

**Book Review Editor
Ruth Stewart**



the time the book was written, Marrickville had three workers for the kids as opposed to none when the refuge first opened.

Finally, **The Last Resort** covers the change in the thinking of the women who originally set up the refuge. Refuges set themselves up as an alternative to the "professional vs. client" version of welfare but, as one worker comments, "Though it was easy enough to sate our opposition to the 'social worker' mentality, it was much more difficult to put this into practice.

At Marrickville the practice has entailed a group of ex-residents eventually being employed to work alongside other workers. Now Marrickville has operated for over eighteen months run totally by ex-residents. This is seen as being the obvious way for refuges to resist being absorbed completely into the established welfare network which in many ways refuges are now part of.

Whether or not this will prove a solution for a refuge movement becoming increasingly involved with its own survival and internal confrontations remains to be seen, but for Marrickville it has proved the answer.

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PARENTING & DELINQUENT YOUTH

**by Alice Parizeau,
Lexington Books, 1980.
Toronto
\$32**

This book is about child welfare, child rights and the issue of community attitudes towards provisions for child preventative services. It consists of three main sections.

In the first section, the author outlines the legislation and service provisions for

children in need of care and juvenile delinquents in both the Canadian and Quebec legislatures. In Quebec, Social Service centres were created under the Youth Protection Act and where parents are agreeable, one of several measures are used:

1. Assistance to the family
2. Assistance given to the child by a Social Worker.
3. Temporary or permanent placement of the child in a home other than that of his or her parents.
4. Placement of the child in a special institution.

Where the parents are in disagreement, the Directory of Youth Protection in S.S.C.'s can take action, but it is up to the juvenile Court to hear the case. The operations of the S.S.C.'s also include the provision of the probation service to minors.

Notwithstanding the recognition of children's rights in legislation, (citizens can report cases of child maltreatment without having their identity divulged, and children are given the right of a choice about where they want to live). Alice Parizeau still considers there are serious inadequacies in both the legislation and its implementation. There is a lack of definition in the legislation, both of children's rights and what constitutes good parenting. This leads to children whose parents maltreat, are indifferent or criminal, receiving no help from the community, simply because they are not troublesome.

She further contends that some natural parents may not have the capacity to love and thus a child's family need not be established on the basis of parent/offspring. Moreover, where it is recognized that parents are inadequate, regardless of whether maltreatment has occurred, society should have the right to intervene. However, the provision of care in institutions has the dual problem of high cost and a lack of effectiveness in outcome in terms of the child's rehabilitation. This raises the need for

family care and the role and significance of foster care, and of family support and intervention.

"In short, I believe that the prevention of deprived childhood will never be regulated by legislation or an official system of treatment, and that to exercise effectively, direct aid must be given to certain groups of parents by assigning them guardians and offering them socio-educational treatment". (p.xxi)

In the second section, the study involves a survey of the dossiers of 14 young adults who appeared before the Criminal Court. For these young people, their dossiers illustrate the failure of legislation on child protection to ensure the rights of children. Their records show some of the experiences they had as children and the failure of their parents to fulfil their responsibility and the inadequacy of the administration to intervene effectively. These cases had several common denominators:

1. As children, they generally appear in juvenile court under the Youth Protection Act and while receiving supervision, keep returning.
2. There is a progressive seriousness of offending.
3. They demonstrate a poor school record both academically and in their relationship with peers.

Unfortunately, the presentation of these dossiers take up 57 pages of the book. This information should have been condensed and presented in summary form in the book or appended, rather than page after page of records. These dossiers certainly illustrate the author's case; however, her generalizations must remain limited, without a more vigorous approach to research, apart from the very small and limited sample.

The third section contains a study of a sample of 48 parents selected among common law prisoners. Again the author includes some 24 pages of resume on the prisoner's response to interviews, plus an interview schedule which could have been appended.



These prisoners consisted of 26 male and 22 female and they were the parents of some 125 children in total. Although these parents come from diverse milieu, generally they experience poor, dissolute and criminogenic backgrounds.

The findings which arose from this study are interesting, but of limited value due to the small size of the sample, the method of selection and the generalizations made from it. Among the findings was the disparity between aspirations of individuals and their daily realities for those who moved from rural backgrounds to city life. The unstable and "chaotic" existence of prisoner's wives who often sought out male companions who had similar backgrounds to their "first mate". There was also a lack of interest by the authorities regarding the families of prisoners. Women prisoners were more concerned with the placement of their children and were penalized more in the sense that there was a higher likelihood of their children being placed, than with men.

Arising out of her studies, Alice Parizeau considers that the basis of inadequate parenting and of juvenile delinquency is sociocultural. No doubt there are economic factors involved, but it is the transmission of values or their lack which lies behind the unstable life experience of these parents and their children.

The author's solution to this problem is a socioeducative and family support approach to these families organized on a socio-administrative basis.

This topic is one of fundamental concern for child welfare. The author has clearly shown that the interests of parents and children do not necessarily coincide and where they do not coincide, the role of society is not clearly defined. However, her book is disappointing in that it is not a coherent study and it is difficult to pick up the author's directions. She does not pursue a very rigorous research design and the

nature and method of her study restricts her findings to the target group of prisoners and their families. But her generalizations go well beyond this target group.

There is too much argument by analogy and the case for value transmission and sociocultural causation is not proven. Issues such as the definition of sociocultural and variables indentified to measure its influence are not addressed. Likewise she provides no definition for the boundaries of intervention and while this reviewer shares her emphasis upon primary family support, her intervention proposals are neither grounded in research findings nor do they have a theory basis. This leaves her position somewhat in the air.

Nonetheless, she has presented a conundrum for social administrators; How should children's rights be defined and what makes up good parenting. In those terms, what should be the nature and scope of intervention and can it take on a preventative role prior to maltreatment occurring? The passion which with the author pursues this theme underlines the question: What is in the best interest of children and how can society promote this?

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BOOKS RECEIVED for Review

These books will be reviewed in forthcoming issues.

Gray, M. and Wilcok, G. *Our Elders*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981.
Scott, D. *"Don't Mourn for me—Organise. . ."* Sydney, George Allen and Unwin, 1981.