SOMETHING NEW

This issue heralds the first Point and Counterpoint, an occasional column written by Christopher Goddard. The intent of the column is to challenge readers to explore further, commonly held assumptions regarding issues in Child and Family Welfare and also to present minority views which need to be aired. Readers are invited to support or present counterpoint arguments to the issues raised and we look forward to hosting debates on what are important issues in Child and Family welfare .

CORRECTION TO P. 23, V12 No.4

Book Review; vol 12 No.4
The reviewer of "The complete guide for Australian Parents" by Marina Petropulos was Jacqueline Adler B.A. Dip. Soc. Studs. Social Worker, Child & Adult Psychotherapist in private practice Windsor Victoria 3181.

EDITORIAL

The lack of political power which children possess in our society is demonstrated daily. This would not be of concern if political power was unnecessary for obtaining essential resources for care of children. Unfortunately exercise of political power appears the only effective approach to achieve adequate resources, and hence children rarely appear to obtain the resources recognized as necessary for their development. This situation was identified at the National Conference on Child Poverty held in Melbourne in April 1988. The conference which was organized by the Institute of Family Studies and ACOSS, provided participants with an excellent forum to hear further research evidence on the structural foundations of child poverty. The conference brought participants to the stage of identifying what needs to be done to prevent child poverty.

However, on the day, the conference moved no further than that stage. It was almost as if once again the resources necessary and the structual changes required in our society were too great to be contemplated. Whilst one can acknowledge the current Federal Government has been more active than many of its predecessors in social provisions it seemed regrettable that the Minister of Social Security, in chairing the final discussion session chose to elaborate on Labor's record rather than opening up the discussion to seek creative solutions for child poverty. In 1978, in 'The International Year of the Child' there was much discussion about : "Who speaks for the Child" the emphasis being on the rights of children. However the concept of rights becomes meaningless if there is little power to claim the rights. Even if we left aside major structural changes which most groups would acknowledge as difficult to achieve one only needs to look at attention to residual programs provided for children who are more noticeably suffering. These programs which focus on child abuse or youth homelessness for example are usually underfunded and usually focussed on attempting to intervene after the problem has occurred rather than focus of protecting the child from harm before the child is hurting.

If our community is serious about eliminating child poverty, then as Jan Carter from the Brotherhood of St. Laurence suggested at the Child poverty Conference, we need creative solutions which involve input and commitment from all groups in the community. This includes business, unions, government, welfare, small business, all people; to examine what changes need to be made and explore how the changes can be made acceptable to all groups, avoiding the usual kneejerk response (which we received from the Minister at the Conference) of responding to calls for the need to change by attacking other groups in society to avoid exploring ones own need to change. We have more than enough evidence that poverty is structually caused and that it does impede the development of children caught in its web. What we have yet to find, is a genuine commitment in our community to change this situation .