

Book Review Editor  
Ruth Stewart



The positive approach taken in this account to the child achieving maximal physical and emotional potential and independence is welcome — the more so since the importance of the needs of other family members is not neglected. There is recurrent emphasis on the fact that the child is the sufferer of the disease and must have the opportunity to contribute to decision making, particularly since this will be his responsibility ultimately.

Barbara Horgan's theme and approach in this book is perhaps best summarized by her dedication quotation:

God give us the serenity  
to accept the things  
we cannot change,  
Courage to change the  
things we can and  
Wisdom to know the difference.

Anon.

## YOURS BY CHOICE.

by Jane Rowe. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 188 pp., \$9.50.

Reviewed by: Dot Shamley, Ph.D.,  
Lecturer,  
Department of Social Work,  
La Trobe University.

Jane Rowe clearly maps out the history of adoption and the introduction of legislation in 1926 in Great Britain.

This book is basically a manual for prospective adoptive parents.

The author points out very meticulously the pitfalls of adoption; society's double standards, a set of rules for adoptive parents and no laws for fertile humans. Fertile humans are allowed to bring into the world a child when they are ready to conceive and impregnate irrespective of their age, social status, role, class and marital status. The two delimiting factors stopping conception and procreation are the biological factor of menopause for women and the fertility of the male, who can sire a child technically until the day he dies. This fact must be very irksome to adoptive parents, who have postponed having a family for financial reasons; then, when they have been unable to conceive, time has elapsed between investigations and trying new method of artificial insemination and that, too, has failed, years have passed only for the couple to feel that they have left it too late and they are disqualified because now they are too old to adopt.

Ms. Rowe spells out several alternatives to adoption for prospective adoptive parents who don't qualify to adopt a baby. It

is strongly feared that an agency may have many young children on their waiting list, and an enthusiastic young worker may place unintentional pressure on a couple to adopt a young child. Maybe the implied communication might follow this sequence: 'If you want to adopt a baby you must show that you are congruent in that you want a baby and as a baby is not available a child will do, or a handicapped child will do'.

It is a far cry from raising a baby from scratch. One's main concern would not only be for the prospective adoptive parents but most certainly for the child who would have no escape from the situation where the adoptive parents might decide that they can't cope and that is not what they had in mind, and return the child. On countless occasions we have seen clinically the devastation to the child.

Ms. Rowe gives down to earth advice on how to prepare the home, family and the extended family for a new baby, what to say and how to say it, and also how much to tell about the child's background. Further, the need and the importance of telling the child before the rest of the world lets him know. It is interesting that in the Human Rights Declaration in the rights for the child no provision is made that the child has the right to biological information — who the parents of procreation were.

Further, Western society does not protect the child from learning about the adoption from the school grounds or from a sticky beak neighbour, or from a malicious relative. Of all the problems related by adoptees, the most painful is the deception and the deviousness of the adoptive parents. Here, again, Ms. Rowe, although she does not suggest it, highlights for us that there is a lack in legislation protecting the rights of the adoptee of knowing their biological origins in an honest way.

This book was written with the express purpose of assisting adoptive and prospective adoptive parents. However, the neophyte social worker would do well to read this book and gain access to what the clients would have as their information base. Further, the neophyte social worker would have to expand the knowledge base and state of the art of counselling in depth adoptive parents from other sources. Further, the new areas not covered in this book are the legal aspects of surrogate motherhood, where the biological parents have to adopt the child from the carrier mother. This new form of adoption has many variations, and it would do well to address the issues of the 21st century's solution to infertility and the myriad of

complications and combinations, donor sperm, non donor sperm; donor ova and non donor ova; and bearers of fertilised ova will pose.

It will most certainly be that the problems arising in this new area will present themselves to adoption agencies as the most logical agency to refer to as they have in the past dealt with allied problems. One would hope that Ms. Rowe, being the most experienced in the field of adoption, would like to address these issues in a forthcoming book both for professionals, parents and children born as a result of the advances of medical science.

## UNDERSTANDING ADOPTION — A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Ed. Rosie Snow, Fontana/Collins, Sydney, 1983. Recommended price \$6.95, 198 pages.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Etherton,  
Social Worker,  
The Adoption Service of the  
Uniting Church.

Former Department of Community Welfare Services adoption worker, Rosie Snow has recently produced a book entitled 'Understanding Adoption' aimed at the general public but particularly directed at 'the adoption community, that is the adoptive parents, the natural parents and adoptees, as it is these people whose lives have been most affected by the impact of past adoption policies'. The work is somewhat misleadingly subtitled 'A Practical Guide' since apart from Rosie's own chapter on the workings of adoption agencies and some brief discussion of the part which may be played by infertility groups in helping couples assess their readiness to adopt, it is comprised of short pieces contributed by consumers and professionals on what they consider to be salient ethical issues or particularly vexing difficulties associated with our present adoption laws and their implementation. In this respect, it is a particularly timely work, preceding the report of the Victorian Adoption Legislative Review Committee by only weeks, and including chapters by some members of that committee, as well as by Cliff Picton, whose research is heavily drawn on in sections of the report. However, the A.L.R.C. report is not directly mentioned and at times it may be difficult for the more naive reader to distinguish be-