

The **child care worker**



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NACCW/NVK



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The Paradox of Continuity and Change

We have been told by the writers of maxims that the only certainty in life is change. We have been told by teachers of human development that children have to negotiate the changes and transitions in their lives, but that at the same time they need a sense of continuity and predictability for this to be successful. When one launches oneself on a long-jump it helps if one can see the landing site.

However Toffler has warned that the rate of change has become so rapid that we cannot expect always to be able to see the landing site. As educators, he says, we have no way of knowing exactly what children will find in their futures and beyond their transitions — all we know is that they need the generalised understanding and skills to deal optimally with whatever it may be that they find when they get there.

In a normal developmental sense, we know this experience. We know that the adolescent is busy gathering his forces and establishing his sense of who he is in preparation for the commitments and risks of young adulthood — and that we can never see in advance what these may be; enough that he leaves us strong and self-aware.

As child care workers we are often less sure that our adolescents have finished their preparation for this adventure, that they are secure in their identity and equipped for their encounter with adult life. Eisikovits and Guttmann suggest in a recent paper that institutional youth do not have the opportunity to consolidate their identity, their relationships,

their base, since they are always 'on the road', transients between home and institution, with constantly changing perspectives of here and there, we and them, now and tomorrow. They prepare for home as they last remember it but when they get there they find it has changed in the meantime. They then prepare for return to the institution as they last remember it ... The authors ask "How can we help them be where they are rather than where they expect to go next? How can we ... enable young people in care to take certain things for granted and build upon them?" Somebody likened the developmental stages to stepping stones across a river: to prepare for the next jump, we need the present stone to be secure, not to wobble. Child care workers uniquely work with both the stepping stones (the environment) and with the jumpers (the children — most of whom arrive as less than proficient jumpers). We are often teaching children new ways to jump at the very time when they must jump anyway.

Fritz Redl highlighted the vulnerability of a child even during positive change: the most difficult child, he said, was the *improving* child. As he is being challenged to adopt new and untried ways of coping, the temptation to revert to the old ways, however maladaptive, is compelling. Our task as child care workers is to be there, never to make it easier, but to be around, to wait upon the child as he risks himself in change — hence our word 'therapy' which derives from the Greek *therapeuo* = to wait upon.

But right now in South Africa, as we seek to hold constant some of the child's circumstances at the micro level in order to render less hazardous his own efforts at change, we find ourselves moving together into major change

at the macro level. This change, also, is rapid and unpredictable, not without its excitement and its anxiety, not without its capacity to threaten troubled children's sense of continuity and safety — to wobble their stepping-stones.

The in-thing today is not to resist change or survive change, but 'to manage change'. So all child care teams must be careful at such a time as this to take account of macro issues, to plan their own strategies which best serve the children's short-term and long-term growth and security needs, giving full information where there are questions, thoroughly listening and talking through issues where there is doubt or fear, building skills and reserves where some new jumps must be made, putting up safety nets, whatever. How is your team doing all this? Do you have some ideas or thinking to share with readers? Please do.

Jontin

We are very fortunate to have been given the opportunity to publish in instalments a new book, *Jontin* by Peter Slingsby. The Editorial Board discussed how we might do this, since the book is quite long and it would either take a large proportion of our space each month — or take a year and a half to finish! There are seven chapters, and we decided to publish the whole of the first chapter this month (see pages 7 to 10). We will publish Chapter 2 in two parts over the following two months — and then be guided by you, our readers, as to whether we should continue. It may be that most will look forward to a couple of pages of *Jontin* each month. It may be that given a taste, many will want to go out and buy the book for themselves anyway. Do let us know.

National Association of Child Care Workers

Nasionale Vereniging van Kinderversorgers

The National Association of Child Care Workers is an independent, non-racial organisation which provides the professional training and infrastructure to improve standards of care and treatment for children in residential settings.

Die Nasionale Vereniging van Kinderversorgers is 'n onafhanklike, nie-rassige organisasie wat professionele opleiding en infrastruktuur verskaf om versorging en behandeling standarde vir kinders in residensiële omgewings te verbeter.

NACCW/NVK

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R.W. (Bob) Stuart writes about the role of the Committee — not in the child care context, but in the management of a club. But if your interest is child care management, read on. There are many parallels, some too close for comfort. There are many suggestions, all of them right on the mark ...

The Role of the Committee in Management

Just how good are decisions taken by committees?

Much fun has been poked at the decisions of committees, and committee decisions have come to be the butt of some very unkind jibes. Unhappily the criticism are often true.

An academic survey is said to have decided that at any given moment, more than a thousand people in various parts of the world are fighting to stay awake at committee meetings!

One wag with a sense of humour described committee meetings as gatherings of people who singly can do nothing, but together decide that nothing can be done. Sharu S. Rangnekar in his book *The Art of Avoiding Decisions* gave us this advice: "If you can avoid a decision do so. If you can get somebody else to avoid a decision, don't avoid it yourself. If you cannot get somebody else to avoid the decision, appoint a committee."

What does the renowned Professor J.K. Galbraith have to say about the subject? He says laconically: "Meetings are indispensable when you don't want to do anything." Herbert V. Prochnow believes that "The usefulness of a meeting is in inverse proportion to the attendance."

An unknown author offers this sage comment: "Even if important matters are not solved at these gatherings, trivial matters are handled promptly."

The quotation, however, which I think amuses me the most, is that of Richard Harkness who gives us this gem: "What is a committee?" he asks rhetorically. "A group of the unwilling, picked from the unfit to do the unnecessary."

I recently heard an amusing variation of the well-known proposition that a camel is a horse designed by a committee: "A good committee which sets out to design a horse comes up with a camel; a bad committee comes up with a kangaroo."

The definition is unkind to those many selfless people who give generously of their time to serve on committees. The astute committee man would however be the first to agree that he is seldom completely happy with a committee decision. He would probably readily agree that many committee decisions:

- are wrong because the decision has been influenced or reached by persons ill-qualified to form a balanced view;
- are wrong because they are reached at too late an hour, when members are inclined to vote for anything rather than listen to further oratory;
- are wrong because they are compromise solutions, which are neither one thing nor the other;
- are right, but taken too late to be of value.

Club Management

Club management differs from management in a corporate business environment in that the Manager (or Managing Director) of a business enterprise, having been carefully selected for his skills and experience, is 'given his head' to a greater extent than the Club Manager.

The Corporate Manager is set targets, and budgets within which his targets must be achieved. He then mobilises his labour force, evolves his strategies, delegates duties and then harnesses his personal expertise to achieve what he has set out to achieve.

The Club Manager would like to be given a similar challenge and often believes that he has. He would like to be left free to develop his own ideas and theories and to be judged not so much on his performance as on his results.

The difference between these two managers is mainly the way in which the Corporate man is answerable to a committee. The board of directors is elected by the shareholders who are mainly profit-orientated and choose their board from people who are experienced in business and efficiency by virtue of one specific discipline or another. They exert an influence by meeting at intervals (usually monthly) assessing the results achieved by management, and providing management with advice, guidance and direction based upon their cumulative knowledge and experience.

The Club committee by contrast finds itself in office, as we have seen, through a vastly different set of circumstances. The committee member is regularly and often to be seen at the "coal-face" where he frequently intervenes and intrudes upon Management. Intervention of this kind is seldom welcomed

by Management, and in most instances is counter-productive. However well intentioned, intervention is counter-productive and destabilising. Quite apart from the resentment which unwanted intrusion causes, it is indeed a truism that "too many cooks spoil the broth". The club broth should be a wholesome mess of potage, but often it is simply an unwholesome mess!

Finally I leave you with the ghastly thought that the Club Manager is confronted by the shareholders themselves every weekend and often during the week. They also have a tendency to want to run the show.

Committee management is often unavoidable

Much as we may prefer other means of management, we live in a community in which democracy is cherished. With all its shortcomings, we do not seem to have come up with anything better, and in many walks of life, we are stuck with it. This is particularly so in the case of unincorporated associations such as Clubs. Here a great number of persons share ownership of assets which are often of very great value. Clearly they must each have a voice in the control of what they own, and the only way to achieve this is the democratic system of electing a committee.

In many instances the creation of a benign dictatorship would lead to far greater efficiency, but there are many perils. Who is to be the dictator? How will we get rid of him if he is or becomes no good? How can we be sure that he is and remains benign?

Whether we like it or not the unwieldy and cumbersome committee system of management is preferable to the hazards of a dictatorship.

Perhaps those of us who are members of Clubs, and particularly those who are Managers, should draw comfort from the well known prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Committee management is probably one of those things we cannot change, and we should have the wisdom to accept it.

Things we can change

Accepting that committee Management is necessary, the prudent man must surely enquire after a means of making that management as efficient, as fast, and as decisive as he can. Here we have something going for us. The committee we create is made by us, and the manner of its functioning is designed by us. It is an artificially created and operated thing, and therefore by our own skill and knowhow, we can make it, if not good, then certainly better.

Furthermore, there are more ways of killing a cat than drowning it in cream, and there seems no reason why astute people should not introduce into a democratic system the elements of a dictatorship which are desirable and praiseworthy, if by this means the democratic system becomes more efficient. There can be no doubt that committee

Management can be tailored, shaped and adapted into something far better than it usually is. So few of us really think a lot about this. We know that things are not going quite as well as they should be, but we do not know where to begin in putting the wrongs right. This paper seeks to investigate the problems, and come up with possible solutions.

Diagnosis and symptoms

Let us now proceed to diagnose the ailment which besets our organisation. There can be no doubt that good management cannot exist where we have too many chiefs and too few indians. We are not discovering our problem, and it becomes necessary to isolate it into its various identifiable areas. We must diagnose the many ills and prescribe for their cure.

The symptoms of our patient-organisation will not be found to be unique. Investigation will show that our Club presents with symptoms which are identical, or similar to those of many other Clubs.

Let us consider together the symptoms which are often peculiar to the general body of members, the elected committee members and the Chairman:

The Body of members

- Members who are not on committees are often grouchers.
- Most believe they could do the job better than the elected committee members.
- The disgruntled member believes his grouse should be solved as soon as he discovers it.
- He prefers to voice his dissatisfaction as a complaint rather than a suggestion.
- He believes it is the duty of a committee member to listen to his complaint, when he, the complainer, is ready to expound upon it.
- He believes complaints are best aired in as loud a voice as possible, to as many people as possible, in as public a place as possible.
- His complaint should be made verbally rather than in writing, because writing is a nuisance.
- A General Meeting of members is considered like a bull fight where the members shout "Olé!" every time you get a dart into a committee man.
- Words of praise are unnecessary because the committee was put there to do the job well in the first place.

The elected Committee Member

- The committee member often believes it his function to control staff and give them instructions, usually before an audience.
- He believes it his duty to admonish staff and other members, and generally make his presence felt.
- He regards the Manager as inferior and subservient; he feels it his duty to keep him in his place.
- He believes it the duty of the Manager to kow-tow and to respond with alacrity to his every whim.
- He often has an uncontrollable urge to tell



"Children? What children?!"

all and sundry what was discussed in committee.

- On average a quarter of elected committee members are good performers, a quarter perform reasonably well, and the balance are passengers.

The Chairman

- Often struts like a peacock, thrives on adulation, and believes he has his job as a reward for his popularity and swash-buckling bonhomie.
- He has been known to regard meetings as occasions at which to indulge a passion for oratory to a captive audience.
- Often sees himself as a figurehead who displays panache and savoir faire. Hail-fellow-well-met? Most certainly! Worker? Unquestionably not, whatever next?
- Often enjoys to grace the company at gala occasions with a late arrival and early departure to a fanfare of trumpets.

Election to office — reward or responsibility?

Are our Club folk really as petty, frivolous and useless as this? Well of course not—not all of them. I have indulged myself in a great deal of poetic licence. I have ridden the rough and risky road of exaggeration for effect, and on purpose. The *reductio ad absurdum* is a good way of making a point and criticism of ourselves and our institutions has fewer barbs when made with a little humour. Who will gainsay that many a true word is spoken in jest.

I am sure that the members of your particular Club do not display all of the woeful symptoms I have described. I am equally sure that you will have recognised many. They are perhaps all very human failings to which we are all prone without conscious self-discipline.

I am ever amazed at the performance that ensues after the election of a committee at a General Meeting of the members. There is in evidence much back-slapping, hand-

shaking, draining of glasses and general jollification. One would think that the unfortunate person elected had won some competition or was off on an extended vacation. Election is not a reward; it is the acceptance of a solemn and onerous responsibility to serve. It involves a commitment to hard work, often at the expense of pleasure and relaxation and usually for a period of at least three years — without pay.

Far more appropriate to such an occasion would be a hushed awe at the man's courage; the expression of a sincere hope that his vitality, energy and good humour will be sufficiently durable to enable him to endure the rigours ahead for his term of office. From the very outset, the tone that we set belies the nature of the task, depicting it as a joyous reward rather than a solemn commitment. Is election to a committee not to be likened to marriage "not to be enterprised, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly".

The Cure

We have now seen all the symptoms of our ailing management, and we have perhaps discovered what the patient is doing wrong to make it feel so poorly. We must now ask ourselves what "muti" is necessary to make it feel better.

Muti is not the answer. What is acutally needed is that the patient should change its very way of life which has brought about the illness in its system. No simple remedy is available out of a bottle as an instant panacea for all ills — a grassroots change is needed in its attitudes, practices and misconceptions.

The patient can certainly be cured if strict guidelines are followed. They are easy to identify for we have already discovered the problems; we must now find a solution to each. I believe most sincerely that a commitment to the following principles will lead to orderly sensible government by committee to the mutual satisfaction of everybody.

I go further. I know it will work because I have tried it and proved it myself. This brings me to the title of this paper "The Role of the Committee in Management". How do we bring it into being, discipline it, supplement it, harness it and finally use it to the best advantage of the organisation and its body of members?

THE MEMBERS

Elections. It should be impressed upon Club members that committee membership is not a sinecure, but a dedicated sacrifice. Unless the member is prepared to make a full commitment he should not offer himself for election. *We have eliminated the backslappers.*

Interference with staff. Members should have it made clear to them that interference with staff (at any level) is unacceptable. Proper lines of communication should be followed. A complaint should be addressed to the appropriate echelon of authority having regard to the seriousness of the complaint and the speed with which it needs to be corrected. *Hopefully the member is losing his delusions of grandeur.*

Suggestions should be recorded in suggestion books provided. Complaints which do not require urgent and immediate action, should likewise be recorded in the suggestion book. Committee members should not be approached with complaints, save in an emergency where time is of the essence. They too are entitled to their relaxation and the enjoyment of their Club on their leisure time. *Perhaps the complainers are now learning better manners.*

THE COMMITTEE

At its first meeting the committee should identify necessary areas of responsibility to be allocated to selected Sub-Committees. *We are preparing for delegation of authority.* Committee members should then be allocated to these sub-committees so as to ensure that the skills and expertise of individual members are harnessed to the maximum degree possible. *We have now optimised our available skills.*

The committee's power to co-opt should then be vigorously exercised to ensure that the maximum skills available to the Club should be pressed into service. In certain cases the co-opted members may well outnumber the elected members where the elected committee is lacking in the skills required. *We have succeeded in neutralising our passengers.*

Elected members should however always act as chairmen of the various Sub-committees. *The elected member must accept the responsibilities of the election to office and also accountability.*

The parameters of responsibility of Sub-Committees should be established and each should be required to document its detailed program for a year's operation, properly time-scheduled. *We prepare for delegation of authority by identifying spe-*

cific duties.

After approval by the full elected committee each Sub-Committee should quantify the expected cost of its year's activities and settle an annual budget and cash flow plan in consultation with the Finance Sub-committee. *Budgets are established.*

The recommendations of the Finance committee with regard to all budgets and cash flows should then be debated and agreed. *The main elected committee refines and defines job descriptions and budgets.*

Defined responsibilities should now be delegated to the Sub-Committees who are given the discretion to spend their budget allocation in their discretion. They in turn are required to structure reporting lines to staff operating beneath them. *We have achieved delegation of responsibility.*

It must be emphasised that only responsibility is delegated — never accountability — and a duty to be watchful and vigilant remains always with him who delegates responsibility. *Passing the "Buck" has been avoided.*

Thereafter the committee should act as a Board of Directors. It should not be required to approve the actions of the Sub-Committees or to intrude upon management of their affairs. Its function should be to monitor progress and satisfy itself that goals are being reached efficiently on time and within the budget and cash flow plan. *We do not buy a dog and bark ourselves.*

Management should provide the committee timeously and comprehensively with reporting on the attainment of objects. *We have ensured an articulate feed-back.*

Agendas supported by sub-committee reports should be in the hands of members so as to allow a reasonable time for their perusal prior to committee meetings. *Membership of a committee demands homework and preparation.*

Failure to pre-read papers forming part of the Agenda is negligent, and is immediately evident to those who have taken the trouble to prepare. Unnecessary ill-informed questions reveal the lack of preparation and constitute a needless waste of the committee's time. The Chairman should rebuke such an inconsiderate and casual committee member. *We have established committee discipline.*

The rules of debate should be strictly adhered to. All comment should be addressed to the Chairman and no "meetings within meetings" should be allowed. *We have now established that our committee is not a ladies' knitting circle.*

Agendas should be short and concise and limited to high level debate on matters of principle attainment of objects and budget targets. Sub-committee chairmen should be expected to answer questions on the written reports of the Sub-Committees, but not to indulge in oratory, or to re-decide what has already been decided. *An early night is more appreciated than a moving speech.*

Minutes should be confined to decisions. Verbatim reports on what individuals said is

counter-productive and serves no purpose. *We are already cutting down on the generation of paper, and freeing our manager to manage.*

Lighthearted incentives to good debate are to be commended. A modest prize for the most incisive and pithy contribution is as important as a penalty for the most loquacious and long-winded dissertation. *Fools are not to be suffered gladly.*



The things that kids say!

Sometimes when children are at their most serious, we find it hard to keep a straight face. Some reminiscences from Sarah Burger ...

Social worker to child: "What does Auntie Jane do with you when you have a tantrum?"

Child: "She puts me in my room and lets me have it!"

Child care worker to 13-year-old boy in library: "Tell me, have you tried Biggles?"

Boy, startled: "What big girls?!"

Child: "I had to come to the home because my Dad had too many fun fairs"

Prospective host parent at interview: "In disciplining children, how do you feel about capital punishment?"

Little girl to dental nurse: "Are you the tooth fairy?"

Child praying: "... and thank you God for all these housemothers who are wasting the best years of their lives looking after us kids."

Five-year-old, demonstrating his incontrovertible mastery of the world: "I have five feet on each toe!"

New child to social worker: "Will you hit us if we're naughty?"

Social worker: "No, Johnny. We don't hit little boys"

Johnnie: "You only hit little girls?!"

Child to twin sister: "Mary, you can't say that. It's totally out of conception!"

Child care work must always be family care work

Belinda Erasmus of Annie Starck Village in Athlone, speaking at the recent child care workers' practice workshop

The family is the fundamental unit of a society. Therefore healthy families bring about a healthy society. However we find that society is saturated with ruined families and shattered homes. One result of this breakdown in family life is problem parents trying to rear problem children. The basic function of a children's home is to help with the reconstruction of the foundations of the child's life such as his physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. The ultimate goal of the children's home is to place whole and healthy people back into their communities. We also aim at assisting the child in fulfilling his rightful place in society.

Pre-admission

This is the first stage at which a child is introduced to A.S.V. The child comes along with the social worker. If it is convenient for the parents to be present on this visit then they are welcomed. The first visit is quite an experience for the child, as the village campus is big and there are many children. The child is then taken to the cottage where he or she will be living and is introduced to the child care worker and the home help, that is the lady who cooks and helps clean the cottage. The child is shown his bedroom and is made to feel at home and welcome during his visit. The visit helps the child to feel less anxious about entering his new environment.

Admission meeting

The parents accompany the child and the social worker to A.S.V. with all of his possessions he wishes to bring. They are then introduced to the residential set-up where it is policy for the child care worker who will be working with the child to be present. The child care worker is also expected to read the child's file and be familiar with his past so that we know how to deal with family situations. The child is not always present at the formal admission meeting, because it can be very overwhelming and confusing. So we get together at the cottage with the child and discuss matters with him there. We formulate a permanency plan with the mother present; the child's progress, illness and health, talents, and schooling are discussed. A few days after the child has been admitted the child care worker in the cottage

arranges a welcome party to which siblings and parents are invited too.

Relationship between children's home, parents and child care worker

The rights of all concerned, how the village functions, and the duties of parents during the child's placement should be discussed. It is important for the child care worker to reach out to the parents. This can only be achieved through regular contact. If parents live far away then they are allowed to spend a weekend at the Village. Parents sometimes present themselves at the children's home in an aggressive and hostile way. This is often due to feelings of guilt, shame, inadequacy or resentment. Parents may project their feelings in this way, and child care workers are often the targets. Parents are afraid that child care workers will take their child away from them emotionally. Parents may also provoke situations and test the child care workers' attitude towards them. Child care workers need to understand and show compassion to the difficult parent. Once a parent can understand that they are regarded as partners in the treatment process, they will be able to cooperate with the children's home. Child care workers have always to welcome parents and to be available for parent and child, and to show a certain amount of empathy with the family situation. The child has feelings when the parent is aggressive. He feels let down, disappointed and embarrassed. The others criticise him, and when parents leave the child may present behaviour problems. Some children experience the stress of having to meet their parents' emotional needs, while struggling to meet their own. Parents should be helped to explore their fears, doubts, feelings of anger and guilt, and to see the positive aspects of the placement, not only for the child but for themselves.

Correspondence and contact

Regularly children go home to families or relations if the home situation is bettered. Child or parent can phone each other. We have a log book in which all visits, phone calls and correspondence are written down so that we can keep track of all the contact that the child has. We have parents that make promises to a child and never keep them. It is important to maintain this bond between parent and child, and to monitor its progress.

When parents come to visit, child care workers involve the parents in doing something for the child or with the child, such as ironing, mending clothes, bathing, washing hair and story-telling. It all helps the child to settle, because parents are very special people and play a vital role in the child's life.

Special occasions

Parents and siblings are invited to the child's birthday and other village functions. When the child is ill the mother is informed. From admission to termination every stage must include the family.

BOOKS



Satanism in South Africa

- Is satanism really a problem in SA?
- How widespread is it?
- How are young people recruited?
- What are the warning signs of satanic involvement?
- How can I recognise a satanist?
- How can I protect my child from this?

In his book *Satanism: The Seduction of South Africa's Youth*, John Gardiner, former editor of *Personality* magazine exposes the present onslaught of satanism on South Africa's youth.

In his introduction he states that he has never seen anyone set free from satanism by psychology or therapy, by being talked out of it, or by thinking that he could simply walk away from it. The spiritual bondage over a life that has been consecrated to Satan is simply too strong for that. He has, however, seen many people being set free from Satan's hold through the power and authority of Jesus Christ.

This book will serve as a useful reference and it will also equip you to stand firm in the faith against the enemy Satan and I believe is a must for every child care worker to read. The book is available at the Scripture Union Bookshop, 14 Park Road, Rondebosch 7700, telephone 689-8331, and is priced R29.95 + GST.

● John Gardiner will be holding a Session at the Biennial Conference on Wednesday 10 July at 5pm. All interested parties are welcome to attend this session. Please diarise date and time.

— Chris Smith

Assistant Principal, July 1991

A mature lady, a matriculant, with child care qualification and also preferably with nursing experience. Must have good references related to the child care field. Salary negotiable.

Reply to: The Principal, Ekujabuleni Children's Home, Box 432, Plessislaer 4500. Telephone: 0331-82221

MONDAY

Lungs*Part One (At school)*

Things always went wrong on Mondays. I knew that one was going to be the same old story the moment I stubbed my toe on my way to school. It was cold and the road was muddy from the rain in the night and that fool Sancho and his gang saw me do it. They were hanging around near the school gate like they do every morning, chatting up the girls and pushing the little kids around, and they all tried to make out that I was crying. I didn't cry, though. Not in front of them. When I got to school my toe was still very sore. There was mud and blood all over the place and no paper in the toilets as usual. I found some newspaper in the rubbish bin and then Hansie came into the toilets and I borrowed a sock from him. He cried when I borrowed his sock but he's a little guy and everyone knows he's a blubber. Anyway, he owed me eight cents. I wrapped up my bleeding toe in the newspaper and pulled the sock. The sock was nice and warm and by the time the hooter went for class I began to be sorry that I hadn't borrowed both of Hansie's socks, and maybe his shoes, too. I didn't have any shoes and eight cents would surely be a fair price if I borrowed his shoes for the day. I stood in line with the others outside the classroom door, waiting for our teacher, Miss Luchelle, and I looked forward to borrowing Hansie's shoes at first break.

I didn't see Jontin before the hooter went — maybe he wasn't coming to school, which meant I'd get all my school bread to myself because he wouldn't be hanging around waiting to beg it off me. He often bunked school on Mondays. Mind you, my school bread wasn't all that fancy — Friday's bread with a bit of Rama scraped over it, if I was lucky ...

"Morning, Miss Luchelle," we chanted and we sat down. I shared my desk with a little kid called Mary — she's not really in this story, but I'm telling you that because that was the rule in our school: one boy and one girl in each desk, as long as there was the right number of boys and girls to go round, if you know what I mean. There were more girls than boys in our class so all of us boys had to sit with a girl, which was our bad luck. Mind you, at least Mary wasn't one of those bossy types who wouldn't let you look over their work now and then. We called that sort 'pimpers' — you know, the kind who'd split on you to the teacher if they thought you were trying to get a couple of answers from them.

"Spelling books out," Miss Luchelle said... The spelling test was O.K. — spelling was my speciality. I liked Miss Luchelle and she always seemed to like me too, though some of the others hated her. The girls, especially, hated her guts — I don't think Miss Luchelle liked girls. Christine made three mistakes in her spelling and had to stand up in the front. Miss Luchelle gave her two on each hand with the ruler and she howled like a baby.



SHEPHERD/AMARILLI/DAVIS

Jontin**PETER SLINGSBY**

Girls always cry.

Anyway, the rest of class was pretty boring as usual so I won't give you all the details — things went on calmly until first break, and it seemed as though it wasn't going to be too bad for a Monday after all. When the hooter went I first went to find Hansie to get his shoes but he was hanging around near Sancho's gang so I went down to the soup queue instead. At least I was one of the kids they reckoned was skinny enough to get

soup and biscuits every day.

I managed to slip in in front of Marc without Mr Williams seeing me. Marc wasn't really my friend but he was a bit nuts and I must say, I felt sorry for the guy. His family only moved to our town a couple of years back — funny people, those, they had these two sexy girls, Christine and Crystal, and this nuts guy, Marc. He had these funny flat ears and these little black eyes, sort of close together so when he looked at you those eyes seem to be looking straight through yours into the back of your head, if you know what I mean.

He was a jumpy sort of guy, too — you know, always jumping around like he'd got ants biting him.

He hadn't been in our town for long when he and his cousin Lucio broke into this house. Well, they were caught pretty quick, and off they went to the court. Six cuts each, chop chop. Can you believe it, those mad buggers were hardly able to sit down properly when they went and broke into the same house again.

Well, I guess the cops weren't too impressed and they locked Marc and Lucio up in jail for six weeks to wait for their trial. I guess no one can say what went on there, but they got cuts again before they came home.

Marc was only ten or something when that happened and whatever it was that happened in the jail, neither he nor Lucio would talk about it. But he was changed, that guy, I can tell you. Before he went to the jail he was one of the noisiest, cheekiest guys around but after he came back he was all quiet. Then a few weeks later they found him sitting in a tree with a rope round his neck. At first everyone laughed, then they saw this rope was also tied to the tree. Marc was just sitting there like some kind of owl — you know, his little black eyes were all big and round and that, and he was saying nothing. I wasn't actually there myself, but Lucio told me about it. They got him down before he jumped, but everyone reckoned he would have jumped for sure if they'd left him to it. Well, he was a lot better now, at the time I'm telling you about — jumpy, like I said, but still nuts — I mean, eleven years old and he sucked his thumb and so on.

About 'Jontin'

Jontin was not conceived as a document for publication, but started as a collection of notes and tape-recordings which I collected over a number of years. I felt that many of the rural children of the Cape enjoyed an imposed life-style which ought to be recorded as a part of the social history of South Africa. The decision to pull all the scraps together into a book came later; the manuscript has been accepted for publication after final editing. Everything in *Jontin* really happened, and the lifestyles, perceptions and language used are as they are. The order of events,

the names of the characters and the composition of families are entirely fictitious.

The time-scale in *Jontin* has been drastically shortened to a single week; in the real instances upon which the story is based the average time between a child first coming to the attention of "the Welfare" and the issuing of the final Court order was 817 days.

In the Overberg alone, where the story is set, there are currently 769 children in foster care or institutional care.

If parts of *Jontin* are offensive to some readers I can do no more than apologise for attempting to reflect the truth.

— Peter Slingsby, May 1991

I was only about five places from the front of the queue when the duty prefect, Emzie, called Mr Williams.

"Mr Williams!" she called, "The biscuits are finished!" She waved the empty biscuit box. "Too bad, Emzie, there aren't any more," Mr Williams called back. The kids who'd already had theirs were standing around sipping their soup from the red plastic cups and showing off their biscuits.

"None for you!" they jeered, when I saw that Basil — Miss Marsha's son — had a whole pocket full of biscuits. That s***! We were only supposed to get two, but he must have had at least six. He was a big, fat guy too — he didn't need extra biscuits and we reckoned he was only on the soup list because he was a teacher's kid. There was no way he needed soup and biscuits, especially with all that jam and cheese on his school bread.

Six biscuits! I could feel my stomach longing for them.

"I'll tell Miss Luchelle, you fat arse!" I shouted at him. Miss Luchelle didn't like Miss Marsha, Basil's mother — everyone knew that. She would send Basil to the office. Some of the kids reckoned that Miss Marsha married Miss Luchelle's boyfriend or something. Those two birds hated each other's guts, that's all I know. Mr Williams once sent me to fetch some books from the teachers' room and when I walked in there Miss Luchelle and Miss Marsha were giving it hell, I can tell you — screaming and shouting at each other, sounded worse than my grandmother when she'd been to her church meeting and she'd come home slammed.

Basil leered at me and stuck his hand in his pocket. It came out full of biscuits.

Marc was hopping up and down furiously behind me.

"You f***ing thief!" he shouted. Basil suddenly pushed the biscuits into his pocket and ran away around the corner.

The hooter went and I stood in line again, waiting for Miss Luchelle. I saw Basil join the line just as she came to class. That s***! I shook my fist at him, but he just smiled back.

I wanted to tell Miss Luchelle about him but she never gave me a chance. There had been a break-in, she was telling us. All the teachers had been talking about it in the staff-room. The police had found children's fingerprints. Were any of us involved? She seemed very agitated — I began to wonder if it wasn't someone in our class. I looked around. Basil sat a few rows behind me. He looked a bit strange but that didn't figure because he was much too chicken to get involved in a housebreaking.

Miss Luchelle was still telling us about what would happen if we broke into houses when Basil stood up. He kicked over some books and stumbled towards the front of the class. Miss Luchelle stopped talking — there was silence except for Basil's stumbling feet. I think his shoes were too big for him.

"Basil!" Miss Luchelle started, but she stopped right there. Basil made a funny gurgling noise and then puked all over her

feet. She jumped back but he just carried on, throwing up all over the floor and making these weird noises.

I turned round and winked at my friend Glezenti. He was some sort of cousin of mine and he lived next door to us. We'd been friends since we'd been small, though lately he'd started going with Sancho and his gang. He sat near the back of the class hoping that Miss Luchelle wouldn't notice him too much. He was a bit stupid, I think. The rest of the class were still silent, you know, sort of shocked by Basil throwing up, when the door opened. The Headmaster came in just as Basil was straightening up. The Head was a tall, stoopy guy — very dark, with sharp eyes. He always wore these sort of blue stripy shirts and a red tie, and he had these sort of wrinkles behind his eyes that he got if he was angry. We always reckoned that if you saw those wrinkles then you knew there was trouble coming.

His eyes seemed to jump around, looking at each of us in turn, as well as at the puddle of puke at Basil's feet, though I can't say for sure whether he had the wrinkles or not.

"Mrs Botha," he said to Miss Luchelle, "could I see Glezenti Maritz in the office, please?"

I turned round again and looked at Glezenti. His eyes had got a little bigger. He stood up and walked towards the front. He looked sort of white round his ears and round his eyes.

I wondered about the Head fetching Glezenti to the office. The Head never came to the classroom himself. He always sent one of the prefects. Maybe Miss Luchelle should have something to worry about. Maybe I should have worried, when I think about what happened later on.

The next lesson was PE with Mr Gregory. I hated PE — it always made me wheezy, and now I had a sore toe too.

Mr Gregory scared me. He was the only teacher I was really scared of. He never shouted at anyone — he just fixed you with his eyes and talked very quietly. They said he was bad with the stick too, though I never had it from him myself — not like Mr Williams. He was a stocky sort of guy — you know, big muscles and that, and he always wore this sort of blue track suit and running shoes. He did all the PE in the school and I reckon he expected everyone to be as strong as he was.

I always tried hard at PE, even though I hated it because it made me wheezy. I could never see why I shouldn't be as strong as anyone else even if I had got only one lung. Anyway, we all ran off to the field and those who had shoes on took them off. I looked at the line of shoes, wondering if I could get away with a pair at the end of the lesson, but Mr Gregory called us and made us start the exercises.

It was a cool day, after the rain, and I actually started to enjoy myself. The exercises warmed me up and I really enjoyed watching Basil sweating it out. He was just in front of me, wearing long pants like he always did in winter. I hoped he was sweating in those pants. I didn't have any long pants at all and

I hated his smug smile on cold days. I hoped he was still feeling sick.

Well, it must have been near the end of the lesson when Cyril the prefect came up to the field. He went across and started talking to Mr Gregory and I realised suddenly that Glezenti hadn't come back from the office yet. He must be bunking, I thought — probably in the toilets. No one went to the office that long. Perhaps he got caned and didn't want us to see him blubbing — although Glezenti had never blubbed before, not that I could remember. I was just wondering about this when Mr Gregory called my name. I ran across and he told me to go with Cyril the prefect.

"What's up?" I asked him as we walked down the bank at the side of the field. I was feeling pretty shaken that they wanted me.

"Police," he replied. "You're in the s***!"

That didn't help me much. Police! I never had anything to do with the cops. I kept away from those guys — they used to say that if the cops didn't know your name or just your face they wouldn't trouble you. I believed that.

I knocked on the door and a faint voice shouted "Come in!" The Head stood behind his desk. I could see those wrinkles standing out behind his eyes. The policemen were two of the big whiteys. Glezenti was in the corner. He was crying. Bertram was standing next to the Head's bookcase.

It took me a few moments to realise that the Head was talking to me — I was so surprised that Glezenti was crying. Glezenti never cried.

"These boys say you were seen at the house that was broken into," he was saying. "They say you were standing in the street outside, yesterday — Sunday morning."

Well, I denied it of course. On Sunday morning I was down at the fishing harbour with Marc and Jontin — that was one thing I could rely on those guys about. Like me they hated Sunday school, so we always went off somewhere together.

"They say you were with Glezenti," the Head said. Well, I denied that too. I never went with Glezenti on Sundays. He had to go to Sunday school — his Auntie made sure of that. I looked around at Bertram — was he trying to pin something on me? He caught my eye and his eyes dropped. He was one of Sancho's gang. That must be it. The bastard!

The Head spoke to the policemen and then told us to go. I went back to class with Glezenti, feeling bad. First the toe, then the biscuits, now the cops. We went to the toilets first so Glezenti could wash his face. "What the hell's up?" I asked him as soon as we were alone. "What are the police here for? Did you do something?"

He looked at me and shook his head. Then he looked down. Guilty, I thought. Glezenti often hung around with guys like Bertram. Sure as hell they would use him to do their dirty work. Those big guys always got one of the little ones to go with them, so they could push him through the window first.

"Tell me after school," I said when we went back to class. I knew he wouldn't.

MONDAY

Lungs

Part Two (After school)

Not much else happened at school. The final hooter went and I remembered to give the sock back to Hansie. Just as well I remembered. Hansie may have been a dumb cry baby, but his mother was Auntie Jezebel. I wouldn't mess around with her — not that lady. She was a big auntie with these arms that looked like she could throw you over a house.

The sock was a bit mucky. I had walked around in it all morning and done PE in it — but I persuaded Hansie to put it on again and suggested that he wear it to school all week, so that Auntie Jezebel wouldn't see it. He cried a bit again — what can you expect? I mean, most kids don't need as much persuading as all that — but he promised to wear it.

My toe wasn't bleeding anymore and I went home and found a bit of bread. Marc wanted to come and play with him but I was hardly out of the house when my mother came from work and wanted me to go to the shops for her. That was pretty normal too, so I took the money and the list and set off for the shops.

It was quite a way to the shops — they were all down at the whitey end of town — and the bag of groceries was pretty heavy. That was another bad thing about Mondays. My mother had money on Mondays, so the list was always long. By Thursday it would be very short, or maybe there wouldn't be a list at all. Still at least going to the shops gave me the chance to grab a chocolate bar. The shop I always went to was run by a stupid old woman. You could eat the chocolate while you were walking around finding the things on the list. She never noticed.

I always smiled at her when I went up to the till. She must have liked my smile — sometimes she even gave me a sweet or two.

The bag was heavy and my toe was hurting a bit. A cold wind was blowing and it looked though it might rain again. I turned the corner into the long street that led to the Scheme and found Glezenti and Marc and some others sitting in the ditch on the side of the road.

"Hi," I said, "What's up?"

"We're looking for bottles," Glezenti said.

"There's a film tonight."

"A film!" I was surprised. "What's showing?"

"Bud Spencer and Terrence Hill," Marc said.

"Eighty cents a ticket."

Eighty cents! It took a lot of thrown-away wine bottles to make eighty cents. "You're nuts!" I said, walking on. I knew how I could get eighty cents for the film. My mother's change jingled in my pocket, but I knew she'd never give me film money. If I watched carefully where she put the cash I'd get my chance later.

It was raining by the time I got home — the soft sort of rain that wets everything, right through your clothes. My mother was waiting for me at the door.

"Why did the police want to see you?" she wanted to know. That's a funny thing about



mothers. They always think you must have done something wrong, just because someone wanted to see you. I told her about Marc and Jontin and the harbour — we called it the Bay — and how Bertram false-accused me. She seemed happy with that. She put the change from the shopping on a shelf behind a packet of Omo and that made me happy. She'd go to her church meeting later — then I could take enough for the film. I went down the road and bumped into Jontin and Cyril the prefect.

I didn't really like them — I didn't really like them at all. They weren't the same as Sancho and his gang — trying to make you cry and that sort of thing. It was just ... well, Cyril was a big guy. I mean, he was as big as a man, even though he was only sixteen. He was quite kind, really, but every now and then he would push me around.

Jontin was different. Cyril seemed to look after him — they were often together. Jontin was supposed to be some sort of dwarf — he was much smaller than me, and I was pretty small for my age. He had also been to hospital — that's what they said. For injections, to make him grow.

He was a strange guy. Sometimes he was friendly, other times I used to think he was mad. He had a lot of hair and he was always dirty. When I think about it now, I think he must have been a bit stupid — you know, thick. He was far behind me at school.

Jontin was sitting on the bar of Cyril's bicycle. Cyril was riding.

"Hey, Lungs!" Jontin shouted. I didn't know what to say. They all knew I'd only got one lung, but what do you shout at someone who won't grow? I knew Cyril called Jontin 'The Prick', but the last time another kid called Jontin that he threw a bottle at the guy, and that guy had to go off to have his head stitched up.

I stopped and waited for them.

"Are you going to the film?" Cyril asked. I shrugged. Why should I tell him?

"C-c-can't you get some m-m-money from your mother?" Jontin asked. He used to stutter like that sometimes. He also peed in his blanket every night. I didn't blame him. I

also had a mean step-father. I wasn't always so sure who my real father was, even though my mother had told me. Jontin's step-father was one of those big guys — with a can of wine in him, he was pretty scary. And Jontin's mother was nuts. She used to pray all the time and kept having babies.

Jontin might have looked like he was seven, even though he was thirteen, but I reckon I might have been the same with a mother like that — or a step-father. I might have peed in my blanket, too. Even with only one lung. Anyway it turned out that Jontin and Cyril wanted money for the film, of course. I don't know why they thought I could get money from my mother.

I thought: they're only friendly if there's a film coming up. Or if Jontin wants some of my school bread. Otherwise they were always pretty rude.

Jontin spat in my face once and I know that one day he pulled out his tassel and peed on Hansie. Hansie probably deserved it and I'm sure he cried. I'm just as sure that Jontin laughed. I told them about the money behind the Omo box.

We rode on the bike for a while. The rain stopped and we found Gareth.

Gareth was a tough little guy. He had to be. His mother used to get canned as a fowl every night, that's why the Welfare took Gareth and his little brother, Gawyn, away to a farm for a while. They came back to live with their Auntie Jane after a couple of months. I guess Auntie Jane didn't like the idea of those kids being stuck out there on a farm. She was a good lady, that Auntie Jane — I wouldn't have minded if she'd been my auntie.

We found Gareth sitting in the gutter with Gawyn. Gawyn was a real baby — I mean real. He was four or something. Gareth and Jontin were sort of friends when there were problems, if you know what I mean. I never had to sleep in the bush very often, but they used to, together, before Gareth and Gawyn went to the farm, so they were sort of friends. Auntie Jane hadn't come home from work yet. She was nice, Auntie Jane. She would

give you supper and she would have let any kid sleep at her place if she hadn't been scared of their drunk parents coming to look for them. Kids like Jontin and Gareth — and me too, I guess — only slept in the bush because we knew that if anyone was going to look for anyone, they'd go to Auntie Jane first. Mind you, I don't reckon Jontin's or Gareth's mothers ever looked for them if they went to the bush.

It was getting pretty dark by now so we took Gareth and his baby brother back to my place to see if there was any supper cooking.

My mother wasn't back from her church meeting yet so I looked behind the Omo box. Enough film money for all of us.

We went to Cyril's house and had potatoes and rice with his granny.

That was one good thing about Cyril — his granny. His mother died long ago and his father got drowned in a fishing accident. His granny was great. She used to cook enough potatoes and rice every night to feed the whole Scheme — or so it seemed. We all ate at Cyril's house and then we went to Wesley's house to watch the A-Team.

The people who brought the films were clever. They knew it was the A-Team on TV on Mondays, so they didn't start the film until after eight o'clock. All the kids wanted to watch the A-Team and there would have been no one at the films if they'd started them too early.

Anyway, there we were at Wesley's house, watching the A-Team and feeling the money in our pockets — our film money. It was quite a squash, what with Wesley's mother and step-father and all his sisters and all of us.

I didn't see much of the A-Team, though. Wesley's sister's kid, who was two or something, kept standing in between me and the TV. I could hardly tell him to sit down — not with Wesley's mother there. Wesley's sisters talked the whole time too — they couldn't understand English as well as I could and I got pretty annoyed with them, because I couldn't hear the words properly.

Wesley's real father was also drowned — like Cyril's — only some people thought that Wesley's father was murdered. He'd gone to help some whitey fishing on the big lake and they'd had a fight — at least that's what someone told me. The whitey pushed Wesley's father into the water and hit him with the oar, so he drowned. That's what they say, anyway. That whitey was a bigshot on the town council or something, after that. Wesley was a bossy sort of guy who was always trying to make out he was big stuff. He usually went around with little kids, making like he was some sort of hero with his little moustache on his lip. I never knew exactly what he and those little kids did — they stole sweets and things in the shops or stuff like that, I guess. I mean, I used to take a chocolate or two at my shop because I knew the old lady wasn't looking, but then I was buying something too, wasn't I? Wesley just went in there and took things, making himself look like a big deal in front of the small ones. That's stealing.

The A-Team ended and we went out, to the

film.

They stamped the backs of our hands and we were in, right to the front. I've never really understood why everyone wanted to sit in the front row at a film — I always got a sore neck from looking up at the screen.

The sound was very bad, although you couldn't hear it anyway above the noise the people made, and the projector only broke down twice. Suddenly it was over. Not one of Bud Spencer's best, I thought. I said



goodnight to Cyril and Jontin and Gareth and them and walked up the tarred road, to bed.

The tarred road ran up the middle of the Scheme. At least it didn't have puddles. There were no streetlights either, like in the whitey part of town. Our house was down a dirt road. On rainy evenings it was muddy and full of puddles. I wondered if anyone would be awake when I got home.

No one was. I found my blanket and lay down in the passage where I always slept — outside my mother's room. It was quite cold, and it took me a long time to get to sleep. Especially when I remembered Glezenti. He wasn't at the film. And he was blubbing today — blubbing in the Headmaster's office, while the cops were there. What did that mean?

MONDAY

Hansie

I knew that my Ma would ask me why I'd been crying again when I got home from school. I tried to wash my face at Auntie Rosa's house but my Ma was like that — you couldn't hide it from her if you'd been crying. She'd usually go on at me about it all afternoon but my baby brother Joey dropped something on his foot and started bawling so she left me alone.

I couldn't help it that I cried so easily. Anyway, that Lungs, he got my neck in an armlock and made me give him my sock; anyone would have cried. Well, I tried to hide away from that Lungs but he caught me after school and made me promise not to tell Ma about the sock.

I didn't know what to do. I could feel through my toes how dirty that sock was but I knew that Lungs would hit me again if I told my Ma, so I had to keep it on.

I found some bread for lunch and I went to play with Elrico.

Elrico and his brothers lived across the road from us. I liked Elrico but I didn't like the others. Elrico was small like me, though his clothes weren't as good as mine. Elroy was a year older. He was a big guy, very bossy. I didn't think much of him. Jontin was the oldest, although he was smaller than I was. I hated Jontin. He was a rough kid. Once I was wearing a new jersey that Auntie Rosa gave me. Jontin had no nice clothes and I could see he was jealous of my jersey. I was walking home from Auntie Rosa's place one day when I met Jontin on the street corner and he started going on about my new jersey. Well, I told him to leave me alone but he started tugging at it and carrying on.

I tried to run away but he wouldn't let me go, so I lost my temper and started screaming at him. You wouldn't guess what he did then. He pushed me over and before I could stand up he pulled down his pants and he peed all over my new jersey.

That was the sort of kid he was and after that I only used to play with Elrico if Jontin had gone off somewhere else.

I went off with Elrico to the Bush — that was a sort of forest near where we lived — and we played cops and robbers with some other kids all afternoon.

I went home when it got dark. I was hoping my Ma wouldn't go on at me about crying at school, but Joey was screaming at her so she didn't have time for me.

That was the thing about Joey. I knew he was my brother but until he came along my mother had lots of time for me. I still loved her but I don't think she loved me very much anymore. Auntie Rosa loved me more than she did, I think.

After supper I went and watched the 'A-team' at Auntie Rosa's house.

MONDAY

Jontin

My name is Jontin. My mother gave me that name. She called me that — everyone called me that. Why did Cyril call me 'The Prick'? I didn't like that name.

Why did Cyril like me? He used to take me around on his bike. Sancho and them were scared of Cyril. I liked Cyril. He gave me some of his school bread. He made Lungs take us to the film. I liked Cyril. He was kind to me.

He called me 'The Prick'. I didn't like that. My name is Jontin. My mother gave me that name.

Cape Technikon child care student **Francisco G. Cornelius** writes on an important but often neglected aspect of residential work

The Institution's and the Community's Responsibility for Effective After Care

After care is the service rendered to the child when he has ended his time at the children's institution he was committed to. This termination could have occurred for a number of reasons, which include: the child has completed two years in the institution; he seeks to pursue a career after his schooling but he is still retained under the provisions of the Child Care Act 1983; suitable placement within his own family or relatives has been found for the child irrespective of the period that he's spent at the home; the child has turned 18 years old and is no longer protected by the provisions of the Child Care Act.

Conditions for Discharge

In the first and the second instances above, statutory provisions for after care services apply to the child released on licence from the children's institution. These services are normally rendered for a period of two years after the child's release. During this period social workers are required to submit reports on a six-monthly basis to the children's institution informing them of the child's progress and integration in the family and the community.

The after care period can be extended if it is necessary, but when it expires, the child is discharged from the provisions of the Act. In the last instance, the type of service is not regulated by the Act and could include a boarding house facility or a service run by voluntary social workers and the community. In some cases these services are rendered by the children's institutions and therefore a social worker will be available to assist with finding suitable work and accommodation for these young people.

Reconstruction services

What is needed for this? Who does the preparation? Reconstruction services and after care services are normally done by the social workers of the agency which rendered services to the family while the child was in the institution. Some children's homes also render this type of service as a matter of policy and the facilities for after-care services are built into their treatment programmes.

The need for aftercare services is often neglected. This, together with the question of facilities, remains a major issue. Many children do not go home to their parents, because, in some cases successful re-

construction services were not rendered, with the that result parents are not prepared for the next move and we have a potential disaster on our hands.

In some cases children are not adequately prepared for their release and the move can come as such a big surprise or hurdle to them that release from the children's home can be a total failure. There are other cases where children have been transferred to child care schools, places of safety or reformatories. These institutions differ from the children's home in their preparation for the release of a child. At the child care school the child is prepared vocationally and educationally; at the reformatory there can be a time factor and the youth has to attend the school for a specified period. These institutions are run by the Education Department and not by Health and Welfare as are the other institutions. At the children's home the child is less removed from the community. He is taught life skills. He might undergo a behaviour modification programme, and be taught how to cope with problem issues at home. He attends school and church in the community, plays sport, enjoys recreation facilities, is generally promoted developmentally, and the institution basically rehabilitates him so that he can return to take up his place in society.

Community Services

The community plays an important role in the life of any child. It is their duty to see to adequate facilities for children so that they can enjoy themselves and learn about life and appropriate coping skills. Many of our children are released from institutions and come to a home with virtually no resources or support, and end up back on the street again. One of the reasons is the lack of social services and because of this, our children can become dropouts in school and in society. We should also take into account the facilities at some of our institutions such as sporting equipment, arts and crafts and so on, which are not available in the wider community and could be a breakdown factor for a child after his release.

What are we then giving or teaching the child while he is in the institution? Are we giving him false expectations about our society? These are but a few of the many questions we need to ask, and the answer is that we must try to prepare a child to fit into society as it is.

It remains true that many parents need a lot of care and rehabilitation. It is often their inadequacy in dealing with their problems that led to the removal of their child(ren) and their placement in a home. It could also have been through illness, misfortune, or through negligence.

Parents

Parents need proper preparation to accept the child's removal in the first place, and equally preparation for the return of the child to the family. The success of this, we know, depends on how much contact they've had with the child while he was in the home. If there was little contact then it would be harder for the re-adjustment to take place. The whole family needs to re-adjust to the child's presence on a daily basis.

The parenting role has to be brought to a level which avoids the problems which resulted in the child's removal, and all members of the family should be helped to function as a healthy family unit. The social worker's relationship with the child and his family should incorporate the following features:

- Supportive
- Advice giving
- Educative
- Problem-solving activities to strengthen the skills of the parents, the child and the family as a whole, to tackle problems and to make decisions.

Other Services

We think in this area of a number of people in the community, like ministers of religion to help foster relations with the family and to be there in time of need; teachers who can help with extra teaching or tutoring; the family doctor as medical agent and as facilitator of other medical services required by the family; and other community institutions like Boy Scouts and Girl Guides to involve the children and teach them about their environment. There are youth groups, sports and other recreation groups that should make themselves available so that everybody can make use of these facilities and not just the lucky few who can afford it.

Conclusion

Our main aim in the institution is to return the child to his family and to the community after treating his special problems and teaching him some coping and life skills. Following his release from the institution we should be monitoring the child to see that he is safe and coping, and also to see whether our intervention was effective at all. This monitoring does not always happen. There are many excuses and/or reasons, but we should be making this a priority because there is a definite need for this type of service in the community. Child care staff should place emphasis on monitoring the progress of children after they have left the institution. There should be definite goals for the child and his family at the time of leaving, and we have some responsibility for ensuring that these goals can be reached.



Staff Supervision and Prevention of Institutional Child Abuse

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Abstract: The available literature has pointed to a number of factors which can contribute to incidents of child maltreatment in residential settings. These may include conflicting job demands placed on staff, overcrowding of facilities, low pay, unscheduled overtime, and characteristics of the children in care. This paper examines staff supervision as a tool for helping staff cope with the stresses experienced in residential child care settings. It is suggested that staff supervisors can play an important role in creating an environment that is responsive to the needs of the children in care as well as the staff, and that effective and supportive supervision can help to prevent incidents of abuse. Specific recommendations are made for ways in which supervision can be a vital part of a comprehensive effort to prevent incidents of child abuse and neglect in residential child care settings.

Introduction

Workers in residential child care facilities are faced with considerable physical and emotional challenge regardless of their position in the administrative hierarchy. In describing the impact of their work on staff, Durkin (1982) wrote that: "when child care staff start work, they are happy and enthusiastic and even enjoy the 70-hour work week. Conversely, the children come in messed up, angry, depressed, strung out on drugs. After a few years, the children leave feeling better about themselves and life in general, while the child care staff leave drinking heavily, wrecking their cars, getting divorced, flunking out of school, and the like."

While Durkin's example may be an overstatement of the problem, it does help to underscore the difficulties faced by child care workers.

In many ways, the demands placed on child and youth care staff, as well as the impact of these demands, are analogous to those experienced by abusive parents (Blatt & Brown, 1986; Durkin, 1982). Just as stress, frustration, and social isolation may contribute to incidents of abuse and

neglect in familial settings, these factors also play a role in the maltreatment of youngsters in out-of-home care settings. In fact, it is likely that most abuse incidents in residential settings result from acts of frustration (Sundram, 1984). Staff supervision can provide an important source of support for staff in residential care facilities and can aid workers trying to cope with job demands (Fant & Ross, 1979). Ineffective supervision, on the other hand, may serve to exacerbate the stresses experienced by staff. This paper will examine staff supervision and its contribution to the etiology and prevention of child abuse and neglect in residential child care settings.

The Importance of the Supervisor's Role

Many incidents of abuse and maltreatment in residential settings go unreported, and, as a result, it is difficult to accurately gauge the extent of the problem. Interestingly, there has been little agreement among authors regarding the proportion of child maltreatment events that are reported. Findings from two recent studies indicate that the annual rate is approximately four reports per 100 youngsters in care (New York State Commission on Quality of Care, 1987; Rindfleisch & Rabb, 1984). Many of these reported incidents are similar to the physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and neglect which occur in familial settings. The abusive or neglectful act, however, is committed by a facility employee who is paid to care for the youth.

As is true of child maltreatment in familial settings, abuse and neglect of youngsters in residential care is a multi-dimensional problem. In order to understand the causes of child maltreatment in residential settings, and provide effective prevention, it is necessary to examine the interaction between the residential environment, the staff, and the children in care. A focus on any one of these factors in isolation will lead to an incomplete understanding of the problem and will, in all likelihood, lead

to ineffective preventative measures. It is the complex nature of this problem, and the unique pressures placed on child and youth care workers, that make staff supervision a key to identifying, reporting, and preventing the abuse and neglect of youngsters in residential settings.

The importance of effective and supportive supervision in residential programs is well recognized. Sarason and Doris (1968), for example, suggested that supervision could be a key to improving the "climate or culture" of institutions. In a recent survey of 104 executive directors of programs providing out-of-home child care, Dodge Reymore (1988) found that staff supervision was most frequently (ninety-one percent of the respondents) identified as an important factor in the prevention of institutional child abuse and maltreatment. It was also found that, among seven areas related to abuse and neglect, staff supervision was identified as an area where executive directors felt they could have the most impact in preventing abuse and neglect. In light of this finding, it is interesting to note that supervisors in residential care facilities often assume the role without training (Edelwich, 1980; Fant & Ross, 1979). Most supervisors and administrators never intended such careers, but rather, rose from direct care positions to supervisory posts (Edelwich, 1980). Facility administrators and staff supervisors are faced with varied, and at times conflicting, job demands. They must, first, provide effective services to the children in care (Fant & Ross, 1979). At the same time, they must meet commitments to those below and above them in the hierarchy (Edelwich, 1980); helping their subordinates deal with the stress and pressure of their work, while implementing the directives of their supervisors. In many ways, their roles are ambiguous and it is this ambiguity which may serve to reduce job satisfaction and exacerbate job-related stress.

The significance of the supervisor's role is highlighted by reports from facility directors that most incidents involving abuse in

the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) and Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) facilities occur during second shifts (3 p.m. to 11 p.m.) while youngsters are still awake, but while most professionals support such a contention, it is likely that similar trends occur in other types of programs as well.



Etiology of Institutional Child Abuse and Neglect

Even under the best circumstances, working conditions in child caring facilities are difficult (Sundram, 1986). As in other professions, the pressures experienced by workers are largely determined by their place in the administrative hierarchy (Edelwich, 1980). Direct care staff, who are at the bottom of the facility hierarchy and who perform the most difficult work for the lowest pay, are often faced with overcrowding, unscheduled overtime and double shifts. They monitor daily living activities, settle conflicts, and may be responsible for administering medications several times a day. Direct care staff escort youngsters to activities or oversee activities themselves. Their paperwork responsibilities include documenting a variety of important and unimportant occurrences (Sundram, 1984). These job demands are fulfilled with little appreciation from supervisors or the youngsters in care (Edelwich, 1980).

Powerlessness (Durkin, 1982; Edelwich, 1980; Sundram, 1984) and professional isolation (Durkin, 1982) are important issues for direct care staff. They are often placed in the position of being told what to do, without adequate training or knowledge. In some instances, they are asked by supervisors to implement a variety of programs and treatment plans that are incompatible (Durkin, 1982). The most highly trained staff, such as facility directors and clinical staff, are typically available only during regular business hours. Even during these hours, however, administrative staff are often removed from direct contact with youngsters and are inaccessible to direct care staff in need of guidance (Sundram, 1984). Direct care staff are left in a position where they are isolated, frustrated, and angry. Power over children becomes their only way of gaining a sense of significance (Mercer, 1982), and the children they work with become the most available outlet for their feelings (Sundram, 1984).

The job stresses discussed above are particularly interesting in light of what is known about the etiology of institutional child abuse and neglect. Rindfleisch (1988) reported on a study involving forty facilities in six states. The study examined 196 "adverse events" in residential facilities and the contribution of eighty factors to these events. It was found that more serious events occurred when there was an interaction with residents who were less recently visited. Events were

also judged as more serious when the staff members involved were older than the norm, had fewer children of their own, had high levels of personal life stress, had less say in treatment plans, and had less opportunity for promotion. Frequent (e.g., daily) meetings between direct care staff and administrative staff were also found to


Staff members who are not given responsibility, are not consulted about decisions, and who are generally overlooked by the administration will feel unappreciated ...
Child care workers who feel they are overworked, underpaid, and trapped in dead-end jobs will experience frustration and anger.


be related to serious adverse events. Rindfleisch (1988) did not offer an explanation for this counter-intuitive finding. Blatt and Brown (1985, 1986) reported findings that support and expand upon those of Rindfleisch (1988). In a study of youngsters who were residents in OMH operated programs, Blatt and Brown (1985) found that children who were subjects of reports to the State Central Register (SCR) were less likely to be in the custody of their own parents and were less likely to have parents who were involved in their treatment when compared to the general OMH children's population. It was found that the sample of youngsters reported to the SCR were more difficult for facility staff to work with. That is, they were more often reported as assaultive, suicidal, violent, and dangerous. They were more likely to have run away from the facility, and were more likely to have destroyed property or set a fire. They were also reported as being more in need of one-to-one supervision when compared to the general OMH population.

In a second study, covering a thirty-four month period, Blatt and Brown (1986) examined environmental stress factors related to institutional child abuse and neglect. The authors focused on administrative policy decisions, facility censuses and admissions, seasonal influences and staffing levels as potential contributors to incidents of institutional maltreatment. Regularly occurring factors

relating to incidents of maltreatment included staff-to-child ratio and seasonal changes in scheduling (e.g., abuse reports increased in the spring and fall when school ended and began). One-time occurrences related to increased reports of abuse and neglect included threatened staff layoffs and changes in physical location. The first of these factors resulted in a system-wide increase in reporting from three reports per month to twenty-one reports during the month when layoffs were announced. (It should be noted that the layoffs did not occur to the extent announced and reported incidents decreased significantly over the next two months.) Location changes, such as moving groups of youngsters within facilities, resulted in similar reporting increases for the affected group of program.

Administrative Responsiveness to the Needs of Children and Staff

Although there are limits to the availability of literature relating to staff supervision and institutional child abuse and neglect, the information that is available provides useful guidance for developing effective preventive programs. It is clear that any such efforts must focus on the supervisor's role in developing an environment that is responsive to the needs of the children in care and staff. At a minimum, supervisors and administrators must be attentive to signs of stress in the workplace, provide staff with clear expectations of how youngsters in care are to be treated, convey a sense of respect for the work done by staff, and provide staff with the skills and knowledge needed to meet the demands of their job. Mercer (1982) suggested two ways in which good supervision could prevent abuse. The first was through monitoring the actions and state of mind of employees. The second was by providing an experienced person with whom to discuss job problems and stresses. As a means for preventing abuse and neglect, however, supervision involves more than monitoring direct care staff for signs of stress or distress. It is also essential that top management demonstrate that both youngsters and staff are valued and will be treated with dignity and respect. The quality and nature of interpersonal relationships between children and staff reflect the facility director's standards and values (Diamond, 1988). When a facility administration demonstrates, by the living conditions it tolerates, that it does not have much regard for the youngsters in care, it should come as no surprise that staff members abuse children (Sundram, 1986). Similarly, an administration that is unresponsive to staff needs will create a staff that is unresponsive to the needs of youngsters in their care (Mercer, 1982). Ensuring that behavioural expectations are made clear to staff, at all levels of the institutional hierarchy, is crucial to the suc-

successful operation of a residential program (Sundram, 1986). There is a clear link between the extent to which these expectations and values are understood and accepted by staff, and the living and working conditions within the facility. Expressing values, however, is not sufficient. They must also be reinforced by actions. It would be inconsistent, for example, for an administrator to articulate the importance of providing quality services to youngsters, but to tolerate living conditions that do not provide adequate clothing or grooming supplies, and that violate a youngster's right to privacy in a bathroom (Sundram, 1986).

Behavioural expectations and values must go beyond the treatment of youngsters. The facility administration must also be responsible to the people working for it. Staff members who are not given responsibility, are not consulted about decisions, and who are generally overlooked by the administration will feel unappreciated (Edelwich, 1980). Child care workers who feel they are overworked, underpaid, and trapped in dead-end jobs will experience frustration and anger. Staff must be encouraged to report instances of abuse, but at the same time they must feel that they, and their peers will be treated fairly if they do. Employees who feel that a facility's disciplinary system is unfair will not accept it. Without staff acceptance, any disciplinary system is likely to fail and most abuse will go unreported (Sundram, 1986).

The lack of adequate staff training is another area of concern. Facility administrators and staff supervisors do not always have control over the qualifications established for facility staff, but they do have some discretion in the training provided to new staff (Sundram, 1986). The importance of staff training is highlighted by a series of investigations by the New York State Commission of Quality of Care for the Mentally Disabled (CQC) into deaths in state hospitals. It was found that in almost every instance, one or more staff members who attempted to restrain an individual had no training in dealing with violent patient behaviour. Professional development programs that provide information about the causes of abuse and maltreatment and enhance staff understanding of youngsters' problems are also important. It has been suggested, for example, that children from troubled families repeat behavioural patterns experienced in their homes. As a result, children who experienced abuse, abandonment, and neglect will provoke similar interactions with facility staff. The finding by Blatt and Brown (1985) that youngsters reported as maltreated in OMH operated residential programs were likely to come from homes where they were abused underscores the need for this type of training. Although the suggestions made above are relatively straightforward, implementa-

tion would present some problems which must be acknowledged. For example, funding and time for staff training are often limited. As a result, facility administrators may need to find alternatives to traditional training programs. Staff overtime, overcrowding, and other factors that place stress on staff may be easily identified,

It has been suggested, for example, that children from troubled families repeat behavioural patterns experienced in their homes. As a result, children who experienced abuse, abandonment, and neglect will provoke similar interactions with facility staff.

but they are often unavoidable. Therefore, prevention and remediation must both be considered as options for dealing with such issues. Administrators and supervisors must also determine the most effective ways to convey goals and values to staff, to make themselves more accessible to direct care staff, and to equip themselves to respond to the needs of staff and youngsters in care.

Conclusion

It is important to recognise that supervision by itself is not sufficient to explain all incidents of institutional child abuse. At the very least, environmental factors as well as the characteristics of staff and youngsters must also be examined and addressed as potential causes of abuse. Recognition of the multidimensional nature of institutional child abuse can aid in the development of procedures for avoiding situations which may lead to abuse. These methods can include identification of environmental factors that cause distress for staff or children, recognition of individual characteristics that might make a youngster more difficult to care for, staff reassignments, stress and crisis management training, and informing facility personnel of administrative policy decisions and changes that may lead to potential problems. Although effective staff supervision can play a key role in these types of efforts, it alone is not sufficient to prevent all incidents of institutional abuse. Nonetheless, supervision must be considered in any comprehensive effort to prevent incidents of abuse and maltreatment in residential settings.

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5 YEARS AGO

For those who weren't around then, a look at our June 1986 issue

A challenging **Editorial** on some of the institutional "crimes" we commit against our children. *Kidnapping* is when we don't live up to our commitment to families, we keep the children for ourselves, call them 'our children' and find new reasons for not allowing them back home. *Amputation* when we don't try to help *in situ*, when we unnecessarily sever the child's intricate networks, we deny the existence of his own world, even his past, and certainly his future in which he will return to his own people. *Greenhousing* is when we overcompensate and provide an overindulgent, artificial environment with more TVs, VCRs, domestic servants and swimming pools than the realistic demands and experiences which will prepare the children for their futures. And *warehousing* where we fail utterly to write (and take the trouble to implement) the personal curriculum needed by an individual child, allowing him — even preferring him? — to sit on the shelf, safely out of trouble, on the bland, inactive diet of eating, cleaning, homework and TV.

The *Child Care Worker* interviewed **Dave Jackson**, Director of SOS Children's Villages which was planning a chain of seven villages in South Africa. He sketched the international background of the organisation and aspects of its child care philosophy. Two of the controversial policies were discussed, namely the employment of housemothers rather than couples, and the preference for long-term care. Dave outlined the community outreach, parental education and satellite pre-school programmes which went hand in hand with the development of villages.

SANRA het hul reeks artikels oor dwelmmisbruik beëindig deur die hulpbronne wat bestaan vir ouers en adolossente te bespreek. Drie vrae word beantwoord: **Waarom** professionele hulp soek, **Waar** kan ek om hulp vra, en **Wat** sal professionele hulp behels? Die laaste woord: "Ouers moet hul verantwoordelijkheid in dié verband besef. Hulle is gewoonlik die eerste om op te merk dat 'n probleem wel bestaan, en moet optree om te verseker dat hul kinders elke geleentheid kry om gelukkige, betekenisvolle, volwasse lewens te lei."

A piece on child care work as a craft was contributed by **Brian Gannon**. As with a craftsman, it is our training and experience which tell us when we can go for the broad strokes in our practice, and when we need to work sensitively and in

finer detail. We can lose the rich learning between master and apprentice if the leaders in child care become only administrators and don't realise that they are expected to continue to be competent practitioners whom newcomers can watch at work. On 'letting go': "... craftsmen rarely keep for themselves what they have made. Invariably they work on something which will grace someone else's home. There is a generosity in the craftsman who knows that he is working meticulously on a task for someone else's joy and appreciation. So, too, the children we work with will be passed on to enrich the lives of others ..."

A parents' day at Lakehaven was described by **Zeni Thumbadoo** and **Vasinta Veeran**. Staff, parents and children agreed it should be an annual event. "However, for children whose parents did not come, it was very sad and a great disappointment. There were children who cried and staff had to be their 'family' for the day. As an attempt to comfort them, other parents included these children in their circle"

The role of children's institutions in the management of child abuse was discussed in an article by **Priscilla McKay** of Pinetown Child Welfare. The children's home is seen as a helpfully neutral environment for the child while abusing parents are in therapy. "Many social workers err by placing the abused child in foster care ... the child may be unable to handle the bonding demanded by the foster parents." Priscilla emphasises the principle of permanency: "I would like to emphasise that the approach I advocate is to remove, diagnose, treat and return the child where possible, or to make a long-term plan where the child can be placed so that he can reach his optimum potential".

This very full issue ended with the hard-hitting and plaintive *Reflections on Children in Care* by **Sharon Bacher**. "I can't stand the adults who govern my life. They come and they go, leaving the echoes of their tiresome instructions, and each time I must yield to their sanctioned new authority. I must listen. I must be good ..."

NOTE: This regular feature draws many enquiries for copies of material mentioned. Its a pleasure! There was so much helpful writing in past issues, it would be a pity for it to be buried in history. For articles, we ask only for a contribution for copying and postage.

OVERHEARD AT A WORKSHOP

Honesty is the Best Child Care Policy

A major problem of child care workers is the perception that management committees and principals simply expect them to achieve miracles, so that much of their work becomes a frantic 'paint job' to make everything look OK. "Your job is to see that the children behave ... " is a terrifying assignment when we are working with some very troubled kids, and are not too sure of our skills. When those expectations are expressed, management has only itself to blame for the 'methods' which some staff members will use to produce the wanted 'results'.

Management often calls on child care workers to act as a team, but forgets that the team also has responsibilities toward the individual. It is the principal, as *leader* of the team who is responsible for effective team functioning — and this means that everybody on the team shares the responsibility.

If the child care worker is going to play a courageous and creative part, it must be with the absolute understanding that instant success is not realistic; that progress will have to be worked at. The child care worker needs to be told clearly: "We, the whole team, management, principal, social worker, other professionals and child care workers, accepted the joint responsibility for this child. We knew when we admitted him that we were accepting the shared responsibility for the care, education and treatment of, for example, a frightened, unsocialised, hurt, angry, deprived child. If he is impolite, uncouth, aggressive, destructive or abusive that is not your fault — we all expected that, and that is why he is here. And in turn, what we are all here for is to help, to heal, to comfort, to reassure, to accept, to encourage, to teach, to build, to strengthen, and we accept that this may take months, or even years. Therefore we do not expect you as child care worker to force the children into compliance, to paper over the cracks, to conceal the ugly and frightening things which happen in your unit, or to pretend that 'everything is fine'. Only by honestly facing up to the reality of this child's problems, by talking together about them openly, objectively and constructively, will we even have an idea of what has to be done. Each of us on the team is here to share that task with you." Only after such a message can we fairly talk about the child care worker's responsibility — and after a message like that most child care workers will willingly accept their share of the responsibility.



The Younger they are, the Harder they Play

Keith Waterhouse writes in *Punch* on the games that adults never see ...

According to Hoyle, most popular children's games simply do not exist. I suppose this is because their participants, being naturally indolent or illiterate or preferring to climb trees instead of attending committee meetings, have never bothered to write down the rules. It is also true, I believe, that children tend not to congregate in the upper rooms of village pubs, where traditionally the laws of cricket, Association Football, Rugby League, ice-hockey, poker and the remainder were drawn up on the backs of menus.

A pity, that, for how many games of conkers or hopscotch have been won by default through ignorance of the complex rules? How many children can recite the Declaration of Intent — a variation of the Hippocratic Oath — that was to have cleaned up the sport of doctors and nurses? What boy is aware of the first law of marbles, which is that although every tournament shall be played for keeps, no tournament shall really be played for keeps always provided that the loser shall throw himself to the ground, drumming his heels and screaming, "Tisn't fair!"

For want of a stub of pencil and half a page torn from an exercise book at the right moment, the rules of many children's games are lost in antiquity. This constitutional void has often led to unseemly behaviour on the field. A skipping marathon in East London, for example, recently broke up in disorder because none of the contestants could agree as to the order of the condiments in the skipping rhyme. An elimination standing-on-one-leg competition in Derbyshire was abandoned when one of the semi-finalists challenged the umpire's decision that holding onto the railings was not permitted. The Northern Long-distance Spitting League has been arguing for three generations as to whether the expectation of licorice juice shall constitute a foul.

These are happily isolated examples. It would be a sad day if children's games in general began to acquire the same ugly reputation as soccer or chess. In order to avoid the escalation of unpleasantness in what should be healthy, competitive sports, I have attempted to jot down a few notes on some of the children's games I remember best. Perhaps some minuscule Hoyle will continue the good work and produce the definitive treatise.

Not Walking on the Cracks of Pavements

This is an essentially urban game, the object being to perambulate a measured stretch of pavement — usually to the nearest sweet-shop and back — without stepping on the cracks. The origins of the sport are obscure but there is documentary evidence that it was played by Dr. Johnson, whose shambling gait was said to have been caused by over-meticulous play on a cobbled course. *Rules.* 1. A crack in the pavement shall be interpreted as the gap between one paving-stone and another. Faults in the pavement surface or the edges of coal-hole covers are not cracks. 2. All players to set off simultaneously. 3. No bumping or boring. 4. It is permissible to negotiate the course on a scooter, but scooting over a crack will be declared a fault. 5. Last one to the sweet-shop is a big sweaty nit.

A player shall be deemed to be dismissed when he or she steps on a crack. In the event of a player being so dismissed, the earth shall open up and swallow that player alive. The game shall continue until all but one of the players shall have been swallowed up alive.

Walking to the End of the Lane with Your Eyes Closed

This was originally a rural version of the game just described. It is said that many years ago a group of yokels were playing Not Walking On The Cracks in a certain village lane. One of them, more observant than the others, noticed that the country lane was not paved, hence that there were no cracks. To enliven what was necessarily a slow-moving match when played in pastoral surroundings, the yokels introduced a new rule: that all contestants must keep their eyes closed until they reach the end of the lane. Thus — in much the same way as Rugby evolved from Soccer when William Webb Ellis first handled the ball in 1823 — an entirely new sport was born.

In essence, the rules of Walking With Your Eyes Closed remain the same as those for Walking On The Cracks, with appropriate adjustments for the variation just described. The most important of these is that a player being dismissed from the game shall be carried off by a big furry monster and boiled in a pot, rather than being swallowed up alive as in the traditional version.

Counting up to a Zillion

There are many variations of this exacting sport, ranging from the simple Counting Up To A Million to the more sophisticated and energetic counting Up To A Million Zillion Trillion. Counting Up To A Zillion has perhaps the most devotees.

Rules. 1. Each player shall count in a high-pitched monotonous voice, beginning at nought (0) and not pausing for breath until he has reached the number of one zillion (1,000,000,000,000,000,000). 2. A player counting under his breath and then claiming to have reached twelve million shall be disqualified. 3. Counting in fives, tens or hundreds shall be disallowed. 4. The use of

non-recognised or eccentric numbers such as fifty-twelve or eleveny-ten is not permitted.

A disadvantage of Counting Up To A Zillion is that like the Eton Wall Game it rarely ends with a definite result, the main reason being that it takes twelve years to complete a single innings.

Holding One's Breath

This is often played on Counting Up To A Zillion pitches when the presence of parents or elder sisters may have created unfavourable conditions for any game that cannot be conducted in absolute silence. The object of the game is to see which of a number of players can hold his breath longer than the others.

The rules may be subject to many and diverse local variations, but there is a standard Non-Breathing Code laying down the circumstances in which one contestant may examine another to see if his heart has stopped beating. The Code also discourages babes-in-arms from taking part in the game, even as amateurs.

Is-Isn't-Is-Isn't-Is

Playing with something of the ritual of Japanese wrestling, this is a battle of wits between two players, requiring great verbal dexterity.

The game commences with one of the players making a statement or *postulation*, e.g., "The moon is flat" or "My dad can beat your dad" or "If you swallow chewing-gum it winds round your heart and you die".

The challenger must then reply with the *response*, which according to the rigid customs of the game shall be "It isn't", or "He can't" or "You don't", according to which may be most appropriate.

The first player then counters with the *assertion* — "It is", "He Can", "You do", etc. Immediately, the second player must produce the *contradiction* — "Isn't", "Can't", "Don't", etc. — else he shall have forfeited the game. Note that at this stage the *abbreviation of "It isn't"* responses has been arrived at — "Isn't" instead of "It isn't", and so on.

This style of play continues until one or other of the players shall introduce the *variation*. There are as many variations as there are moves in chess, and it is necessary to learn them by heart before one can hope to become an accomplished player. A simple sequence of variations might be as follows:-

"Is."

"Isn't."

"Is."

"Isn't, you rotten stinker." (First variation.)

"Rotten stinker yourself." (Second variation.)

"Don't you call me a rotten stinker." (Third variation.)

"Well you are one." (Fourth variation.)

"Aren't." (Fifth variation.)

"Are." (New sequence commences.)

The game continues through many such sequences and concludes with the *assault*, when one player shall have been led to the point of hitting the other one in the mouth.