

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