

## Reviews

**The Mental Health Year Book 1981/82.** MIND (National Association for Mental Health). Pp 600. £12.95.

Information about mental health services, whether statutory or voluntary, has up to now been very inadequately provided in works of reference—simple facts about psychiatric facilities have had to be laboriously dug out or have been unobtainable except by personal local enquiry. This new publication from MIND must therefore be warmly welcomed. It will appeal equally to those needing help for their patients and to addicts for whom Whitaker's Almanack is light bedtime reading. Moreover, the Directory sections which take up about two-thirds of the book are supplemented by nearly 100 pages of consecutive reading matter in the form of a series of articles under the general heading of 'Basic Information on Mental Health' and 'Special Topics'; there are also a number of statistical tables, a glossary of psychiatric terms and other items.

The main Directory lists, under their respective authorities, all psychiatric hospitals and units and psychiatric units in general hospitals—information which cannot be ascertained from the *Medical Directory*. It would be ungrateful to expect more in this section, but perhaps some day we may be told something of the scope and function of these latter units—what kind of patient does each one admit, which ones work in conjunction with a psychiatric hospital and which claim to provide the whole in-patient service for a given catchment area.

Again, since the passing of the Mental Health Acts, nursing homes for psychiatric patients, including the former Licensed Houses, are no longer to be found in the *Medical Directory*. Here they are listed, along with the three independent hospitals, St Andrew's, Cheadle Royal and The Retreat. Of the once familiar 'private asylums', only Ticehurst, The Priory and St George's Retreat survive and flourish, and there are not more than a dozen other registered homes for the mentally ill.

Over 150 pages are devoted to facilities and resources provided by local authorities, but here figures only are given—so many homes, training centres and so on for each authority, and so many places in each category; but for their names and whereabouts one still has to resort to local telephone directories.

A particularly valuable section is that listing and describing national voluntary organizations concerned in some way with mental health. The net has been cast wide, but even so it is evident that the number of such organizations primarily designed to help psychiatric patients or potential patients has been growing rapidly. There are some 150 entries in this section, and a further 75 professional and research organizations are described.

Voluntary action is also the subject of two of the articles in the 'essay' section, and two other articles are contributed by members of the College: Professor Russell Davis writes on the development of services for the mentally ill, and Dr Douglas Bennett on psychiatric day centres, while Dr Tony Whitehead has been responsible for the Glossary.

The two articles on legislation are, of course, by Larry Gostin, and although much of what he writes gives an appearance of sweet reasonableness there can be no doubt about the way the text is slanted. I will give an example of this. In the directory of Government departments and statutory bodies, the Court of Protection is not included, although this is an important office to which the public have access by way of personal application. In Mr Gostin's article the Court receives an unenthusiastic mention—we are told only that by its order 'a person may be deprived of control over his own property and affairs'. (One can almost hear the shocked emphasis on that 'own'.) Nothing is said of the beneficent functions of the Court in protecting the patient's property from neglect or misappropriation, or the patient's family from his insane squandering—it is just 'deprivation'.

One other point—about the title 'Year Book'. At the published price, what library or individual would wish to buy a new edition every year, since, apart from such cataclysms as the impending reorganization of the NHS, the facts recorded are likely to change only minimally from year to year? A less frequent publication might be more realistic. Meanwhile, the first edition should certainly be in every psychiatric library, as it is in the College's.

ALEXANDER WALK

**Report on the Work of The Prison Department 1980.** Home Office Cmnd. 8228. HMSO. £6.50.

This year the annual report of the Prison Department has a new look. It has increased its size from 85 to 114 pages (+34 per cent) and its price from £4.00 to £6.50 (+63 per cent). Last year's 13 chapters have been reduced to 7, the only one surviving unchanged being 'Health and Medical Services'. Presumably all this is to fit in with the changes in the administration of our prisons that have followed from the recommendations of the May Committee. The Director General, Mr D. J. Trevelyan, tells that the first principle of the reorganization is accountability, and that the new Prison Department, like the old, will be accountable to the public through the Home Secretary and remain an integral part of the Home Office. He also talks of a new accountability via a decreasing level of secrecy and quotes the BBC documentary 'Strangeways' as an example of the new approach to this wider accountability. In addition there is to be a

prison inspectorate, separate from the Prison Department, but still reporting to the Home Secretary. The second principle of the reorganization is the strengthening of management. The regional management structure has been slimmed down, and regional directors are now in a clear line of authority from the central office. Regional directors also become members of the Prisons Board. In addition the Board now has two non-executive members from industry. None of this, of course, affects the biggest difficulty facing the prisons, the seemingly inexorable rise in population, which reached a peak figure of 44,626 in March 1980. Perhaps it is not unrelated that 1980 also saw the worst industrial dispute in the history of the prisons.

Time will tell whether the new-look Prisons Department is going to bring fundamental improvements or whether it is mere window dressing. What is quite clear, however, is that whilst there is determination on the Home Secretary's part to strengthen his hand over the day-to-day running of the prisons, there is no way in which he can alter the catastrophically high level of the inmate population. This question requires more detailed examination within the whole of the Cabinet and needs the fullest co-operation from the judiciary and the magistracy. In spite of the near-disaster which the penal system suffered at the end of 1980 there seems no willingness on the part of this, or any other, Government to tackle the real issue.

This year the Health and Medical Services chapter is brief, and the familiar complaint about the numbers of mentally abnormal offenders in prison is absent. However, the Home Secretary, in his Parliamentary statement on the May Com-

mittee report on 30 April 1980 said 'The mentally disordered offender presents particularly difficult problems. My Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State of Social Services, and I accept that it is undesirable to detain in prison persons whose mental disorder permits them to be detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act. We shall continue our efforts to have such persons transferred to hospitals with the appropriate levels of security. My Right Honourable Friend will continue to give priority to the establishment of regional secure units.' Within the medical report there is a hint that the new policy of putting up more cases for transfer under Section 72 of the Act is beginning to work. 'There is a slight increase again this year in the number of reports submitted recommending transfer to psychiatric hospital ... and in transfers actually effected.' All the medical statistics have been banished to an Appendix, although there is a discussion in the text about self-injury and suicide within prisons. It is strangely reassuring that in spite of the increase in overcrowding, and the major industrial dispute of 1980 there was no increase in either self-injury or suicide. A final footnote to the statistics, which may tell us as much about changing attitudes and staffing among prison doctors as about prison populations, is the decline in the number of EEGs undertaken (577 as opposed to 700 in 1979) and in the number of ECTs administered (27 as opposed to 34 in 1979).

JOHN GUNN

*Institute of Psychiatry  
London SE5*

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## *Forthcoming Events*

The **Society of Clinical Psychiatrists** will be holding an open meeting at Rampton Hospital on 9 March 1982. The theme of the meeting will be the need or otherwise for compulsory detention. Information: Honorary Secretary, Dr M. T. Haslam, Clifton Hospital, York YO3 6RD.

The **Second Annual Springfield Lecture** on 'Social factors and the aetiology of depressive disorders: A Comparison of an urban and a rural population' will be given by Professor George Brown, Bedford College, London at the Postgraduate Medical Centre, St Richard's Hospital, Chichester on 26 March 1982. Information: Dr K. A. O'Keefe, Graylingwell Hospital, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 4PQ.

A two-day workshop on **basic committee and management skills for senior trainees in psychiatry** will be held at the Institute of Psychiatry on 18 and 19 February 1982. The programme covers skills related to effective communication, interdisciplinary teamwork, basics of committee practice and the structure of Health Service administration. The workshop is sponsored by the British Postgraduate

Medical Federation and is approved for study leave and expenses. Course fee £25. Information: Dr Helena Waters, Institute of Psychiatry, De Crespigny Park, London SE5 8AF or Dr Peter Hill, St George's Hospital, London SW17.

A **one-day symposium on schizophrenia** will be held at the Cripps Postgraduate Medical Centre, Northampton General Hospital on 17 February 1982. Information: Dr Harish Gadhvi, St Crispin Hospital, Duston, Northampton NN5 6UN.

The **Biennial Experimental Group Psychotherapy Workshop** (non-residential) on the theme of 'Self—the reflected image: Encounter and self-discovery within groups' will be held at the Postgraduate Centre, South Academic Block, Southampton General Hospital from 24 March to 26 March 1982. Information: Dr Pamela Ashurst, Department of Psychotherapy, Royal South Hants Hospital, Graham Road, Southampton SO9 4PE.

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