

# WHAT SHOULD THE BROTHERHOOD DO IF IT HAD THE MONEY?

This was the question put to members of the staff of the Brotherhood at the Annual Staff Conference held on a recent Sunday at Carrum Downs.

It is important that organisations like the Brotherhood, which claim to be responsive to changing need, are continually looking beyond the present services they are providing to see where we should be directing resources in the future.

Four years ago, the Brotherhood embarked on a number of new ventures to help people in need, hence the Family Centre Project (now known as the Action and Resource Centre - ARC), Family Day Care and Group Care for children of working mothers, Material Aid Service, Laurence Industries Sheltered Workshop, Research, Community Education activities and new building programs for the Aged.

At present, our resources are fully committed to these important services, but as our Founder, Father Tucker, always said: 'We should be dreaming dreams', and if they are concerned with genuine need in some way or other resources will be found to at least demonstrate on a small scale what might be needed and provided on a larger scale.

There was a lively discussion and many suggestions emerged from the staff meeting.

In the area of services for elderly people, it was felt that there was need for more education to encourage people to plan for retirement. Much of the loneliness and security of old age which we now meet by providing buildings in various housing centres could be avoided if people were helped to develop their own plan for occupations, interests and housing after retirement depending, of course, on their likely income.

Another idea was that the Brotherhood should sponsor an hour-long Talk-Back Program for elderly people in which questions could be asked and answered and information provided on recreation, cultural and occupational activities and all the other issues that affect elderly people.

Others felt that we should help people to remain in their own homes. Often they are unable to do so for physical, emotional and financial reasons, but if they had more community support and were free of the financial worries

and burdens of maintaining homes, they may not wish or need to move. Trade Unions might become involved in low cost home maintenance problems. Perhaps the Brotherhood could help with interest-free loans to meet maintenance needs. We could also see if companion services could be organised to combat loneliness.

Those who work with low-income families and provide services for children of working mothers felt there was a need for a 24-hour care service for children in emergency situations, particularly those of single-parent families.

Support programs were needed as a substitute for the extended family system which is no longer such an important part of our society. How could one family be helped to support another?

There was another suggestion that children's services could be linked with services for elderly people. This is the trend in Scandinavia. Old people with time on their hands can be ideal foster-grandparents.

There was much discussion on whether or not the Brotherhood should extend its community education program. If we do want to see changes in social conditions that will lead to fewer people being dependent on institutional services, then we have to educate people as to the nature of social problems and how they can be prevented. It was suggested that we reintroduce the 'Meet the Community' courses that the Brotherhood organised for many years for university students and trainee teachers to work in social welfare areas and discuss the needs and services with doctors, social workers and other welfare personnel.

It was thought that there was also a need to help people to understand how social change comes about. This could be done through a series of organised talks and discussions. As friends and supporters of the Brotherhood, we would be pleased to hear any ideas you may have on needs that the Brotherhood might meet over the next 5-10 years. We would also like to know if you would like us to arrange a meeting or series of meetings where we could discuss your ideas and our ideas with the staff and committees of the Brotherhood.

*David Scott*



**BROTHERHOOD STAFF (from left), Shirley Sargent (Research Secretary), David Scott (Executive Director), Bob Long (ARC worker), Brian Brandenburg (Pay Clerk), Revd. Peter Hollingworth (Associate Director), Sid Smith (Voluntary worker), Norma Hampton (ARC worker).**

## VOLUNTARY HELPERS NEEDED

Do you live near Malvern, Brunswick, Fitzroy, Seaford, Frankston or Mornington?

We are very short of *voluntary helpers* for our SHOPS in these areas. If you can help, please ring Thelma Tuxen on 41-4151.