

child, his restlessness and unteachability. Some families are in danger of breaking up because of the internal stresses. Help in the home would do much for many, and should not prove impossible to organize in urban areas; but what is more needed in the long term is a special type of residential training unit.

The difficulties of management of the autistic child have unique features, but in principle they are the same as with the severely subnormal. If society insists on keeping these wretchedly suffering little things alive, it is morally obliged to provide the necessary facilities. It is not right that normal parents should have inflicted on them a burden which they are not physically or emotionally able to carry, a burden which destroys the possibility of normal family life, both for them and their other children.

ELIOT SLATER.

Diminished People. Edited by NORMAN R. BERNSTEIN, J. and A. Churchill, for Little, Brown and Company. Boston. 1970. Pp. 340. Price £6.50.

When a new unit for autistic children in the London area was opened a few years ago a B.B.C. commentator gave details of the facilities offered and described some of the children for whose needs the centre had been brought into being. The commentator finished with the words 'and I shudder to think that only a few years ago these children would have been in an institution for the mentally defective'. My own thoughts were that I shuddered to think that mentally defective children could be in an institution at which one would shudder to think.

For too long it has been taken as a matter of course that the most meagre provisions would pass muster for mentally defective children and adults. The climate is changing, but it is still necessary to find advocates for offering a developmental view of mental retardation in which socialization and training is succeeded by the concept of developability.

Bernstein is an enthusiast and has gathered together fifteen authors who have taken topics such as educability, work, and parental attitudes. There are also contributions on personality development, the use of psychotherapy (which has yet to find its full place with the retarded), and there is also a short contribution on 'behaviour shaping'—a much better descriptive label than 'behaviour therapy'.

Each chapter has its own bibliography, which appears to be well chosen, and United Kingdom workers, such as the Clarkes, Gunzburg, Kushlick, Rutter, Tizard, Tredgold and the late Dr. Yudkin

are given appropriate recognition. The title *Diminished People* jars somewhat, but Bernstein and his fellow contributors write on the subject with compassion, and the book will give stimulus to those who are carrying the work with the mentally handicapped into the prestige areas of psychiatry.

J. H. KAHN.

Mental Subnormality: Modern Trends in Research. By B. W. RICHARDS (Ed.). London: Pitman Medical and Scientific Publishing Co. Ltd. 1970. Pp. 260. Price £3.00.

In this book a team of seven authors under the able guidance of Dr. B. W. Richards pool the results of their original investigations conducted at St. Lawrence's Hospital.

Richards' accounts of mongolism and other clinical syndromes contain new material, and his survey of demographic processes in the hospital population will supply administrators with important factors for their planning.

Rundle presents evidence, supported by figures, that genetical, endocrinological and environmental factors make for retardation of growth and delay in maturation in the mentally subnormal. Hermelin and O'Connor, in their review of psychological findings, indicate the unusual levels of arousal in the subnormal and severely subnormal, which deviate from normal expectations and, together with neurological abnormalities, contribute to psychological deficits.

Bryant's studies suggest that the severely subnormal are impaired in vocabulary development and spontaneous verbalization as well as in tasks requiring abstraction.

Griffith, in the chapter on drug trials, points out the facilities for this type of study provided by a large psychiatric hospital in the form of environmental stability, ready availability of control groups and accurate records often extending over many years. He also describes clinical trials of Librium, Valium and Ospanol which he finds beneficial in treatment of cerebral palsy and difficult behaviour in the mentally subnormal.

The lack of growth of brain which Sylvester correlates with endocrine disturbances completes the attempt to present the material with all the accuracy and clarity that might be expected from such distinguished authors and the editor has admirably succeeded in achieving unity of approach to mental subnormality by representatives of different scientific disciplines.

This well-printed, documented, illustrated and indexed book will be of value to all engaged in the