

Book Reviews

THE PSYCHIATRIC ENVIRONMENT

The Planned Environment in Psychiatric Treatment. By ARTHUR D. COLMAN. American Lecture Series. Publication number 809. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas. 1971. Pp. 147. Price \$9.00.

This is an unusually interesting, important and lucidly written book. It deals with the management of a special ward for soldiers with sociopathic disorders; men with histories of severely disordered and delinquent behaviour, who regarded treatment as a soft option which they could exploit. Remarkably, the unit survived not only the eighteen months the author remained in charge, but also a later changeover to staff who were not especially committed to the treatment model used. Follow-up of the first 48 men treated showed a 65 per cent success rate judged by objective criteria.

The ward organization was based predominantly on an operant conditioning model. Clear goals were set for each patient: goals in terms of social, educational, and work achievement, rather than insight. Appropriate behaviour was rewarded with privileges according to a carefully calculated points system, although, in fact, mastery in these fields appeared to become highly rewarding in itself for these men previously so used to failure. These methods seemed to produce a surprisingly relaxed and pleasant atmosphere; quite unlike the authoritarian or mechanistic milieu sometimes predicted to follow their use. Freed by the clear and objective system of rewards, of the need to use interpersonal relationships to manipulate each other, patients and staff were able to relate in an open and human fashion. The implications of these findings for the treatment of this difficult group of patients, and for the organization of ward communities generally, need no emphasis.

D. ABRAHAMSON.

Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped.

Department of Health and Social Security.
London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
Pp. 66. Price 45p.

Red is the colour but not the contents of this State paper, couched in typical administrator's jargon, full of dogmatic statements without reference to evidence or acknowledgement of source, even giving a review of research without supplying the reader

with any means of checking the literature or contacting the authors. Yet it provides valuable ammunition for those wishing to improve the subnormality services.

Some money has been set aside for the improvement of hospitals for the subnormal, but the Government places the main onus for improvement on local authorities, asking them to fix a date as early as possible 'after which the hospitals will not be asked to admit any more people who need residential rather than hospital care'. The impact of this is somewhat lessened by later indications that the target is not expected to be reached until 1991. Some may feel the pitting of taxpayer against ratepayer a somewhat cynical manoeuvre, and will note that few hostels for the mentally ill have so far been provided by local authorities.

There is a useful summary of the different kinds of help voluntary services can provide.

CHRISTOPHER J. WARDLE.

Healing Through Living: A Symposium on Residential Treatment. Edited by M. F. MAYER and A. BLUM. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas. 1971. Pp. 215. Price \$15.50.

Healing Through Living is a collection of papers selected from the symposium held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Bellefaire, which was founded in 1868 as an 'Orphan Asylum' for Jewish war orphans. Over the years the functions and policies of this institution have changed, and now it is a dynamically orientated residential treatment centre for disturbed children of all sects.

The various papers describe in detail how the day-to-day contact of the different members of the staff with the children is discussed in various staff meetings. It is emphasized that a very important aspect of residential treatment is the experience of living in a group, and therefore a foster home can never replace residential treatment. At first, family structure was simulated by grouping the children of different ages together, but later groups of similar ages were found to be more satisfactory. The problems of giving intensive individual psychotherapy to some of the children, the ultimate discharge of children to the community, the roles of the school teachers and the contributions that volunteers can make in a residential setting are also discussed.

The papers reflect current views on the manage-