

INTEGRATION OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN IN SOCIETY

Edited by James Loring and
Graham Burn, Routledge & Kegan
Paul, 1975, pp217. Price \$14.50 in
association with the Spastics Socie-
ty.

BOOK REVIEWS

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C/- BOOK REVIEW EDITOR
AUST. CHILD AND FAMILY
WELFARE
313 KINGSWAY,
SOUTH MELBOURNE. 3205.

This collection of papers by British, Swedish and French experts in the care and treatment of physically and mentally handicapped children is a welcome addition to the literature. Educationalists, doctors, researchers and disabled persons examine forcefully the pros and cons of integration of handicapped children in schools and in the wider society. The arguments are refreshingly blunt and free from the mawkish sentimentality that so often characterises the debate. Thus, Margaret Morgan of the Spastics Society "People with serious and obvious disabilities and impairments arouse many real and conflicting emotions in other people, emotions which I am convinced are proper emotions, which should not be unthinkingly denied or suppressed. They are often quite appropriate responses to a situation which is distressing and painful and may arouse feelings of real sorrow, sympathy or embarrassment. What matters is the positive reaction to these conflicting emotions . . ." (pp. 8-9).

The two papers by James and Anita Loring are significant analyses of the problems facing the multiple handicapped child and how so often residential special schools fail to provide adequate guidance on which to plan a meaningful contribution to society.

Of particular interest to educationalists are the papers on actual projects involving the integration of handicapped children into so-called normal schools. These offer exciting glimpses of what can be done by

careful planning and a determination to break down the isolation caused by a policy of segregation. Anderson's research report provides a useful checklist of factors which need to be taken into account before launching an integration project.

Throughout the book runs the refrain of trying to see the handicapped child's needs as a whole person — not just in terms of a malformed or malfunctioning organism. Lundquist's assertion that Swedish educational policy for the handicapped goes beyond stimulating the intellect to a concern about emotional and social development will sound revolutionary to many parents who confront the arid formalism of much of Australian education for the non-impaired.

There is something in this book for everybody concerned with handicapped children. Professor Jack Tizard offers a vision of the future place of the handicapped in society, and Brian Goldsmith, an architect designs a school environment in which the foundations for this future can be laid down; June Maelzer, herself disabled, warden of a hostel in Birmingham, points out the ways in which the handicapped person is daily mortified by the insensitivity of the able-bodied, and Gun Andersson, a special education counsellor from Sweden, poses the fundamental question for us all — are the handicapped to be in society or to be beside it?

This book is a distillation of much wisdom and humanity founded on extensive experience. It deserves the widest publicity and debate.