die verantwoordelikhede van die supervisor ("cottage supervisor"). Dié supervisor is 'n senior kinderversorger. Die behandelings supervisor en die twee supervisors werk nou saam ten einde konsekwentheid van dienste in die twee wooneenhede te verseker.

Die balans van die kindersorgpersoneel bestaan uit drie voltydse en een deeltydse dag/nag staf en een voltydse en een of twee deeltydse nagstaf.

### Skedule in die wooneenheid

Die nagskof strek oor tien ure (23h00 to 09h00). Die tradisionele skof van 23h00 to 07h00 het daartoe aanleiding gegee dat nagstaf geïsoleer is van die hoofstroom van die lewe in die wooneenheid. Die nagstaf het aan diens gekom nadat die seuns reeds in die bed was, en het van diens gegaan voordat hul opgestaan het. Daar was dus nie geleentheid vir die kinderversorger om met enige van die seuns of met die personeel te werk nie. Hulle het ook selde kontak

gehad met die supervisor. Die huidige werkskedule is: 23h00 tot 09h00; 07h00 tot 13h00 of 15h00; 12h00 tot 22h00 en 15h00 tot 23h00.

Die nagstaf werk dus daaglik vir twee ure met 'n ander kinderversorger en het deel in die wakkermaak van die seuns en is betrokke in die oggendroetine. So-doende leer hulle die kinders ken asook die ander personeel. Daar is altyd twee kinderversorgers aan diens wanneer die kinders wakker in die wooneenheid is.

**Programbeplanning en -implementering**

Ten einde konsekwente, kwaliteitsdienste te verseker word die volgende vergaderings weekliks gehou:

- Die maatskaplike werkers vergader met die Direkteur ten einde beleid en aspekte rakende die programme te bespreek. Maniere waarop huidige programme verbeter kan word en nuwe programme ontwikkel kan word, geniet aandag.
- Die supervisors van die kindersorgers vergader met die Direkteur en sy assistent. Alle fasette van die lewe in die wooneenhede word hersien, o.a. gedragsmodifikasie programme, daaglikse roetine, dissiplineringsmaatreëls, ens.
- Die kinderversorgers in elke wooneenheid vergader met die behandelingssupervisor en gevallewerker. Spesifieke wyses waarop behandelingsplanne geïmplementeer kan word en nuwe programme en beleid ontwikkel kan word, geniet aandag. Die seuns se aanpassing in die wooneenheid word ook bespreek.
- 'n Oop vergadering vir alle personeellede in die eenheid (al ses wooneenhede) word op 'n maandelikse basis gehou. Dit gee aan alle personeellede 'n geleentheid om 'n inset te lewer in die formulering van beleid in die eenheid en om aspekte te opper wat in administratiewe personeelvergaderings verder ondersoek kan word.

**Gedragsmodifikasie program**

Elk van die ses wooneenhede maak gebruik van een of ander gedragsmodifikasie program. In hierdie stadium is twee soorte programme in werking, naamlik die puntestelsel en die 'seun van die maand' program.

Die puntestelsel is daarop gemik om toepaslike gedrag te beloon en negatiewe gedrag te 'straf' (deur verlies van voorregte). 'n Seun se gedrag word ten minste twee keer per dag geëvalueer en die punte word op daaglikse basis in die wooneenheid opgeplak. Die seuns se totale punte vir die week word op 'n meesterskaart ingevul wat ook opgeplak word. Elke seun kan so sy weeklikse totaal vergelyk met dié van die vorige week asook met die totale van die ander seuns in die wooneenheid. Indien 'n spesifieke vorm van gedrag so ernstig raak dat dit 'n algemene prob-

leem in die wooneenheid veroorsaak, word dié tipe gedrag gevoeg by die puntestelsel as 'n teikengedrag. Indien seuns se gedrag in die oggende 'n ernstige probleem raak, sal die aantal punte toegeken vir gedrag gedurende hierdie tyd verhoog word.

Aangesien die puntestelsel 'n terapeutiese doel dien, word daar genoegsame buigbaarheid in die sisteem ingebou ten einde die huidige behoeftes van die wooneenheid te dien.

Elke wooneenheid neem deel aan die 'seun van die maand program'. Hierdie program is ontwerp sodat 'n seun beloon word vir die bereiking van 'n "gedragsdoelstelling" wat hy geselekteer het. Die seuns kies 'n gedrag wat vir elkeen probematies is, bv. geneigdheid tot aggressie, leuentaal, ens. Daar word dan daaraan gewerk om sulke gedrag te verbeter.

Die kinderversorgers evalueer daaglik watter mate van sukses die seun gehad het met die bereiking van sy doelstelling. Die laagste punt is een en die

hoogste is drie. Die punte word opgetel en die seun met die hoogste telling aan die einde van die maand, is die 'seun van die maand'. 'n Spesiale ete word gehou waarheen al die seuns in die wooneenheid genooi word. Die wenner ontvang 'n sertifikaat en 'n bedrag geld.

**Ten slotte**

Uit bogenoemde blyk dit duidelik dat veranderinge in die organisering van die wooneenhede aangebring word, indien dit blyk dat die huidige stelsel die personeel en seuns nie ten beste dien nie. Die model wat tans in werking is, maak dit moontlik dat kliniese dienste ten alle tye t.o.v. seuns gelewer kan word, selfs in die afwesigheid van 'n personeellid. Kinders wat uit onstabiele omstandighede kom, moet die versekering hê dat hulle in inrigtingsverband altyd iemand het wat na hul kan omsien.

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**Letter**

**Professionalism and Humanness**

The need to professionalise child care work, thereby enhancing both its quality and status, was frequently raised at the October 1987 National Conference. A move towards a more professional approach to child care must be welcomed — we certainly need to become more systematic and reflective about our work in child care. Unless child care workers can view and understand children's behaviour from a metaposition (Powis, 1987), they are more likely than not to fall into traps which lead to frustration and disillusionment for child and child care worker alike.

However, a move towards professionalisation is not without its hazards. A strong emphasis on theory and technique easily leads to the development of intellectual knowledge at the expense of "humanness" by which I mean the capacity to think and act spontaneously in using one's unique human qualities. A friend and colleague who trains psychologists and therapists wrote to me saying that advanced training courses often "turn warm human beings into useless robots" (Bakker, 1987). Carl Whittaker, a highly respected psychiatrist and therapist, says that helpers become effective only when they stop trying to be like someone else or like some theory says they should be, and become free to be real people (Whittaker, 1976). Of all helpers, on-line child care workers need to give their clients (the children) the experience of relating to real people. While theory and technique should pro-

tect the worker from disillusionment and ineffectiveness, child care workers cannot afford the luxury of "professional objectivity".

How can child care trainers achieve a balance between professionalisation and humanness? I do not have an answer, only a suggestion. While educating and training our care workers in theory and technique, we need to pay equal attention to the emergence and development of each child care worker's special human qualities, and give them the confidence and freedom to apply theory and technique in a way which complements their individual human qualities. We will have to select child care workers who earn this freedom and are eager to develop themselves, and not only those who want to help troubled children. Finally, we as trainers will have to achieve high standards not only in terms of information-giving but also in the personal development of trainees.

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Peter Powis, Cape Town

# Nuusbrokkies



## Newsbriefs

### National

#### National Workshop on Street Children

At the October 1987 National Conference, the NACCW was asked to organise a national workshop for the many scattered organisations in South Africa serving street children. 21 organisations were circularised and, based on their responses, the dates 7 to 9 July in Cape Town have been set for this workshop.

The respondents also indicated a large range of topics they would like to be dealt with. The most important of these were alternative education, management of difficult behaviour, developing programmes, solvent abuse, legislation, staff and volunteer programmes, and family and community issues.

World estimates of the number of street children vary from eight to thirty million — the South African estimate being 5 000. A national workshop, in which the Department of National Health and Population Development has asked to be involved, comes at the right time as this problem becomes recognised in South Africa.

#### Institute Panel for BQCC Course

A national panel has been appointed to serve as an external moderating committee for the BQCC course. This course is establishing itself as the most widely used course for child care workers in South Africa, and this panel which will meet in the Transvaal will serve to set standards for the BQCC to ensure that the teaching is appropriate and relevant to the needs of child care workers. Substantial sets of notes for each module of the course are

being developed and one of the first tasks of that panel is to analyse the notes for Module I. They will meet to discuss the assignments and tests set for each module, and will serve as external examiners, moderating the test results. Panel members include Barrie Lodge, Headmaster of St George's Home and the new Vice-Chairman of the Transvaal region, Jean Wright, Director of Guild Cottage, and Dr Wilma Hoffmann, the Assistant Director of the School of Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand. We are fortunate to have people of this calibre who are willingly devoting their time to uplifting the standards of our training.

#### International Conference Delegates Return

Ashley Theron of NACCW, Jacqui Michael of NACCW and the Children's Foundation, Ros Usdin of the SA National Council for Child and Family Welfare, Elaine Davie of SOS and Katy Dempers of the Department of Health Services and Welfare all return from Washington this month, and no doubt we shall have the opportunity to hear something of their travels in due course through the pages of this journal. Ashley Theron visited agencies in both North America and the United Kingdom after the International Conference. He brought greetings not only from a number of American colleagues, but also from Dina Hatchuel, Lynette Rossouw and Peter Harper.

#### Conference Book Published

Enclosed with this issue is an order form for the NACCW's most ambitious publication to date, the book which contains some 35 of the papers presented at the October 1987 National Conference in

Johannesburg. The book represents an unusually wide cross-section of contemporary South African child care writing, and can be ordered from the NACCW, P.O. Box 23199, Claremont 7735 for R15.00 + R1.50 for postage.

#### Service Clubs and Children in Care

National Director Brian Gannon had the opportunity of discussing service clubs' involvement with child care organisations when he addressed a national convention of Leos Clubs in Worcester on Sunday 27 March. The point was well received that the commitment of individual relationships with youngsters was far more valuable than 'boerewors and ice-cream bashes', and this led to a constructive discussion on how service clubs could make more realistic contributions to youngsters in care. An organisation such as Leos represents a powerful resource of well-motivated and successful young people who could have a lot to offer.

### Transvaal

#### First Aid Course for Child Care Workers

At the request of children's homes a First Aid course for child care workers has been arranged, and will take place in June starting on the first Tuesday of the month — June 2nd. The course consists of 8 sessions over a four-week period and the group will meet every Tuesday and Thursday. The workers can choose to join either a morning or an evening session. The morning session runs from 08h30 to 10h30 and the evening session from 19h00 to 21h00. It was recommended that child care workers join the morning session if at all possible. The course covers the theory and practice of CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation) as well as the handling of a wide variety of emergency situations such as burns, bone fractures, head injuries and the treatment of shock. The training is run by Civil Defence, at no cost to the participants, at their training centre near the Old Fort, around the corner from the Transvaal Memorial Institute. It is essential that all child care workers have some knowledge of first aid. Book with Miss Hart at 403-2626, well in advance to ensure your place.

#### The BQCC Course

The BQCC has got off to an excellent start with a registration of 71 enthusiastic child care workers from 18 different organisations. The programme for the remainder of Module I is as follows:

**May 4:** Professor Di Shmukler from the Department of Applied Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand will run this and the next week's session. All our children have been through separation experiences. The lecture focuses on what separation means to the child.

**May 11:** In this session Professor Shmukler will examine the role of the child care worker in coping with the child's deprivation.

**May 18:** This session will be used to complete our work understanding the child's situation.

**May 25:** Jacqui Michael, our Transvaal Chairlady and Director of The Children's Foundation, will investigate the subject "Working with the Child's Biological Family". Times: 09h15 to 12h00. Venue: TMI (the old Children's Hospital).

#### Institute of Child Care — Principals' and Social Workers' Meeting

All members of the Institute are welcome to attend our meeting at 10h00 on the 19th May at Guild Cottage at which we will receive a report back from the International Child Care Conference in Washington. Jacqui Michael, our Region Chairlady, and Elaine Davie, Assistant Director of SOS, will give us their impressions of the conference and of current trends in child care in the United States. This meeting is also open to senior staff who are not Institute members.

#### Nuwe NVK Personeellid

Dit is vir ons 'n groot voorreg om Mev Cathy Beukes as personeellid van die NVK welkom te heet. Sy sal deelyds as koördinator van die BKK in Pretoria optree. Cathy is 'n maatskaplike werkster wat by die Transvaalse Kreupelsorg Vereniging gewerk het. Sy het ook diens gelewer aan die Pretoriase Skool vir Serebraal Verlamdes. Boonop was Cathy ook betrokke by die opleiding van raadgewers vir "Lifeline" en het sy as huweliksvoorligter by "Family Life" gewerk. Cathy voltooi tans haar M.A. deur UNISA. Sy is getroud en het drie kinders.

### BKK in Pretoria

Die BKK sal vir die eerste keer op 'n weeklikse basis in Afrikaans in Pretoria aangebied word. Module I (Filosofie van Kinderversorging) sal op 25 April teen 09h30 by Louis Botha Kinderhuis 'n aanvang neem.

### New Vice-Chairman for the Transvaal Region

Mr Barrie Lodge, Headmaster of St George's Home, has been elected the new Vice-Chairman of the Transvaal Executive Committee. Barrie has previously served as the Chairman of the Eastern Cape Region, and he brings not only a wealth of knowledge and experience on residential child care, but also an in-depth understanding of the tasks and challenges that face the NACCW.

### Workshop on Discipline

A three-session workshop on Discipline will be offered by the Institute of Child Care from 09h00 to 11h00 on May 4th, 11th and 18th at the Transvaal Memorial Institute. The workshop will be led by Philip Cohen and Maureen Lang, and is open to graduates of the BQCC, the National Higher Certificate or other approved course. Enquiries and reservations may be made by telephoning Di Levine on 728-2044.

## Natal

### Natal Technikon Problems Resolved

In reply to correspondence with the NACCW, the Rector of the Natal Technikon, Professor A.L. du Preez, has explained that although the decision to scrap the quota system which governed student admissions was taken in 1987, technikons were only informed of this on 25th January 1988 when registrations for this year were at the closing stages. It is understood, therefore, that the Natal Technikon was not in a position to handle registrations for child care students in a more satisfactory way. Prof du Preez has informed the NACCW that his Technikon Council's policy emphasises academic merit as a major criterion for admission, and we are happy to report that this issue appears to be resolved.

### Programming

The Principals' and Social Workers' Groups which meet in Durban and Pietermaritzburg



Part of the group attending the Durban seminar for Places of Safety

have been working over the past two months on the development of programmes as envisaged by Circular 6. Although child care organisations in all Regions have now devoted time to this task, there is still no clarity as to whether such programmes will qualify for specific subsidy.

### Dealing with Loss

The last two Regional Meetings of the Association, each attended by about 110 members, have been addressed by Elaine Agar, social worker attached to the Highway Hospice in Durban. She has led discussions on helping children to deal with grief at the death of significant people in their families, working on how the need for mourning and working through loss can be facilitated in the institution.

### Regional Workshop for Places of Safety

A two-day workshop for staff of places of safety in the Durban-Pietermaritzburg area was held on 8 and 9 March. 37 delegates attended from the Valley View, Wentworth, Excelsior, Greenfields, Pata and Enduduzweni places of safety. Ashley Theron, Head of the Bonnytoun Place of Safety in Cape Town and National Chairman of the NACCW led the workshop. He dealt with such topics as the Child Care Task in a Place of Safety, Admission and Discharge Procedures in a session entitled 'Hullo's and Goodbye's', Care for the Principals and Senior Staff, and Management versus Control — coping with troubled behaviour in the place of safety. Monet Slabbert, Clinical Psychologist from Excelsior, led two very well-received sessions on (a) The

World of the Child and (b) Child Care Workers in Places of Safety are People too.

Much time was spent in role-plays and discussions, and the depth of participation was impressive.

In an evaluation at the end of the workshop some of the delegates' comments included:

- Some of us have worked in places of safety for twenty years and never experienced a training workshop like this.
- A number of requests to meet regularly together for training.
- Folk particularly enjoyed sharing their concerns with other places of safety and finding that resources could be shared.
- Ashley and Monet were very helpful in one-to-one discussions during tea and breaks.

There has subsequently been a request that the NACCW set up a monthly morning training session to which all places of safety will be invited. The "Friends of Excelsior" who sponsored the meals for this workshop have offered to sponsor these morning workshops.

## Eastern Province

### Opleiding in Port Elizabeth

Op 'n vergadering van al die prinsipale van kinderinstansies in Port Elizabeth is daar op 10 Maart besluit om die BKK deur middel van lesings in die tweede helfte van 1988 aan te bied. Tot op datum was slegs kwartaalike naweek kursusse om die beurt beskikbaar in Port Elizabeth en King William's Town en menige toekomstige studente kon nie gereeld bywoon nie. Daar is vyf privaat kinderhuise en drie plekke van veiligheid onder staatsbeheer in Port Elizabeth, asook 'n klein aantal spesiale skole.

### King William's Town Weekend

About thirty students from children's institutions in East London, King William's Town and the Ciskei attended a residential weekend course run by Lesley du Toit and Brian Gannon from 11-13 March. The students worked on an elaboration of Henry Maier's "Core of Care" ingredients, and on treatment planning using Mark Krueger's book *Intervention Techniques for Child and Youth Care Workers* as a source. One session was devoted to "Teams, Pyramids and Authority", looking at administrative structures in children's institutions.

## Western Cape

### Three-Day Residential Seminar

A residential weekend for senior and middle management staff has been planned at the Melkbosstrand Cultural Centre from 18h00 on Friday 13th May to 14h00 on Sunday 15th May. The major task of the seminar will be based on the development of programmes in terms of Circular 6. A programme will be available in the next week, and enquiries may be directed to Leon Rodrigues on 021-31-4154.

### BQCC Courses off to a Good Start

Rose September, Vice-Chairman of the Western Cape Region and who was previously on the staff of the School of Social Work at UWC, led a team of three Cape Town child care workers, Keith Balie, Nerina Abrahams and André Thompson, to offer the first Module to children's homes in Namaqualand in March. 30 people attended the weekend from 18-20 March, held at the RK-Sending Kinderhuis in Kamieskroon. On 13th April the BQCC course started in Cape Town for which 45 students have so far registered. The course is being offered this year at Annie Starck Village in Athlone. Enquiries may be directed to Rose September on 638-3127.

### Residential Social Workers' Group Plans Full Year

If anyone wants more information about the group they can contact one of the following committee members: Margie Davison 61-2135, Jane Payne 71-7130 or Collin Smith 71-5057.

# Education: The Lost Property of our People

Fr. Bill MacCurtain, S.J.

*Father Bill MacCurtain is Chairman of Street-Wise, Johannesburg.*

**"We were particularly interested in looking at the programmes providing non-formal education for street, slum and working children. With the generally poor standard of state education and the pressures on children to drop out of school and start working at an early age, many children have little or no education at all . . . nearly all the non-governmental organisations are now thinking in terms of training the children with an aim to their becoming self-employed . . . however, we were disappointed at how many of these schemes were based on uninspired 'carpentry-for-the-boys' and 'tailoring-for-the-girls'."** — James Gardner and Julie Steel, Durham University. Expedition July-September 1987. 15 overseas projects visited.

Why should such programmes be "uninspired" when there seem to be so many persons about who claim to have the interests of the street child deeply at heart? My own experience in helping to set up Street-Wise, an educational and job-skills training programme for street children in Johannesburg, immediately highlighted two major stumbling blocks. The first lies in the priority of needs in the children; the second is to be found in the priority of needs in those who would help them.

## Needs of the children

Learning skills are a 'growth' need in children which cannot be pursued until prior 'dependency' needs are to some extent being met. Not only are adequate food and shelter a pre-requisite; the child must also be affirmed, valued as an individual and, in the case of the young child, regularly cuddled, if he is to embark upon a sustained educational adventure. The abandoned child will seek to be assured that such care will not again be suddenly withdrawn. Factors in society which produce the

phenomenon of the street child, not only in Johannesburg but in cities throughout the world, are abandonment, being orphaned, parental destitution, and physical and emotional abuse. In the case of South Africa, there is also eviction of employees' children by their employers — this is especially the case in certain farming communities and where children are offspring of live-in domestic workers. State provision for such victims is either inadequate or absent. Until the 1976 riots highlighted their existence, there were, officially, no children in Soweto, which was purely designed as a dormitory for migrant workers serving the industrial, civic and domestic needs of the white population of Johannesburg.

Non-governmental projects which set out to assist such children have tended to expend their slim resources on their 'dependency' needs and have insufficient remaining to satisfy their 'growth' needs. If a separate project directed towards the growth needs of the child is to have any real hope of success, then the project catering for the dependency needs must provide effective support.

The Street-Wise project in Johannesburg was set up specifically to complement the work being done by residential care centres for street children, and to reach those children still living on the streets who claimed they wanted to be re-integrated into society. After careful research by professional people who already had first-hand experience of street children, their backgrounds and their needs, the programme was set in motion in a front garden in April 1987. The small group of enthusiasts involved consisted mostly of educationists who were no strangers to the street children of Johannesburg but who had known them, worked with them and in some cases shared their homes and food with them for some years. And still the project almost foundered.

This was due in part to the lack of a healthy communicative relationship with the residential organisations. This has improved considerably in recent months, to the great benefit of the children.

It was found too that children still living on the streets could only gain minimum benefits from the educational programme since their prior dependency needs were not being met. Some were 'high' on glue and had to sleep off its effects. They did not get enough sleep at night and fell asleep as soon as they sat down, and they were inadequately nourished. Children who are on the streets are still welcomed at Street-Wise, but they are encouraged to seek shelter at one of the residential care centres.

## Needs of the helpers

The second chief stumbling block in setting up and developing a successful programme lies in the inability or refusal of us would-be helpers to discern our own motivation in our attraction to the children's plight. The child is vulnerable having suffered repeated rejection, humiliation and physical want, and may appear to be the answer to emotional needs within those of us who have difficulty in forming healthy reciprocal relationships and have a compulsive urge to possess people in one way or another. Others of us may have the need, perhaps unacknowledged, to feel relevant, wanted and praised, and seek through our work for the street child the satisfaction of that need. Other needs which can be identified range from sentimentality through the channelling of anger to the prospect of material gain.

Where the helpers, therefore, are not attempting to discern *together* why they are doing what they are doing, and are not making a conscious effort to put the needs of the children first, the result will be jealousy, suspicion, rivalry, demoralisation, the demise of the project and public scandal. And it is the street child who, at the end of the day, pays the damages which he can ill afford. Indeed he would be better left to his own devices.

## Relevancy of the teaching programme

An educational or training project for street children is not a task for inexperienced enthusiasts. It requires well-qualified and experienced teachers with a knowledge of African languages and a flexible attitude to teaching methods. It is vitally important that education for the street child be something more than occupational therapy. It must look rather to his future, taking his particular socio-economic context into consideration as well as his personal interests, aptitudes and problems.

The street child, like anybody else, wants a job one day which is suited to his interests and abilities. He does not want to be placed in any available slot and expected to remain there, gratefully, regardless of his interests and aspirations. He has had problems previously in



coming to terms with life's vicissitudes and has tended to try to escape his problems by walking away from them or sniffing glue. One must remember that a street child is totally without support or protection, even from the law of the country, and only has his own small allocation of brain and brawn to rely upon for survival. A personally threatening work situation will frighten him away, and those who were his benefactors will write him off and thus undermine his self-esteem.

A street child is also unaccustomed to the concept of a nine-to-five working day and has not learnt to integrate work and play as normally adjusted people tend to do. The lower a boy's self-esteem, the more he will fantasise; his ambitions will be so unrealistic as to be quite unattainable. As one restores his dignity and self-esteem one also has to gently encourage him to strive for attainable goals. During the early stages of working life he will need a great deal of support and encouragement. In normal development a child learns to adapt to primary school, then learns to become a small fish in a big pond again in secondary school; learns, in the supportive home environment, to cope with the loss of a loved grandparent or some other friend or relative; is still at home when he starts tertiary education or the thrill of his first pay packet. It is no wonder, then, that a street child will encounter considerable stress as he seeks to meet the expectations of employers and benefactors.

### Setting objectives

The broad objective of Street-Wise is the self-fulfilment of the children in the long-term. Therefore it is pointless to prepare programmes which the children may not be able to adapt to. The Johannesburg Art Foundation very quickly discovered this when they tried to give the children art lessons. Five talented boys took to it immediately, the rest did not come back! Now the Johannesburg Art Foundation comes to Street-Wise willing to learn and teach at the same time. There has to be constant discussion between teachers, helpers and children concerning their interests and aspirations. Where they have no prior experience of certain activities they are encouraged to try them, and if they have an aversion, to talk about it and not reject it out of hand.

In looking beyond the immediate basic needs of the street child to his future, Street-Wise has set itself the following aims: (a) to prepare the child for a return to school, if he has had sufficient previous schooling and is keen to complete it; or (b) to prepare him for employment through teaching him basic literacy and numeracy as well as work-bench and marketing skills; and (c) to rebuild the child's dignity and personal pride.

### Development of the Street-Wise programme

Initially Street-Wise was hampered by the lack of suitable premises and proper funding. 'Back-garden' education proved quite popular with the children as they were able to swim regularly, but it was not an ideal setting for teaching effectively. After several moves, Street-Wise settled for four months in St George's Presbyterian church hall in Wolmarans Street. Although made very welcome, the teachers found it difficult to teach several classes simultaneously in one room, and there was no workshop facility. In October 1987 we moved into premises at the Catholic Cathedral complex in Saratoga Avenue, Berea, where we have individual classrooms, a shower for those living on the streets, and workshop space. In order to keep the classes small and so teach effectively, we teach half the children from 08h30 to 10h30 in three forty-minute periods, and after a half-hour break for tea and bread, we teach the other half from 11h00 until 13h00. Those not in the classes are then free to do art, drama, singing and workshop skills. Since the children come voluntarily and invest a portion of their time in the Street-Wise programme, we do not have the usual school disciplinary problems.

More than 150 boys and several girls have had some contact with Street-Wise since its inception in April 1987, but so far just over one-third have used the programme with sufficient regularity to have gained any real benefit from it, most of these being in the 13-17 age group. Almost half of these were illiterate when they first came and nearly all the rest were several years behind their age group at school. One of the girls had been gang-raped at her school in Soweto, and Street-Wise was asked to take her for a few months while she was being treated by a psychiatrist.

It was typical of the street children that they first approached us with some caution, testing for authenticity. The numbers of children coming in the early days varied from six to forty-six. One needs considerable patience at such times when all one's hard work is seemingly being eroded. Constancy and communication with the children, about their needs and where they are not being met, ensures that the project is 'on target' so that they return voluntarily and draw others with them. As happens in many such projects, a small core of about six settle first and come regularly, then the regular attendance builds up. Today the regular attendance is over fifty and rising. The time is now coming round for another outreach programme to listen to those still on the streets whose previous association with projects were unsuccessful or unhappy for one reason or another. Many of these children are known to Street-Wise per-

sonnel.

It has been very rewarding to see how well the children have responded once they have settled into the programme. Their attention span at first was no more than five to ten minutes. Within a month nearly all of them were coping happily with three 45-minute periods every morning. As they began to make progress their self-confidence and application also improved and they no longer needed to sniff glue.

### Learning difficulties

Despite all the efforts of the teachers, however, a number of the children were showing little if any academic progress. A specially tailored remedial programme had to be worked out with the help of remedial tutors at the University of Witwatersrand and SAALED. Unisa also came to our help. Their Institute of Behavioural Sciences undertook cognitive/developmental testing of the children, using a series of tests which they had also applied to a wide range of children from varying backgrounds. We are expecting the results very soon and they should identify children with possible brain damage from drug abuse or physical abuse who could then be tested further. Certain learning problems may also be highlighted. A follow-up testing after a year will also give us an impartial yardstick of the children's academic progress. The testing of the children at Unisa was done with such sensitivity that the children experienced it as fun and look forward to doing it again.

### Problems with language

In the Johannesburg area some of the children have a smattering of several languages but insufficient mastery of any to be able to express themselves with much precision. This could expose them to the danger of frustration and angry impotence. It is necessary therefore for our staff to be competent in a range of languages. The 'home' languages used by the children at Street-Wise include Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, Pedi, Swazi and Shangaan. The literacy programme includes vernacular literacy in Sotho and Zulu, the two main languages of the children. The only teacher at Street-Wise without a knowledge of home languages is the teacher of spoken and written English. She is a Wits graduate specialising in teaching English as a second language who did her practical work at Street-Wise last year. A creative and determined person, she overcame the barrier of class-taught theory which proved ineffectual in the Street-Wise setting, and developed an eclectic style of her own which is paying good dividends.

We found it unproductive to employ teachers of spoken English whose mother tongue was not English. In most instances they made the same syntacti-

cal and grammatical errors as the children themselves. Another advantage is that in their English classes the children are forced to communicate with their teacher in English or not at all!

### Content of the programme

We decided from the beginning to concentrate our energies mainly on vernacular literacy, use of English and basic numeracy rather than a broad syllabus, and this has been beneficial. At the prompting of the children, some history and geography have been introduced into the teaching of English, and biology into vernacular literacy classes. When the numbers grew beyond fifty children we decided to split into more and smaller classes (as outlined above) to keep the pupil-teacher ratio at an effective level. Those children who come new to Street-Wise start in a beginner's class where they can be assessed and then fed into one of the six other classes when their level of education and ability to study in groups has been ascertained. When they are not in these classes they are doing art, drama, workshop skills, sewing, etc. They are also members of the local public library which they enjoy. Friday afternoons are devoted to soccer and swimming at the Sacred Heart College where a group of students acts as hosts and hostesses and makes sure no one drowns!

### Bridging the gap

After a substantial time away from school children forget both what they have learnt and how to learn, but within two months of starting we had our first 'graduate'. Street-Wise is not a school in the conventional sense and we must consciously resist the temptation to hold onto our children. We approached St Ansgar's Boarding School near Roo-depoort, a community school run by Sowetan parents. They agreed to take William and any other 'graduates' whom we judged to be psychologically and academically capable of flourishing there. For our part we undertook to find bursaries and provide the quasi-parental care the boys need in order to persevere and succeed. This year a further seven boys have started at St Ansgar's, one of whom had never been to school and spoke no English when he first came to us and is now in Standard 4. Another boy returned home and went back to his former school in Sebokeng, but turned up again after three months, saying that his father had had to go into hospital and his step-mother had "poisoned his brother to death", so he had run away again. It is almost impossible to resettle street children in their homes for more than short periods. PROCESS now have ten children who attend schools in Soweto from their Hillbrow shelter for street children and we hope that the two Hillbrow shelters, PROCESS and TWI-

LIGHT, will soon develop a supportive home situation from which boys can attend day schools. Those at boarding schools will also need some place to call home during their holidays and from which to be launched into employment. That the boys really value our confidence in their personal ability, and are hungry for education, is reflected in Jabulani Biyela's written statement on why he wished to go to St Ansgar's:

"I like to go to St Ansgar's because I need to go threwh with my study and learn more things about the world and know what's happening in the world. I want to help others thats are come after me . . .

"I didn't leave school for street. That day while I was go to live the school my heart it was very very bad. I told my friends that time I was at Magaliesburg, (he spent some time at PROCESS and went to the local school in Magaliesburg) God loves me because now he gives a place where I become saved and go back to school. I want to learn how to speak English well and how to gives manners and how to respect others and how to pray to God . . .

"I will contribute people that's poor like me when I become something in future but I like to be a doctor. And with that way I can try with many many ways much way to help others. My supervisor that are in charge of Streetwise when I grow they will see what I am going to do for them when I become a doctor. Because they are trying to do something nice for me, they try to make me a person not a pig or what ever. They show a way and they love me. And me I must done something for them. Thats all."

### At the work bench

The job-skills training programme has produced the most teething problems. As in the class room, so at the work bench, the quality of teaching must be very good. Two very skilled and highly qualified men both undertook to give half a day a week to the programme. We also asked a number of firms to release people who could pass on their skills for a few hours a week, but so far without any response. People of the calibre we seek are not thick on the ground and can command very good salaries. Another difficulty lies in the fact that in the early stages of familiarisation with the proper use of tools and materials, each boy has to be individually supervised, so the classes have to be small. We have had to restrict our precious work bench time therefore to those boys between 17 and 19 who must soon venture into the market place. They have lost so much schooling that if they want to better their education they will have to attend evening classes during their working life. In the meantime we have set June as the target date by which they must be ready to start to find employment. Get-

ting them ID cards is a mammoth task since most of them have long lost contact with their places of origin.

Creativity in the workshop programme is vital. The boys must get a sense of achievement early on if we are not to reinforce their low self-esteem. They should also make things which they can sell so as to introduce them to costing and marketing. Even if the skills they acquire in the workshop are not subsequently used to earn a living, they will still be valuable to them in adult life. People working with street children are not generally aware that the children lack knowledge in such basic things as refrigeration, telephonic communication and electrification.

### My brother's keeper?

In conclusion, I would like to touch briefly on the contention often heard, that the government should be handling the problem of street children, or that they should be handled by the judicial system. Worldwide, the positive and progressive programmes have emanated, not from governmental, but from non-governmental projects, the quotation at the beginning of this article notwithstanding.

The United States Senate, when considering private sector initiatives three years ago, said:

"Both the high costs of involving the criminal justice system and the number of non-delinquent motives for running away point up the logic of locating a program outside the justice system while making it capable of triggering judicial, mental health and other social service processes . . ."

It noted further that street children are a problem because "Young people who, without resources of shelter, face dangers of living on the street . . . create substantial law enforcement problems for the communities they live in and run to."

The strength and well-being of a community — or a nation — can be gauged by its readiness to care for its sick and marginalised. I would be remiss if I did not pay glowing tribute to the many people who have contributed time, expertise, funds in greater or lesser amounts, clothing, bikes, their premises, in their efforts to restoring to their rightful place in our community the unfortunate children of Johannesburg's streets.

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# One Year Later: A Critical Look at the Child Care Act

Di Levine with Jackie Loffell and  
Jean Wright

After living with the new Child Care Act (No.74 of 1983) since February 1987, it has become clear that this legislation is far from satisfactory. Although the Act has brought some notable improvements, mainly in the field of adoption, we are left with the question: Is this Act merely worse than the old Children's Act, or can it be more accurately described as a catastrophe for those involved in rendering residential care services?

There are major problems on two levels: The first is a philosophical one. Although parts of the philosophy are soundly based in acceptable academic standards of theory and practice, other parts are largely unacceptable. The second lies in the provisions of the Act itself, where the implications of certain sections were not thought through to their logical conclusions, and where it is quite clear that the realities of practice were either unknown or disregarded. The ironic part of this is that some of the provisions are so poorly conceptualised, that they serve to undermine the positive aspects of the philosophy mentioned above.

In analysing the philosophy of the Act, two streams of thought emerge. The first is an attempt to encourage permanency planning, that is, the prompt and decisive return of the neglected and abused child to the community. It is depressing that most of the provisions designed to bring this about have had the opposite effect, and the Act is likely to retard our efforts to return children to their biological parents. This is seen mainly in the provisions of Section 16 and Section 34.

## Lapse and renewal of court orders

Section 16 makes provision for the court order committing the child to the care of the children's home to lapse after two years. The idea here was to encourage the institution to complete the treatment and rehabilitation of the child within a period of two years, a positive contribution to our work. Section 16 replaces Section 46 (bis) of the old Act,

which required the regular submission of progress reports explaining what had been done in terms of reconstruction, and why the child/children should remain in care for a further period. These reports were submitted initially after the first two-year period of care and annually after that. Section 46 (bis) was generally considered an ineffective paper review that did nothing to ensure the delivery of adequate reconstruction services so that children did not remain in indefinite care.

The intention of Section 16 seems to be to correct the short-comings of Section 46 (bis) by attempting to ensure that children do not remain in limbo by providing for the lapsing of orders after a specific time period. The supposition appears to be that social workers will be galvanised into action and will provide more effective, better quality reconstruction work.

The reality is that Section 46 (bis) did not work because of an overstressed system, with too few social workers, with too high caseloads, with inadequate supervision and insufficient and inadequate skills. In reality, social work agencies frequently have vacant posts. In reality the old Section 46 reports were by and large submitted late, and it is highly unlikely that this inadequate welfare system will now be so administered that Section 16 orders can be reinstated on time. Take the situation in the white community and multiply the problems by ten for the black community, and we realise we are dealing with a fantasy that cannot be realised within the South African welfare system. What will happen if the orders are not renewed? Either the organisation and foster parents will have their grants cut off, or, more likely, we will have increasing chaos with lengthy extensions granted as the real-life situations drift increasingly away from the intentions of the Act.

The most serious negative implication is that a case may now come to be reviewed every two years, instead of annually for a child in long-term care. Moreover, the mechanism by which this order can be reinstated does nothing to

further the aims of family rehabilitation. The order is simply reinstated in exactly the same way as provided for by the old Section 46, namely, by the submission of reports from the children's home and the family welfare organisation.

## Transfers

It is the gaps in the provisions of Section 34 which present the most serious obstacles to our work. This section replaces Section 44 and 50 of the old Act. Section 34 of the Child Care Act allows for the transfer of a child from one custody to another. In this respect it replaces Section 50 of the old Children's Act. However, it has two anomalies. Firstly, children can be transferred from one institution to another or from foster care to an institution but not from their own parents back to an institution.

When a family breakdown occurs, the whole case has to go back to court and be treated as a new case, which entails many hours of work, and costs to the welfare agency which have been estimated to be in excess of R1 000 in terms of staff time. In all cases where children have been away from their families for extended periods of time, the child's and family's readjustment is never a matter of certainty. Even in cases where social workers feel confident of a positive outcome, they cannot guarantee the success of the placement. In other cases, for example of a child strongly bonded to his mother but severely depressed in the children's home, the social worker may feel that it would be to the benefit of the child to return home, even if the long-term prognosis of the family is not positive. When working with multi-problem families, the disruption of the placement is not necessarily a disaster for the child, especially if the agency keeps regular and systematic contact with the family. The effect of this provision is to discourage the family welfare agencies from releasing children at the very time when we are increasingly motivated to return children to their biological families.

The second anomaly is that no provision is made for statutory after-care services. The delivery of after-care services therefore depends entirely on the family welfare organisation's or children's home's willingness to provide an after care service.

## Release on licence

The new Act makes no provision for release on licence as provided for in Section 44 of the old Act. This appears to be an unfortunate omission, as this provision facilitated the release and return of children, enabled conditions of licence to be laid down, and provided for statutory supervision of the placement.

One result of the major omissions in the provisions of Section 34 is that children's homes, in a sense of despera-

tion, looked to other sections in the Act to serve the purpose of release on licence. Because the children's home feels a moral obligation to continue some supportive service for the families whose lives they have been intimately involved in, they have turned to using Section 35, which provides for a period of six months' leave of absence which an institution may allow to a child. This section was not intended to serve as a release on licence, and the children's homes have been specifically requested not to use it for this purpose. However, the reality situation has led to the use of this section to allow the social workers to provide a period of supervision for the family and a safety net for the child. This in turn has led to serious negative financial implications for the children's home and for service delivery as a whole. Whilst the child is on the six-month leave of absence, the institution is not permitted to fill the vacancy left by the child. The state will pay the grant for the first two weeks of the leave of absence only. If we consider an organisation which is doing active reconstruction work and returning 25 percent of its children to the community annually, this children's home will be heavily penalised financially for doing its work properly. Other homes which do not actively promote work with the biological parents are certainly rewarded financially. A principal of a home for 80 children confided that he had released 11 children in 1987, but cannot afford to release any more for at least another nine months because he has to wait until he can process new applications to fill the empty places. Children in places of safety awaiting placement will have their admissions even further delayed.

In summary, the gaps in Section 34 have undermined both the spirit and the intentions of the Act, which were to enhance reconstruction services and to ensure that children are maintained in care for as short a period as possible. This section will have the effect of making social workers feel that they have to guarantee the successful outcome of placements, which in reality is not possible. Social workers, already pressurised and overloaded, are also likely to be intimidated by the extra work that may be incurred should the placement fail and the case need to go back to court. Entry into the system will be delayed, and the homes will suffer unnecessary financial strain.

The practical administration of the Act is in some instances clumsy. For example, if a case comes to court and it is decided that a child should be placed under supervision in the custody of his parents, and it later becomes necessary to transfer him to a children's home, this cannot be done. The child has first to be discharged from the provisions of the Act, and then once again has to go through

the full process of a Children's Court Inquiry.

### **Unfit parents**

The second major philosophical emphasis emerges as a bias against the parent who has neglected the child. This is demonstrated mainly in the provisions of Section 14 where the parent has to be judged to be unfit, or unable to parent before the court will make an order in respect of the child. Finding the parent unfit, or unable, replaces the concept of finding the child "in need of care". The Children's Court proceedings were never intended to determine guilt and assign blame, and this shift in emphasis tends to "criminalise" the parent, rather than regard the child as in need of help.

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### ***Children's Court proceedings were never intended to determine guilt and assign blame, and this shift in emphasis tends to "criminalise" the parent.***

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This is not merely a theoretical issue. The social worker who is assigned to prove the parent's "guilt" in being unfit or unable, is the same person assigned the task of providing long-term rehabilitation for the parents. In essence, her task is therapeutic, and to ask her first to act as prosecutor and then as therapist is not compatible. This provision has merely highlighted the parents' inadequacy and incompetence to no good purpose, and parents who are already resistant and angry with "the welfare" are likely to have these feelings heightened by the court procedure. There is also a feeling amongst many in the field that this new provision may make it more difficult for a child who needs substitute care to obtain it. In other words, having to find the parent unfit will exclude some children who would otherwise have been deemed in need of care. Although not strictly relevant to residential care, it is worth mentioning the provisions of Section 35(b) show an anti-biological parent slant, in that they give the foster parent the right to grant permission to the child's parent to have the child for holidays. This should be a professional decision taken by the family welfare agency in terms of its long-term plans for the child. A further oddity is incorporated into Section 18(g), which gives the foster parent the right to grant permission for the adoption of a child in his custody. The idea of giving a third party the right to consent to the adoption of a child not born to him, is unheard of anywhere in the world.

### **Appeal to Supreme Court**

Child care legislation in this country has

been left in the backwaters of legal thought, because there has been no provision for appeal to the Supreme Court. It is important to note that Section 22(1) allows appeal to the Supreme Court in cases of disputes arising over the adoption of a child. However, all other provisions of the Act have been excluded from such appeal. The Supreme Court is supposed to be the guardian of all children in the country, but the neglected or deprived child has no access to this court. Whereas the Supreme Court has taken a definite role in intervening in parent-child relationships when two or more adults are contesting the custody of a child, or in protecting the property rights of a child, it has a very limited jurisdiction over a major area of child welfare, namely child neglect and abuse cases brought to a hearing in the Children's Court.

Examples of cases in which Su, Court precedents and guidelines are necessary include those concerning the rights of parents. Once their child has been removed from their custody, it becomes extremely difficult for them to regain custody of the child. There is a wide discrepancy between social work organisations as to what constitutes "rehabilitation". Some organisations do not allow a child to return to his parents, using criteria which other organisations would consider as largely irrelevant, and the parents have no right of appeal in such situations.

Further examples are cases of child abuse where the welfare agency seeks removal of the child. In such situations the parents are entitled to have a lawyer to defend them, while there is only the Clerk of the Court to represent the child. Because of the skills of the defending lawyer, it is commonly accepted that the agency is unlikely to be able to prove that parents have committed an offence, and again there is no recourse to a higher court for a re-examination of such cases.

There are many situations in which social workers have felt that Commissioners of Child Welfare have not made decisions which are in the best interests of the child. The secrecy surrounding the Children's Court proceedings have left decision-making in child care unmonitored by the standards and values of the legal profession, or even those of the community.

### **Conclusion**

Overall it seems unclear why this Act was rewritten. It is accepted that after more than 25 years the old Children's Act could have been re-examined and certain clauses adapted and shortened. Nevertheless, even if one feels that the term "catastrophe" is too strong a description, there is no doubt that the new Act represents a leap backwards for those involved in residential care.