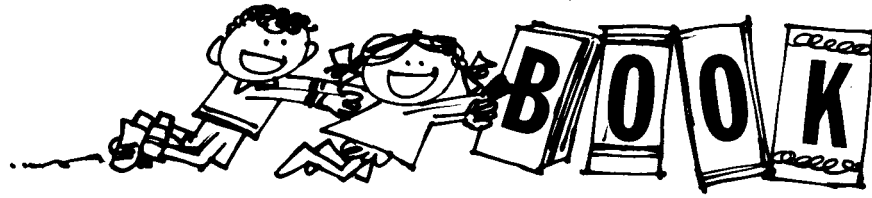


Book Review Editor Ruth Stewart



children's health is really instructive and does make use of the most up to date information and shows by comparison with the medically most advanced countries how much we still need to do in Australia before we catch up. Peter Saunders on the economic costs of children and child poverty in Australia is equally sound and presents material that is not normally available to the general reader. Richard Chisholm, on law, presents one of the best, concise overviews to be found in Australian writing.

Is the style of writing and presentation at an acceptable level?

Mention of the general lucidity of the writers' style has already been made and satisfaction expressed. Equally Ray Brown's editorship has been commended. But there are rather more mistakes in the actual production than one would expect to see, especially in a book which comes from one of the world's highly respected publishing houses. There are many typographical errors, there is one, long, duplicated paragraph, which should have been spotted at the proof reading stage and in Eckermann's chapter on Aboriginal children, references are numerically mismatched. Trivial? Maybe, but faintly irritating just the same.

Does one put the book down with a feeling of satisfaction as having fulfilled the expectations with which one picked it up?

Presumably that depends on one's expectations. This reviewer had high expectations and with only a few exceptions he was satisfied. Even the exceptions do not refer to the whole of any one contributor's writing, rather that here or there a few important points were glossed over — e.g. in Skilbeck's chapter, when he failed adequately to address the issues on education raised by neo Marxist writers or even by non-Marxist critics of education, or when Eckermann's analysis on Aborigines becomes too partisan and reads rather

distorted, toward the end of her chapter.

But one can't have everything and all in all, the book stands up well to criticism, unless indeed one takes one or other particular, doctrinaire, ideological stand, and then, of course, it would be all condemnation from a reviewer.

In conclusion then, this is a well assembled collection of contributions of good quality which do what they set out to do. This reviewer, for instance, has no hesitation in placing it on his reading list for his tertiary students and equally has no hesitation in commending it to any other reader who is interested in children and concerned about the child welfare policies pursued in Australia.

*P. Boss
Professor of Social Work
Monash University*



ANNIE'S COMING OUT. Rosemary Crossley and Anne McDonald. Penguin Books, Australia. 1980. \$4.50. 251p.

Reviewed by J.M. Houston. B.A. Dip.Soc.Stud. Post graduate student in Behavioural Science, Department of Social Work, LaTrobe University.

Anne McDonald suffers from bilateral hemiplegia and athetosis resulting from birth injury. When she was three, she was placed in St Nicholas Hospital, an institution for profoundly retarded physically handicapped children, where she remained until she was eighteen.

When Anne was sixteen, Rosemary Crossley, a ward assistant at St Nicholas, began to believe that Anne was not retarded. This book is an

account of her successful struggle to have Anne discharged by order of the Supreme Court and against the wishes of her parents.

Anne cannot speak and she appears to have no voluntary movement. Miss Crossley believes that she is able to communicate with her, with the aid of an alphabet board. She describes how she stands behind Anne, pushing her head and shoulders forward, supporting her arm and providing stimulation to the extensor muscles (p.53) This is a stressful and slow procedure and the sections of the book written in this way must have taken many hours.

The first part of the book describes the period immediately following Miss Crossley's suspicion that Anne was not mentally retarded. It could have been a most moving story but Miss Crossley tends to concentrate on the teaching of mathematical ideas rather than the communication of Anne's thoughts and feelings.

The academic progress described is extraordinary. Within thirty days of the first attempts at communication, Anne is said to have been deducing the rules for dealing with negative numbers and resolving Algebraic equations. (p.105).

Through the alphabet board, Anne reveals that she had been interested in mathematics for some time. She learnt numbers from Sesame Street, fractions from another severely handicapped resident with whom she communicated in a secret language, and geometry from watching the napkins being folded.

"I had a go at the speed of light using the distance of the moon from the earth (which had been given coverage during the Apollo missions) and the stated delay time for radio signals. My calculation was unavoidably rough, because the time was to the nearest second." (p.107)

"I ruined a large part of a stupendous work on A bombs because I could not divide

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properly." (p.108). Anne McDonald.

Her general knowledge is quite remarkable given her life experience. She is able to advise Miss Crossley on the conduct of her action for habeas corpus and able to spell the names and know the positions of politicians.

No child has been heard to speak in St Nicholas but Miss Crossley believes that Anne spoke to her friends in 'Yuggish', a combination of English and Yugoslavian, expressed in cries and noises and unrecognised as language by staff. It is stated that children admitted temporarily were able to communicate complex ideas to Anne and her friends through the secret language. (p.172) They were afraid that should it be known they could speak, they would be punished.

Miss Crossley raises the obvious query regarding what is actually happening. Is it possible that she herself is unconsciously influencing the movement of Anne's arm? Could it be that like all of us she finds it impossible to look into a bright happy little face and face the reality of profound mental damage?

In the foreword to the book, the last chapters of the book itself, and in the media coverage of Anne's litigation, it is assumed that the Supreme Court decision of Mr Justice Jenkinson on 9.5.1979 answered this query. But a reading of the court records reveals that this is not the case.

The trial was an action for Habeas Corpus. The court did not require that Miss Crossley prove that she was in fact able to communicate with Anne. It required the Health Commission to prove beyond doubt that she was not, and that it do so immediately or release Anne from custody. Alternatively, the Health Commission would have needed to produce evidence of Miss Crossley's insincerity. Her sincerity was not questioned.

In finding that Anne was capable of communicating that she wanted to leave

St Nicholas, Mr Justice Jenkinson was dealing with legal constraints rather than making a medical diagnosis. He stated that he would have been greatly assisted in his judgement if an attempt had been made to elicit communication with Anne under controlled conditions. He agreed with the psychologist for the Health Commission that at least three variables had to be controlled:

- a. the nature of the support to Anne's arm;
- b. the amount of information available to the supporting person regarding the response requested of Anne; and
- c. the nature of Anne's response.

Such a test had not been done. An attempt was made to organise a test during the court proceedings, but Miss Crossley, through Anne's lawyers, refused.

Mr Justice Jenkinson noted that a test could have been devised using a 'yes' 'no' response, but he observed that Miss Crossley had not made known the fact that she perceived such a response in the frequent movement of Anne's tongue. It was not known until the days of the court proceedings that such a claim was being made.

Habeas Corpus actions are inevitably urgent. The Health Commission had very little time to prepare its case and Mr Justice Jenkinson was not able to defer his judgements for several months until the government enquiry into Miss Crossley's allegations had tabled its findings.

Turning to the book, one searches for the evidence which was not produced at the court hearing. But it is not there. Anne consistently refuses to spell out answers when Miss Crossley does not know the question, although she is able to use the alphabet board fluently at other times. She does not seem to realise the importance of proving that she is not retarded.

Some other people can support her arm while she uses the alphabet board, but these people too have always heard

the question.

As described in the book, the second court case to determine Anne's right to manage her own affairs, produced no further evidence. Once Anne is said to have spelt some letters of the word 'string' which she had been asked when Miss Crossley was not present. But as her hand covers several letters at once, and as S T and R are close together, this could be explained by chance. Perhaps the questioner glanced at the string. Why did Anne not spell the other words which she was asked to spell?

Several times Miss Crossley states that Anne can now move her arm without support, but she does not ask her to spell words or even indicate a yes or no response before witnesses. Neither does she alter the alphabet board so that it would require less precise, less ambiguous movement.

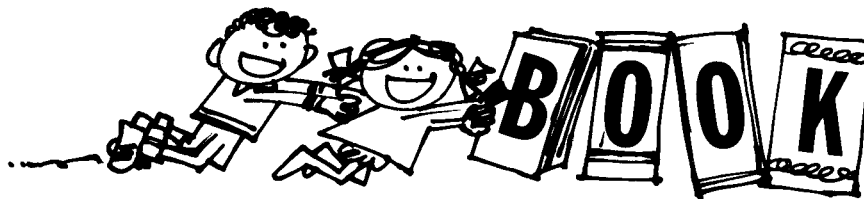
As a story of the release of an isolated soul from an imprisoning body, the reader is frustrated by lack of evidence and by the many unanswered questions.

The book has a second purpose which has received as much publicity as the story of Anne, to the distress of parents and staff. It is a critique of St Nicholas Hospital and appears to have reinforced commonly held beliefs and fantasies about institutions for the retarded.

Miss Crossley's language implies the worst. She speaks of 'skeletons in cupboards', 'high brick walls with broken glass on top', 'troughs for baths'. But she ignores the open gates and doors, the unrestricted visiting in all the years that Anne was resident, (except perhaps in the last months when she and some others were in danger of becoming a circus attraction), and the need for high baths for incontinent, totally dependent teenagers being nursed by women.

She hints that the death rate is high but doesn't relate death totals to the number of years the hospital has been open or the general life expectancy of profoundly handicapped children. "Jobs

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in mental hospitals do not attract the best doctors, and there was no supervision." (p.19)

Some of the criticisms rely for their validity on the belief that there are children in the hospital who are not severely retarded. No evidence is produced to support this claim, or the claim that deformed children are admitted as babies, regardless of their intelligence, to this "state garbage bin".

Contrary evidence has been presented by the government enquiry. Eleven of the twelve children whom Miss Crossley claimed were not retarded were found to be severely or profoundly retarded by an independent body of experts. The twelfth, Anne, was not subject to the enquiry, having already left the hospital.

Claims that children, once admitted, receive no further investigation are also found to be false. If they were true, one could not explain how children come to be moved into special education programs within and without the hospital, sometimes transferred to other facilities, or sent to the Children's Hospital for assistance with physical problems. Miss Crossley should know that specialist staff have always visited the hospital regularly to advise regarding various aspects of the children's care.

The authors state that the medical staff is incompetent, that nurses punish the children by putting them in a dark, cupboard-like room, that the children are starved to death by poor feeding, brutally restrained and encouraged to die, that Anne was bashed by a nurse and that someone attempted to smother her with a pillow. No evidence is given in support of these allegations. They seem to contradict a statement on page five that the deprivations in the institution only really affect the children who are not genuinely retarded.

Other criticisms refer to problems in architecture, which no one disputes, and to the problems of responding to the needs of profoundly retarded, multiple-

handicapped children, or any children, in a group situation. These problems deserve an objective and clear search for solutions, including an honest assessment of alternatives.

As a critique of a particular institution, the book has far too many inaccuracies which tend to prevent the reader appreciating the forward thinking ideas of Miss Crossley. It does not attempt to explore in any way the general problems of caring for such profoundly mentally and physically handicapped people, the emotional problems for staff, or the problematic place of hope. For nursing and teaching staff must find themselves in the paradoxical position of somehow acting as if they believe in growth and development, being ever ready to see it if it occurs, but seeing potential as irrelevant to their care and commitment.



"ENDS AND MEANS IN SOCIAL WORK — the Development and Outcome of a Case Review System for Social Workers" National Institute Social Services Library. No. 35. By E. Matilda Goldberg and R. Williams Warburton. 155 pages. Published by George Allen & Unwin, London, 1979. Reviewed by Sandra de Wolf (B.A. Hons., Dip.Soc.Stud.)

Reorganisation of an English local authority personal social services provided the impetus for this book. The authors carried out a series of surveys and action studies in the early and mid 70's and developed a Case Review System as their main monitoring tool. The major emphasis in the book is on the development and use of this Case Review System.

The authors had three main aims in their research. First, to find out what the clients and social workers thought about the newly re-organised social

services; second, to discover how social work skills and resources are used to meet different client needs, and third to enable social workers to become more explicit about means and ends of their activities. The research was carried out in an area office of an English town serving a population of 73,000. Perceptions of clients and social workers were studied in 1972, soon after the integration of the social services, and again in 1975. The Case Review System was developed over a couple of years and used from February 1975 for one year.

The section on social worker and consumer perspectives (Chapter 3) contains interesting information on persistent areas of "conflict" in perspectives. In particular, the emphasis placed by social workers on the "helping relationship" and discussing "personal problems" was not supported by the clients who "appeared to take a sympathetic receptive attitude by the social workers for granted". (Page 15) Social workers also tended to undervalue their contribution and be acutely aware of their gaps in knowledge, skills etc. Another interesting finding was that, despite a substantial decrease in caseload size over the three years, the social workers still felt under considerable pressure. Conflict over deciding priorities, lack of clear definition of tasks and roles, awareness of gaps in information and services and a surfeit of clerical and administrative tasks all contributed to the feelings of dissatisfaction experienced by social workers.

The authors also wanted to test whether they could identify neighbourhoods with different "social need profiles" and, if so, whether these related to rates and kinds of client contact with the area office. From the social workers' subjective sketches and census information, they divided the district into nine clusters. Not surprisingly, they found that "high use of social work services is still very much