

## **A Living Library Project**

### **History of Children's Services**

## **Two Articles about Health**

### **The Neglected Children's Aid Society**

First Published 1911

and

### **The After Care Home and District Nursing**

First Published 1925



Two Articles About Health

by Ray Phillips

A Plea for Children

An article about the Neglected Children's Aid Society  
1911

and

An After Care Home

An article about the District Nursing Society  
1925

Republished by the Crow Collection Association as part of the  
1992 Living Library Project on the History of children's  
Services.

Booklet Number 2.

Illustration by Simon Kneebone from "Do It Yourself Social  
Research" by Yoland Wadsworth.

## Introduction

1.

Two Articles about Health of Women and children

The Neglected Children's Aid society  
and

The After Care Home and District Nursing

There are very few people, still alive, who would remember the days before there were Infant Welfare Centres and Kindergartens and other children's services which were established, in Victoria, in the years between 1910 and 1925. Here are some approximate dates :-

- 1910 The first Free kindergarten.
- 1914 The first Maternal and Infant Visitations
- 1919 The first Municipal Infant Welfare Service
- 1920 Baby Health Centres Association established
- 1920 The Tweddle Hospital opened
- 1925 The After-care Hospital opened.

To help students and community organisations to visualise the past the Crow Collection Association is publishing a set of booklets which provide some historical background.

For example, this booklet is a reprint of a typescript of two articles by Ray Phillips, who also used the by-line Philip Ray. It seems from one of the typescripts that Ray Phillips was a woman although on one the by-line used is Philip Ray with Ray Philips in brackets.

There are three of her/his typescripts in the Crow Collection, dated between 1911 and 1925, so, he/she was a contributor to newspapers from about 1910 to 1925 - the period "just before living memory".

The other article is on "Slum Babies and Slum Mothers". This has been republished in the Living Library booklet "Two Documents about Attitudes to Slums".

To date, there is no information about the newspaper in which the series was published.

The articles present pen pictures of some of the living conditions of the period and of the social attitudes of the philanthropists who pioneered some of our children's services.

Although there is much to learn from the past, there can be no harking back. Families today face different problems and have to face some of the older problems in a different way.

## An Article About Health of Women and Children

### A Plea for Children Neglected Children's Aid Society

Published (The Australian ?) 17 June 1911 by Philip Ray.

(Note :- Headings have been added but no other alterations have been made to the original text)

A quiet room, at the home of the Neglected Children's Aid Society, a gentle-faced woman, with a bosom broad enough to rest weary little heads, sat darning tiny socks, with big holes. The peaceful homelike air of the room was like that of many a suburban home, except for the size of the darning basket, and the uniform of the gentile-faced woman.

"Yes, sixty or seventy pairs a week to mend," was the answer to my inquiry. "The little feet must be kept warm and neat." That sentence rang in my ears for the rest of the afternoon. I wonder if ever anyone before in the lives of these waifs and strays had said of them, "They must be kept warm and neat." And it had been said, had it been possible to carry it out ?  
"And you mend all these socks each week ?"

"In the winter," was the Matron's bright response. "In the summer we use sandals and dispense with socks, only sandals are so expensive, we get cast-off boots sent to us, that we are able to have mended, so of course they are much cheaper than sandals."

With the thought of feet in my home that seemed to knock through boots in almost no time at all, I realised what it must mean to keep sixty sturdy youngsters shod.

"But I won't complain. We have so much to be thankful for. Come through and see our building."

#### "Come see our Building"

A big class room where bible classes were being held, it being school hours, and about 30 bright-looking youngsters were at work. Next door was the kindergarten room, with proper equipment for the tiny ones. Air and brightness were the principal things that you noticed in entering this room; it was empty, but the little occupants were to be found romping out of doors. As we passed groups, little incidents between Matron and her big family spoke clearly of the relationship between them than a volume of printed words or any number of motions moved by committees. Tiny hands fearlessly clutched the print uniform.

"Allo Matron" and "Look at me Matron" and some wonderful performances, such as a high jump off a step quite six inches high, was performed for her never-failing admiration.

A long dining-room, where long low tables were set with white cloths. Fifty mugs of milk and plates of bread and jam stood awaiting owners.

Upstairs were long dormitories and nearly every bed had a window open at its head. In the girls' dormitory little housewives were busy preparing beds for the night; white quilts were being removed and smoothed and beds folded ready.

The elder girls help in this work, thereby learning order and neatness. In the nursery and bathroom the fascinating work of the evening tub, and putting to bed was taking place amongst the babies. Here again the elder girls were helping. A tiny maid of eight years, with an obviously maternal air, was patting, pinning and petting a little chap of two. The desire the make the elder children unselfish and helpful towards the smaller ones seemed to me to be admirable. Outside the dormitory in the passage, we passed a row of wardrobes made of polished laths of wood instead of being solid.

"You see they have a constant current of air passing through, so the clothes in them are kept sweet and fresh."

"Have you a wardrobe for each child, Matron?"

"Yes we like to develop a sense of ownership, and then it is a point of honour never to go to any cupboard but your own."

In a small bedroom was a little laddie in bed and by his side sat a man.

"Such a Decent Chap"

"That is Jack's father. Such a decent man. Poor fellow," she sighed.

"Yes we have three of his children here. I am glad to say it is an exceptional case. The mother is a drunkard and a consumptive. The father is working all day, and, knowing what scanty attention the children were likely to get, and the possibilities before them running wild, with no sort of discipline or proper food, he brought them here."

"Where they will be well trained and disciplined, well fed and their health and morals cared for, instead of being alternatively indulged and knocked about by an intemperate woman" was my unspoken thought.

"I am so glad to be able to help such a man. Of course, he pays towards their keep."

From Jack's room we went to the "clothes room". Here are kept all the clothes as they come from the laundry, and cast-off clothes from people anxious to help, waiting to be apportioned.

"People are so good sending bundles to us," said Matron, "but oh dear, we want so many. Sometimes children are brought in to us with perhaps one thin garment on I feel sometimes almost like going out to rob passers-by to get what I want for the poor mites.

I sometimes dream of a wonderful rain of secondhand boots. I become obsessed by a want of boots. I remember one day ringing for someone to help me with something when the bell she said 'What do you want Matron ?' I absent-mindedly answered, 'A cartload of boots'".

### "From Anywhere and Everywhere"

"Where do the children come from ?"

"All sorts of places and people. Sometimes the police bring them from the courts, the sister of the mission brings them from the slums, they come from anywhere and everywhere. If they are poor and uncared for and neglected, we feel we cannot refuse them.

A little while ago a policeman brought me three. The mother, a widow, had gone to the hospital and became so bad that they said she must enter at once. There was absolutely no-one to care for these children, so they were brought here. Nurse took the eldest girl to the hospital to see her mother. she was so delighted to see the child so well cared for. The doctor said it helped her recovery to have her mind made easy, and she was grateful to us; there wasn't anything she wouldn't have done for us when she came to take the children back."

"We often take charge of little families while the mother is in the Women's Hospital"

"How long do you keep them ?"

"It depends on the condition of the mother. If she is strong we keep them so long as she is in the hospital, but we have to use our judgement. You know the mothers are discharged from the hospital after ten days. Now, imagine a poor mother coming home, not too strong, with an infant to look after and all the housework to do. It gives her a chance if we keep the children for a week or two Do you see that pretty little girl with the curls ? She was brought in from the slums by a mission sister. She seemed to belong to no-one, she slept where she could, got food where she could. Now, will you tell me what hope there was for that girl in the future ?"

"None !" was the obvious answer.

"She is developing into such a splendid little girl, so helpful and good. I have a splendid home in prospect for her in the country. She is not very strong, so the country is just what she wants. In my minds eye I can see her in the future married to a stalwart farmer; and a brood of pretty children around her; and if it comes as I dream, I think the Home can claim the credit.

"Our Home is helping to give you the sort of citizens you want, and out of very unpromising material; because if that girl had been left where we had found her, what possible chance had she of becoming a decent useful member of society?"

"Cecil, that little fair boy, was brought to use by the police. He was black and blue from beatings administered by someone he called 'aunty'. We had a little trouble with him; he was inclined to be deceitful, and who could blame him? Probably a well-timed lie was the only way to avoid a beating. It made my heart ache to see the little arm raised in defence long before he threatened."

"Well he looks happy enough now."

"Yes, he is, and he is growing a fine manly little chap, very clever, and always ready to be helpful. He is going now to bring in the coal." As he passed, using his bucket as a drum to accompany the tune he whistled, he looked the picture of childish contentment.

"You know the way to keep your asylums and goals clear is to get at your children. I hold that no man, or very few, would be a criminal if he had received proper training in his extreme youth. What can you expect from a child who has only the worst of examples and environment, and no sort of restraint or discipline. There is only one possible course for him. But supposing you take that child for three years, and train him carefully, and then place him in the country, beyond temptation, with good surroundings, the chances are that he will prove a man of use to the community."

"You are right of course; and I wish your building was twice as large."

"And our income" was the quick retort. "There are ever so many we would like to take in, but we cannot afford it. This home is kept going entirely by voluntary contributions. Just listen to some of the things that we have to order regularly :-

"Twenty six quarts of milk a day, 12 large loaves of bread, 12 pounds of streak, apart from the nursery dinner. We use three to four tons of coal a month, without reckoning coke. A bag of potatoes a week; sixty pounds of honey in a fortnight. These are a few of the items, so you see we need something to pay our bills with."

It was with regret that I found it was time to leave the home and on my return to town I had time to realise more clearly what a fine work was being done. A work that must make its effect felt all over the Commonwealth. It was a few days ago that our Chief Justice drew attention to the lax morality that is so sadly general. It seemed to me that I had just witnessed one form of cure.

## An Article about the Health of Women and Children

### An After-care Home District Nursing Society Enterprise by Ray Phillips

Published in 1925, (date and newspaper unknown)

(Note :- The headings have been added but no other alterations have been made to the original text.)

"I am sending you five shillings, my first two weeks increase in my pension. I am glad to forgo this, since you have been so good to me, so as to be able to give my mite towards your new great work."

These were the words of a letter read at a recent meeting of the Melbourne district Nursing society. Of all the donations the Society has received, none has been more valued. It is over forty years since the Melbourne District Nursing Society began its work of nursing the sick poor.

#### Work in the By-ways and Lanes

The work done by the Society is not widely known, for it is done in the by-ways. Every day sixteen trained nurses visit surrounding suburbs to relieve sickness and neglect among the poor. Sickness and poverty are the only conditions to procure help. Payment is not necessary. Patients give according to their means.

The list of patients' donations shows how this rule is honoured. Appreciation is not wanting. It is pathetic to witness some of the attempts at repayment by grateful patients. A box of patched worn clothing was once received, with the following note after the death of a patient. "You were so good to my mother. These are hers, they are all we have to give you."

The nurses, wonderful women all, carry knowledge, brightness relief from anxiety tenderness and lessons in cleanliness and hygiene, thrift and responsibility, into many a dark little home, where ignorance of nursing, combined with the burden of work, often proves the undoing of the housewife. The daily visit of the district nurse is frequently the one bright spot in the life of a bed-ridden pensioner, who would otherwise be uncared for and untended.

The Society has often been hampered by want of a resting-place for patients, who are not ill enough for hospital, but who, placed in a poor home, where there are want of proper nourishment, ignorance of nursing and lack of light and air, often become seriously ill. Equally urgent cases are those that should be discharged from hospital if the patient could be assured of either skilled attention, rest, and proper nourishment.



Such patients would be helped to recovery by liberation from the hospital environment, but the lack of a suitable place to which to send them frequently requires detention in hospital, where they retain beds needed for more critical cases.

It has long been the ambition of the Melbourne District Nursing Society to procure a half-way house between a hospital and the home of the very poor, and to use its machinery for what must be very valuable preventative work.

#### Laying the Foundation Stone

This ambition is about to be realised. On Friday next the Countess of Stradbroke will lay the foundation-stone of the Melbourne District Nursing After Care Home, and the first of its kind in Victoria. The building which is situated in Victoria Parade, adjacent to the Society's Home, is almost complete, and should be ready to accommodate patients early in the new year.

The necessary money was raised as recently as last year. this beautiful Home, with accommodation for 70 patients, is an expression of the generosity of the public of Melbourne, and especially of the Edward Wilson ("The Argus") Trust and of the Trustees of the Felton Bequest. It is hoped that, in addition to treating cases met in the poorest quarters, where adequate attention is impossible, the Home will relieve the hospitals.

A system of co-operation will be maintained with the hospitals, whereby the authorities at the After Care Home will be notified when cases needing such attention as can be given there may be removed, and a bed freed for an urgent case.

Often a mother and her newly born child have to be sent out from hospital after eight or ten days treatment. A delicate woman is unable, at so early a stage to face the conditions she will find awaiting her at home, with the additional work entailed by a young infant. Further rest, with care and good feeding will probably make such a difference to her as she and her child will feel the benefit for the rest of their lives. Dr Marshall Allan, the director of obstetrical research, expresses himself as strongly in favour of a scheme. He says :-

"Such a Home is needed to to give mothers the extra rest which, unfortunately, the hospitals cannot give, owing to the number of cases treated - the necessity for a too early return to a hard routine of domestic work does play a great part in the chronic invalidism seen in all grades of life. I hope to be able to estimate, even though roughly, the part which domestic conditions play in keeping up the high morbidity rate. Your nurses, who are behind the scenes, and who see things hidden from the masculine eye, should be able to assist in many ways."

Old-age pensioners who are without friends, while not needing hospital treatment, often need care and good feeding to tide them over a physical crisis. Such people will be cared for.

The old, the young, the tired, the neglected, those weary from serious operations, will find a cheery welcome in the bright, comfortable Home.

It is a splendid block of buildings. One two-story block is for administration, and a large three-story block for patients. This has been carefully planned with large, light airy wards., flanked by wide verandahs, and on the northern boundary are wonderful solariums, with health giving rays for those who can benefit from them.

The successful result of the Committee effort has largely been made possible by the efforts of Lady Stradbroke, who made an appeal for funds for the building. Her interest has never waned, and on Friday she will crown her work by laying the foundation-stone. The Committee will be glad to see any friends who are interested at the ceremony at 3 o'clock.

Crow Collection Association  
Victoria University of Technology

Living Library Project on History of Children's Services

Funded by the Lance Reichstein Charitable Foundation

Sept. 1991 to May 1992

Booklets Published as Background Material.

1. The History of the Carlton Refuge from 1850s to 1920  
First published 1920
2. Two Articles about Health of Women and Children :-  
"The Neglected Children's Aid Society"  
First published 1911  
and  
"The After Care Home and the District Nurses".  
First published 1925
3. Two Documents about Attitudes to Slums  
"Slum Babies and Slum Mothers"  
First published about 1914  
and  
"You can't lift every baby out of the slums  
The Slum Abolition Movement in the 1930s
4. History of Children's Services in Melbourne Municipality  
1910 to 1980
5. "Bread and Treacle Diet"  
Extracts from documents of the 1930s.
6. "Mothers must Work To Win"  
Photos and leaflets from the Brunswick Children's  
Centre, 1943.
7. "The Deprived West/ The Determined West" an extract from a  
report by Ruth and Maurie Crow, first published 1972.
8. Creating Community in the Neighbourhood - Neighbourhood  
Houses in the Western Region", transcript of a tape by  
Meredith Sussex, 1978.
9. History of the Tweddle Baby Hospital, by Kathleen  
Codogonotto  
First published 1992
10. The past, present and future - Community Development in  
the Western Region, a report by Louise Glanville, 1992
11. "Magic in the Lives of Children, Participation in the  
Lives of their Parents" report prepared by Christine  
Carolan and Sheila Byard, 1992.
12. Kit on Federal Funding of Children's Services.

### About the Project

The Lance Reichstein Charitable Foundation funded the Crow Collection for a Living Library Project on children's services in the Western Region.

A Project Steering Committee has assisted the project worker (Christine Carolan) who has worked with providers of children's services teachers and students in the Region.

The project resulted in the production of a video which includes information on the history of child care, a kit about the way children's services are funded, a series of booklets describing community movements which resulted in initiating some of the present children's services and a display of photos of some of the people who have helped to establish these services in Melbourne's Western Region

A seminar on May 22nd 1992 marked the end of this project but the video and publications can be used well into the future.

### About the Collection

Ruth Crow and her late husband, Maurie were involved in movements on urban issues from the mid 1930s. Over the years they built up an extensive collection of documents :- books, pamphlets, posters, photos and working papers.

In 1990 the Victoria University of Technology (Footscray Campus) invited Ruth to donate the collection to the VUT Library.

The Crow Collection includes documents written and/or used by groups and individuals committed to social change. This store of information from the past is being used to generate ideas about the future.

A Crow Collection Association has been formed and incorporated. One of its aims is to enhance the comprehensiveness and accessibility of the Collection through Living Library Projects.



The Crow Collection

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