

districts of the Adelaide Metropolitan area we have determined that a child living in the "worst" district had 2.8 times greater chance of becoming subject of State control and/or supervision than a child in the "best" district. Yet, our findings indicated also that the incidence of law-breaking behaviour was much more widespread throughout the whole metropolitan area. As a matter of fact, the correlation between the socio-economic factors and the number of those children who had appeared in court but did not come under State care of supervision was only 0.27. How do we account for those differences?

That was in 1971 and I am wondering to what extent things have changed in that State after all the legislative changes and the innovations of Mr. Cox and his Department.

What our findings suggest is that decisions to take a child into care might be made for reasons which are beyond the control of his family, and even more beyond the control of such authorities as State Welfare Department. Some of these

Such an approach, I believe, would lead to more careful consideration of the decision and to a greater exploration of alternatives. One of such alternatives could well be financial assistance to families if such assistance appeared to be warranted.

I appreciate the fact that the prevention of statutory intervention is not a matter of money alone. It seems, however, we often go to great lengths into explaining the reasons for statutory intervention. We speak of parental inadequacy, neglect, psychological maladjustment or emotional disturbance; but the obvious fact of lack of financial resources eludes us.

These days we speak of family and child welfare rather than child welfare alone. For example, the Submission presented by your Association to the Committee of Enquiry into Child Care Services in Victoria states:

... the primacy of the family as the basic unit of our society is acknowledged.



MORNING TEA AT LORNE

Adam Jamrozik relaxes with members
of a group during a tea-break at the
Conference.

reasons lie in the geographical distribution of certain socio-economic factors in our Cities. To change those factors we would have to look into the way our cities are built, in the way our resources are allocated in commerce, industry as well as in education, health, recreation.

How, then, do we account for the fact that children who come into care come predominantly from one stratum of society?

I would like to make two suggestions, at this point. First, I suggest that in research projects on child welfare we should focus more on the families whose children do not come into care. If we did that, we would probably find that those families have certain abilities and mechanisms, and access to certain resources, which obviate the necessity for community, or State, intervention. Second, apart from the criteria upon which we take children away from their families, we should clarify some criteria which would state clearly in which cases we cannot do this. Or, at least, in each case when a proposal is made to take a child into care there should be mandatory defence against such an action, even in cases when parents themselves ask for their children to be taken into State care.

Any threat to or breakdown of the concept of the family is to be strongly resisted. In general the rights and needs of the individual child will be seen within the context of the family.

If this is the case, if the family is regarded as a social value in itself, then I would sum up my argument in these terms: first, the separation of the child from his family should be effected only as a measure of last resort; second, if a separation had to be made, such separation should be as short as possible and all efforts should be made to restore the child to his family; and, third, all decisions to separate the child from the family or to prolong the separation should be subject to approval by an independent authority, such as a children's commission, or a family court.

One of the most important criteria upon which we judge, or evaluate, a family is by its performance with regard to the upbringing of the next generation. I suggest that the services we provide in the form of any substitute child care, whether statutory or not, should be evaluated not only as substitutes but as services for upbringing, socialization, and development of the next generation. Accepting that we must have such services, accepting that we must on occasions intervene into a

family for the purpose of protecting the child; the forms and institutions of child care should then be models not imitations. Such a role becomes more important now when the parental role becomes increasingly more difficult and the family becomes more unstable.

In accepting a positive developmental role rather than remedial or substitute role, the services of child care would thus assume a teaching function from which we all, including parents, could learn. Such a role would have, in effect, a preventative function as well. The kind of services I have in mind would aim to share the role of parents and support parents. They would become a link between the family and the community.

Societal Accountability

I have said earlier that one cannot examine child welfare services without examining other social issues which affect the welfare of children. Your Submission to the Committee of Enquiry acknowledged this by stating:

Child car programmes should consider the relationships of the child to an industrialized affluent and predominantly urbanized society.

Further, the Submission states:

The Australian family exists, and often finds itself struggling to survive, in a highly industrialized society, undergoing rapid technological and cultural development and dominated by the values and goals imposed by continued economic change.

You also speak of "hostile environment", such as, "crowded living, high rise housing, lack of recreational space, more cars and the attendant dangers on the road, instability of employment and the frustrations for adult members of the family in their drive towards the material acquisitions available in an affluent society. 10

I am sure, we all agree that this is, indeed, the kind of environment in which our children have to grow up and develop into future adults. What makes me feel rather uneasy is the impression I get from reading your submission that this "hostile environment", as you have called it, seems to be accepted as a given. I also wonder whether the values and goals you mention are imposed by a continued economic change. I would have thought it would be more appropriate to say that the values and goals are imposed by the people who make decisions and decide on economic and social priorities.

There is no value in assigning hostile environment to a reified social change. Conditions do not simply happen; they are created by people and can be changed by people. They should not be regarded as givens.

For example, we often hear of new programmes, government or voluntary, whose aim is to "get the kids off the streets." Why get them off the streets? Why not make the streets fit for the kids? And for the adults, too. At the present time we see the cities as places for offices, department stores, banks, and cars, of course. How will social life and social behaviour, develop if we don't provide places for it? If you go to any European city, especially in warmer weather, you see hundreds and hundreds of people on the streets. More and more cities convert more and more streets into walking malls, there are gardens and parks in the centre. What do we see in the Australian cities (except, perhaps, in Adelaide)? Where are the parklands, where are the gardens, where are the recreation grounds?

How do we account for this state of affairs? Isn't it time that we, who claim to be interested in child welfare, have begun to consider these matters?

What I suggest is this: we will not make much progress in improving the quality of child welfare services if we endeavour

to improve those services in isolation from the societal context in which those services are provided. I do not think that we should be unduly sentimental or emotional about children. On the contrary, I think it is in our society's interest that we aim to ensure a kind of environment which would be conducive to healthy development of the future generation. For example, these days we require certain standards of, say, the motor car manufacturers with regard to emission control so as to reduce air pollution. Should we not require certain standards of the town and city councils, of the industrial and commercial entrepreneurs, of the public transport authorities; standards which would ensure an environment conducive to child and family welfare. After all, any enterprise, public or private, commercial, recreational, or educational, is also a social enterprise. Hence it should accept social responsibility.

For example, if we examined how safe street crossings have been built, e.g., by installation of street lights, or by over-or-under-passes, we would find that quite a few of them have been built only after a child has been killed or seriously injured. Similarly, legislation requiring safety fences around swimming pools came in only after a number of drownings.

When we examine Australian history we see that, as far as social provisions are concerned, we have always (with an exception of a brief period or two) operated on a low-priority philosophy in that area. What has been provided has had to come mainly as a result of arguments, pressure, and sometimes political expediency. In times of economic fluctuations social provisions are the last to come in and the first to go out.

Surely, there must be something fundamentally wrong with a country — one of the richest countries on earth — in which social provisions, say, provisions for the welfare of children, have always to be argued for, over and over again. If anything is gained from time to time, it seems to be eroded and has to be regained again.

This calls for the rethinking of our basic philosophies, it calls for rethinking of directions and priorities; for big part of problems in the field of social welfare comes from the chronic under-allocation of resources to social development. We cannot have an advanced industrial system without an adequately developed system of social provisions.

I know, it is not fashionable nowadays to talk about such things as social provisions: economic production, increased consumption, and control of inflation are our current concerns. The "current economic climate" does not allow, it seems, for social development.

We have to accept that no country has unlimited resources so as to provide all the needs of its citizens. Citizens' needs grow, and satisfaction of one kind of need creates another need. But in a consumer economy needs are also created and channelled into various directions. One of our biggest industries is the advertisement industry which has accumulated some of the best brains and talents of our country to work for the benefit of a few.

What should concern us, I think, are the current attempts in our society to fit in social provisions and social policy into the framework of pure market economy. Such trends may hold some gains and considerable appeal to our individual selfish interests but the price we pay for those gains will be a society in which people become objects and human relationships become increasingly utilitarian.

For example, in education, we have a continuous, and in some quarters a growing pressure to provide education that would fit the person into a job. I agree that to lead an interesting, satisfying, and socially useful life a person has to do something, to create something. But listening to those voices, one gets a clear and distinct impression that people are viewed as factors of production, and only as factors of production, and education is meant to fit them for that role.

These are not the kind of issues that those who are involved in the provision of family and child welfare services alone can solve. They are societal issues which call reassessment of priorities at national levels. At the same time, creating public awareness of those issues and demonstrating how family and child welfare is part of societal responsibility may well be the task of the people who work in family and child welfare services. If we don't do this we may justifiably be called to account for neglecting our responsibility. For if we accept the responsibility for the care and socialization of children then we also ought to ensure that the society in which the child is to live is a kind of society which pursues the same goals and holds the same values as those we attempt to develop in our children. To borrow an example from your submission to the Committee of Enquiry, how does one prepare a child for a "hostile environment"?

Creative Prevention

I have attempted to demonstrate in this address some of the links which exist between the issues of accountability in family and child welfare services in specific cases, such as statutory child care, to the issues of societal accountability for the welfare of all children in the community. Such a society would be a child orientated, or child-conscious, society in which activities in both the public and private sectors would be evaluated in relation to children's needs so as to create an environment conducive to family and child welfare.

It is clear that in a child-conscious society family and child welfare services would make greater call on community resources. I do not hesitate in saying this, for greater call on resources in family and child welfare is a call for investment in the future. That kind of investment can be argued for even in pure economic sense, though I do not think that pure economic criteria are appropriate for the evaluation of investment of that nature.

Because we cannot consider here all the issues and solve all the problems of child welfare, I would like to give an example of how the improvement of family and child welfare services may be achieved in some degree, by a little imagination and wider perspective.

To improve the quality of child welfare services it is not only a matter of creating new resources. Often, it is a matter of better utilization of the existing resources. For example, let us look briefly at school holidays programmes. One often hears that we need more recreation grounds, new camping sites, and so on. At the same time, hundreds of school buildings remain empty during the best months of the year, many of them with good recreation grounds, even with swimming pools. Why can we not take city children into the country, and perhaps country children into the city and use school buildings and facilities as holiday accommodation for children? We could take whole families, too. As far as service personnel is concerned, we have hundreds of university students who look for work during holidays: social work students, medical students, psychology students, teacher education students. All these people are training to work with people, including children. The possibilities for enjoyable and fruitful programmes are enormous.

Yes, I would include private schools, too. Many of them have the best facilities available, bought by government grants and subsidies. Such programmes would give them a chance of repaying the community with something they exclusively enjoy.

I expect that someone would say: the schools have no adequate catering facilities, or showers, or toilets. Well, why not build them and use, say, engineering students to do it?



A moment off at Lorne

Then, again, we have the armed forces who also have facilities for, and expertise in, camping. The programmes I envisage would make better use of those resources — and cut down the boredom of the barrack life.

The kind of programmes I have suggested may be seen as a form of social prevention. I would call it "creative prevention". "A little creative endeavour would take us beyond the somewhat repetitive arguments about statutory as against non-statutory care, large institutions as against small ones, or foster care as against family home. For I am sure that in the call for accountability in family and child welfare services, we should also call for accountability for the lack of vision and creative imagination.

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