



# The Role of the Honorary Probation Officer in the Work of the Children's Court of Victoria

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"The best results of the Juvenile Court are the fruits of probation, the keystone of the system. Much might be said of the advantages of a separate court for children, but I would feel that the arch was not complete had probation been omitted from it, or had probation proved a failure." (1)

"The importance of the probation clause cannot be over-estimated; it is from this form of dealing with delinquent children that the remedial effects are especially to be looked for, and the measure of success will be found in the manner in which the probation officers are able to apply themselves to this section of the work." (2)

These two statements express the flavour of the debate that took place in Parliament over the Children's Court Bill in 1906, and the high hopes that reformers placed on probation as a means of 'saving' the child, of 'forming' the character, rather than 'reforming', as a child was considered not sufficiently mature to be held responsible for his misdemeanours. The Children's Court Movement had been gaining ground in America since the establishment of the first Children's Court there in Illinois in 1899, and it is to the Reports prepared in 1904 by the American Juvenile Judges and Probation Officers for the International Penal and Prison Commission, that the Victorian Members of Parliament turned for guidance, and whose philosophy they expounded. Although South Australia is often maintained to have established the first Children's Court in the world, it is not referred to in the Victorian Debates, but the second statement quoted by the Hon. D. MacKinnon was the considered opinion of Dr. McKellar of New South Wales, who had advised him that of 134 children placed on probation in N.S.W. only 2 had breached.

Probation was not an entirely new feature, Tappan describes it as a "hybrid social institution evolved from the crossing of several strains that run deep in the soil of English and American Legal history," (3) and there is mention in earlier Victorian reports of Neglected Children, of children taken from their own homes, and placed on probation in the home of relatives or friends. The passing of the Children's Court Act of Victoria in 1906 resulted in probation officers being provided for in Children's Courts, because of the special concern for children, a firm belief in their educatability and formation, and an extension of the 'parents patriae' philosophy of the Court. Probation was not provided for in adult courts until 1956 in Victoria.

In 1939 it was considered essential that there should be one chief probation officer appointed in Melbourne, and this was Mr. Alfred Clarke, who received an annuity of 50 pounds, but all other probation officers were honorary. As the Attorney-General, the Hon. J.M. Davies, had said in Parliament

"He was inclined to think that if the ladies and gentlemen would only take an interest in the matter it would lead them to do a great deal more for the children than any paid officer would do . . . it was hoped that hundreds of ladies and gentlemen would be obtained." (4)

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In his report to Parliament 9/6/09, Mr Clarke states that there had been 96 further appointments during that year, so that there were 211 Probation Officers on the roll, and 53 Children's Courts had Probation Officers assigned to them. He goes on to say

"A great experiment is now being made, and it is essential that it should be carried out with intelligence, tact and uniformity." (5)

From such inspired beginnings, it is interesting to follow the development of the role of the Honorary Probation Officer.

Also in 1939, Mrs. Trigellis-Smith, the first female stipendiary officer, was appointed and also Dr. Meadows as a male stipendiary officer, and he prepared a handbook for the guidance of probation officers. The role of Chief Probation Officer had come to be assumed by the officer-in-charge of Children's Courts. These people led the team of honorary probation officers. In the Barsey Report on Juvenile Delinquency was produced, and this report expresses doubts as to the role of the Honoraries.

"Whilst there is no doubt that a large amount of good work is performed by honorary Probation officers who act without payment from praiseworthy motives, there seems substantial ground for considering that the system is now outdated and requires reorganisation." (6)

In 1958 Mr. Knox Brown selected 5 further Stipendiary Officers, men without any specific qualifications, but who proved highly capable officers, and Mr. Brown maintains that the Court then had a knowledge of its Honoraries because all probation reports were carefully read, and an assessment could be made of the work of the Honorary from his report.

In 1960 the Social Welfare Act consolidated the Children's Court Probation Service with the Adult Probation and Parole Service under the control of the Chief Probation Parole Officer in the Social Welfare Department. Further stipendiary probation officers were appointed to the Children's Court and the emphasis now swung towards the professional social worker. Joan Scraton, in an unpublished article, forecast the demise of the honorary probation officer by the 1970's when the professional stipendiary would have assumed full control. However, the developments in the 1970's has proved to be quite the reverse.

Probation is administered under the provision of three Victorian statutes: the Crimes Act 1958, The Children's Court Act 1973, and the Social Welfare Act 1970. There are two major duties prescribed for Probation Officers: firstly to make enquiries and furnish the court with a social report for any child who is to appear on a charge on application, in order to assist the magistrate to make a suitable disposition with due regard to the welfare of the child. Secondly "to visit and supervise any child as directed by the court and in consultation and co-operation with the parents of the child". (7)

The Morison Committee in England in 1962 defined probation as

"the submission of an offender while at liberty to a specified period of supervision by a social case-worker who is an officer of the court; during this period the offender remains liable, if not of good conduct to be otherwise dealt with by the Court." (8)

When a child is released on probation or under a supervision order, the Director of Probation assigns a Probation Officer to the case, and sends a signed copy of the probation order to both parties, with directions that the officer make contact with the child

as soon as possible but no later than 14 days.

The Probation Officer is required to keep a record of his contacts with the client, to keep it strictly confidential, and to forward quarterly reports as to the progress of the probationer and to forward a final report at the termination of probation to his supervising officer. It is strongly stated that no action for breach of probation can be taken except as directed by the Director of Probation or senior officer delegated, and that he should be immediately notified of any apparent breach, or if any difficulties experienced. The honorary must accept any direction given by his supervising officer, and refrain from issuing to probationers any directions or instructions additional to the conditions of the probation order, without prior discussion with that supervising officer. See Appendix A.

The majority of the probation work of the Children's Court is still undertaken by Honoraries in Victoria, and it is the only State in Australia where this is so. There are about 800 male Honoraries and 350 female Honoraries in this field, who according to the Act must be 'fit and proper persons who are willing to perform the powers and duties assigned'. (9) But just how do they perform these powers and duties?

As it said in a Survey for the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice "Probation practice has no clearly defined and stated theoretical base no explicit frame of staff orientation that are realistically conceived in terms of actual skills, time available, or course of treatment. The many theories that have thus far been presented to explain delinquency and crime are so complex, confusing and contradictory that one is hard pressed to set forth a rational base from which to operate. This complicates the whole process of searching out pertinent information as a part of pre-sentence investigation and coming to rational conclusions, and it further complicates the whole process of working with offenders under supervision. Because of the complexity of the task, most probation officers tend to revert to homespun beliefs that give direction in their performance. A considerable discrepancy exists between the theoretical discussions that take place and their application to the down-to-earth day-to-day decisions that have to be made". (10)

By means of attending various Branch meetings, I have talked to many Honorary Probation Officers in the metropolitan area, and I have been struck by the wide variation in skills, personality and methods of approach of these people. A great many already have experience in the handling of young persons, as they are school teachers, clergymen or welfare workers themselves, and have much professional expertise to offer. They show initiative and drive in seeking new ways to help and to socialise their probationers, experiment with group meetings, with outings, even camping weekends. They are knowledgeable concerning community resources, and work with the parents, siblings even peers. Their approach varies according to the particular case, sometimes they focus almost entirely on the probationer, at other times they find it is the parent who needs the attention. Some work in a quite authoritarian way, while others concentrate on building a relationship, and are quite prepared to bend the rules if they consider it will prove effective.

Ann Bailey, in a paper given at a seminar on The Volunteer in N.S.W. in 1972 said

"Professionals should not underestimate the wisdom of their volunteers . . . a lot that many volunteers know that professions have yet to experience." (1)

This is certainly as in Victoria, where the stipendiary probation officers are often very young and inexperienced, and who move from the Department with such rapidity, that no expertise or continuity is developed. Those who do stay have such a heavy workload, that they find it difficult to cover their own probationers, and cannot be too concerned with the honorary probation officers. As Kevin O'Sullivan says in the Report of the Social Welfare Department in 1971

"This service is being strained to the limit to provide the service it is set up to give, lack of time, facilities and staff to engage in some meaningful research, and an increasing volume of work." (12)

As well as the highly experienced honoraries, I also met others who were very new to the work, and I realised how lonely, isolated and unsure that they can feel.

At the meeting of a newly formed branch at Mentone, there were several who were delighted to find some group support, as they already had one or two cases, and completely lacked direction. Then there were other keen, well-qualified people eager to meet the challenge of a case, but a probationer had never been appointed to them, while other honoraries well-know to the stipendiaries had had 6 or 8 pressed upon them. For these two reasons many honoraries have been lost to the service in the past.

The main problems to which honorary probation officers continually referred were the finding of suitable alternative accommodation for their probationers, employment in these times of high unemployment, and difficulties with parents, particularly fathers, even grandmothers, siblings and peers. In the 1974 Social Welfare Report, Mr. Cuddihy states that

"It is a fact, however, that we call on these people to undertake the supervision of quite difficult cases and also ask them to try and work with unco-operative parents on occasion." (13)

One highly experienced honorary who had been working for 11 years, maintained that the cases had become much more difficult in latter years, and that one had to work with the whole family. In the 1973 Report, it states

"In some instances, however, these officers are expected to undertake the supervision of cases beyond the capacity of the volunteer, and are led, in turn, to seek advice and support from limited stipendiary staff." (14)

Many honoraries stressed the fact that when they were in difficulties, they had found help from the stipendiary officer very limited indeed, and were thrown back on their own resources, or the reassurance of other honoraries.

Many of them spend considerable time and effort in handling what is essentially a complicated task, and they are available day and night, there are no office hours for the honorary, and crises can occur at the most inconvenient times. Then there is the great problem of when to breach a probation, and as the experienced honorary said you are not really a probation officer until your child re-offends, and if you are not conditioned for it, you tend to blame yourself and feel a failure.

Many take great care and effort in compiling the quarterly reports and final reports for the stipendiaries, but when particular points of importance are not commented on, or queries answered, the strong feeling grows that these reports are not even read, or at least only cursorily, and that no-one really cares about the probationer or the probation officer. As Charles Newman says —

"All too frequently, however, the new employee is not given any meaningful instruction, beyond an exposure to the "rule book" and is sent forth essentially as a free agent in an unsuspecting society." (15)

In Victoria, there is a Probation Officers' Association to which both stipendiaries and honoraries can belong, and the purpose is "to be of service to all probation officers by keeping them in touch with the latest developments in the probation field and encouraging its members to increase their knowledge and skill so that they may be more effective". (16)

This, through the concern and dedication of some remarkable honoraries, has through the 1970's built up into a powerful self-help group, becoming increasingly well organised and most active. It is headed by a Council which holds monthly meetings at Mathew House, and the members organise the activities for the year, and have devoted themselves to the fostering and assisting

of Branches. In 1966 there were 8 or 9 Branches, but by 1975 there are 23 and at least 3 or 4 more developing. Particularly now Council is reaching out to the country areas, and striving for the increased strength and co-ordination of the State, and efforts are being made to twin a city and a country Branch. This is developing between Eastern and Bairnsdale, and involves not only interaction between probation officers, but with their probationers too.

Country Conferences are organised annually in a different area, and metropolitan probation officers are encouraged to attend. The Council pays for speakers to go to country meetings, and also pays travelling expenses for Country Branch executive members to come to the city for Council meetings. Country honorary probation officers have performed wonderful service in the past years, and the 'court helper' service that is now developing in the metropolitan area, originated in the country much earlier. Because of distance from the Central Office of Probation and Parole, long delays often occurred before a probationer would be appointed a probation officer, and those early weeks after the court hearing and just before are the most crucial time for a child and the family. Therefore certain concerned honorary probation officers made sure that the police informed them of any case that was coming up for hearing, made a pre-court report for the magistrate, and unofficially supervised any child placed on probation, until the official papers came through. Many country honoraries travel long distances in their service of probationers, not to mention telephone and postal charges and other incidentals incurred, but although in the Parliamentary Debates in 1906 a Mr. Bowser tried to move an amendment that reasonable travelling expenses should be allowed to the probation officers, especially in the country districts (7), it has only just been decided that remuneration for expenses will be granted. Thirty dollars for country honoraries, and fifteen dollars for metropolitan honoraries is to be given per case.

Council members have worked hard to receive recognition and monetary support from the Government for the Association and its members. A grant of \$4000 was allowed by the Minister of Social Welfare, Mr. Smith, in 1972, and this gave a real boost to their organisation, and now in the latter part of 1975 they have been given very good office space at 241 William Street, and \$2,500 for the payment of a part-time secretary, who will be supported by voluntary help. The Council now feels it is in a strong position to make a real impact on the community, and make changes for the better in the whole Probation and Parole scheme, in fact the whole juvenile justice system. There are very active sub-committees studying the Children's Courts and alternatives to the present system of handling young offenders or those brought on care and protection applications. Also into the police handling of juveniles, and the best means by which complaints against police could be heard. George Clarke, a former stipendiary, remarked on the Probation Officers' Association "virtual metamorphosis from a dependent self-support group in the middle 1960's to a dynamic, demanding interest group in 1973 . . . It is in fact becoming an informed 'watch-dog organisation', attempting to influence both the bureaucracy and the policy on behalf of the community." (18)

The Association has been very demanding that all honorary Probation officers should receive training before they can be gazetted, if they are to perform adequately, and if they are to be sufficiently assessed as to suitability for the task ahead.

In his Report to Parliament in 1910 we find Arthur Clark saying "To be efficient a probation officer needs to be educated to the work" (19)

but he also maintains

"The most important influence is the officer's own personality" (20)

Charles L. Newman has the same opinion,

"We hold that the probation officer's personality with the use he

makes of it in helping his clients is his most therapeutic tool . . . a helping art" (21)

Many honoraries have expressed concern to me at the brief assessment they had received before gazettal, and at the lack of, or unsatisfactory training provided. It presents difficulties to plan a programme that will accommodate people of many different levels of education and skills, but this must be done because although there has not been a lack of well-educated people offering themselves in the eastern and southern suburbs, the Social Welfare Reports continually remark on the difficulty of obtaining honoraries in the Western and Northern suburbs, and there must be many people with a lack of formal education, but who with support and encouragement would have much to offer. During an induction course, if participated in to the full by stipendiaries and honoraries, the personality of the future honorary could be observed and assessed far more adequately than in one interview. Those who showed lack of sensitivity, maturity, flexibility, or an ability to establish a good relationship, with other people, could be classed and not gazetted as unsuitable. After the new probation officer has had some practical experience in the handling of probationers, a more advanced course would be valuable.

Now that the Department of Social Welfare is regionalising, if the recruitment, assessment and training are organised by the Regional Officer, he and his staff have time to be fully involved in the programme, it will give them a wonderful opportunity to really know their honoraries, their strengths and capabilities, and what they would have to offer to meet the needs of a particular probationer. It was recommended at the seminar on The Volunteer in N.S.W. in 1972 that the organisation of volunteer training should be the responsibility of "regional co-ordinating committees of voluntary, municipal and government agencies". (22)

The Probation Officers' Association Council has offered great assistance to the Social Welfare Training Division this year, and has organised 9 training sessions of 6 weeks each, and each course is managed by a different Branch. The Branch provides a meeting place, a representative marks the roll, supper is provided, and the Training Division organises the speakers. There have been 3 levels of courses, introductions, a second course for honoraries who have 6-12 months experience, and a third for those who have 12-18 months experience. (See Appendix B) The first was held at Broadmeadows, the second at Footscray, and the third at Essendon. A member of the Council has always attended these training sessions, and has had the opportunity to welcome and assess the speakers, and the new honoraries, and sometimes experienced honoraries have given talks themselves. The Council would like to see much further involvement of the Department in these courses. The Association issued the Training Division with a backlog of names of people who had never received any training, but the Department did not keep them informed of the new ones this year. The Association took the organisation of the training on for one year, but very much feel they may have to continue, or the whole edifice may collapse.

Another excellent means of providing in-service training are the monthly or bi-monthly Branch meetings. Sometimes a speaker addresses the members on legal, welfare, medical, educational, or other relevant topics, or sometimes they visit correctional agencies such as Turana or Winlaton. The most valued meetings are those where members discuss problems or case studies, and if the stipendiaries could always attend these sessions much valuable interchange could take place. I have attended a meeting where members have discussed with each other their problems in the handling of parents, another where one honorary conducted a case-study of one particular client, one on leisure time and recreational facilities, and one where the stipendiary of the region was to provide a case-study. Unfortunately he arrived late, never produced a case-study, and used the time to complain bitterly about his huge case-load, the lack of status and money given to the Probation and Parole Department, and the faults of

police, magistrates and the whole system. At this meeting were several quite new honoraries, and even others of longer standing, who needed much simple advice and guidance, but received little on this evening, except for the sane words of the Honorary President of the Branch. This evening summed up for me clearly the problems and failings of the present system. At yet another meeting, they discussed their concern that only one-third of honoraries were members of the Association or attended meetings, and what methods could be used to entice them into participating so that they could perhaps receive or give needed advice and help. The Barwon Regional Centre, which is a very well organised area, and has developed a splendid court helper scheme, conducted an interesting survey among the honorary probation officers to endeavour to discover their preference for time, place, and content of Branch meetings, and their need for training. (see Appendix C) It is of note that the average time since the honoraries had had a discussion with a stipendiary was 10.5 months, and that 18 had never had discussion with a stipendiary. The Secretary of the Geelong Branch said they were amazed and disappointed at the number of "No answers" to the questions asked.

As well as at the Branch meetings, guidance and help can be obtained from the Film and Discussion Nights that the Council run four times a year at the State Film Centre, and the Conference held at the Annual General Meeting. An excellent Bulletin, "The Probation Officer" is produced quarterly. In 1969 this was made into a booklet from a news sheet. In 1970 it really developed, and this year it has achieved a cover. The Bulletin contains many interesting articles of value to Probation officers in their work, and includes news of Branches and Council, notice of meetings, and general information. Copies go to the National and State Library, and it is considered of sufficient worth to be included in the bibliography of Australian serials. There have been requests from overseas countries, such as Israel, Canada and the States, to receive copies regularly. At the recent conference on Volunteers held in Canberra, much interest was evinced in the Bulletin as it proved to be the only one of its type produced by a voluntary organisation in the field of criminology in Australia. The Association is now endeavouring to compile and produce a handbook on the Association, which will be forwarded to each honorary who is gazetted. All this demonstrates what a dynamic self-help group the Association has become, and the extraordinary amount of hard work some people are expending on it.

If the Association could involve all its honorary members, and have them speaking as one voice, it could be a very powerful force in the community indeed. Unlike the stipendiaries who are public servants the honoraries are free to speak out to criticise, and bring to public notice the needs of Probation and Parole. Members are seeking to involve the Members of Parliament and Councillors in their region, to invite them to Branch meetings or seminars, and make them aware of the work they do. Some of them speak at meetings of Service Clubs and community organisation. As Jean Hamilton Smith said in her research paper —

"In recent years there have been many expressions of dissatisfaction with existing social policies. A number of trends have emerged indicating that many individuals are seeking new ways to be involved and to participate with others in order to gain either mutual support to attempt to bring about changes in society or simply to express real concern about other people." (23)

In the last decade there has been an increasing awareness of the value of the work of the volunteer.

Particularly did this develop in the United State, where disillusionment grew with the effects of trained social workers on the rehabilitation of probationers.

Professionals were given smaller and smaller caseloads with no significant results. It is interesting to note the change in Tappan's views between 1949 and 1960.

While in "Juvenile Delinquency" he is stressing the need for trained professionals, in 'Crime Justice and Corrections' he states,

"Furthermore, the author's experience with probation has shown that good results can be achieved by officers without highly specialised educational background, if they are well adapted in personality to the work and if they receive good in-service training and case supervision. Most of the tasks performed by probation officers do not require graduation from a professional school." (24)

In California and other states volunteer probation schemes have been developed. David Biles, in 1970, attended two conferences in Japan, one being the 4th United Nations Congress on the prevention of crime and treatment of offenders. He reported back that the "Japanese seemed to have achieved a remarkably high degree of efficiency in their crime prevention techniques, and in their effectiveness with dealing with offenders," (25)

"It is my belief that Japan has reached this enviable situation largely because they have involved large numbers of ordinary people in the crime prevention process." (26)

He goes on to say there are 50,000 volunteer probation officers in Japan, who are carefully selected and trained, and who consider it an honour. The stipendiaries see very few clients, their role is to supervise and organise.

Dr. Ivan Scheier, the Director, National Information Centre on Volunteerism, Colorado, U.S.A., when he attended the Australian Crime Prevention Council's Biennial Conference in Melbourne in 1973, gave strong support and guidance for the use of volunteers. He stated

"The paid and unpaid work sectors must reinforce one another than attack or ignore each other." (27)

and

"Though the volunteer's work may be less demanding and continuous than the paid person's, it must nevertheless be performed up to the same standards of excellence in its own context. A host of implications follows for careful recruiting and screening of volunteers, for training them, for objective evaluation of their work, and for terminating their service for unsatisfactory performance." (28)

The very fact that a volunteer is engaged successfully in another job or profession where he is used to succeeding can bring him with added zest and positive attitudes to his probation tasks whereas the stipendiary may not have the same enthusiasm after he has had to face continual disappointments with re-offending clients. There seems to be far less stigma attached to having a volunteer probation officer, and the fact that he is an unpaid, interested member of the community is often quite an effective tool. It must be a much more sterile, depersonalised event to visit a stipendiary in his office, than to call on an honorary in his home.

As Mr. Spencer Colliver said

"The important element in the use of volunteers is that they can demonstrate those attitudes which are essential to any satisfactory pattern of human relationships — the exercise of free will to provide compassion, a willingness to help and, in brief, good neighbourliness." (29)

I think of the young honorary who relaxed his client by interviewing him in the kitchen, making a cup of coffee and kicking a football in the street with him each week. Another who bothered to go and watch a football match his probationer was playing in, another who has her skinhead probationer and his peers visit her home to talk together, or sometimes joins them in the milkbar. Others plan outings, even camping trips, and barbecues. They receive urgent phone calls in the middle of the night, at meal times, before breakfast, and put themselves out to deal with them. Often the probationer seems proud of his probation officer and introduces him to his friends as such; some pay return visits

to their honorary long after their probation has ended.

Mrs. Helen W. Rogers of Indianapolis in 1904 wrote in the Report on the Children's Courts in the United States, the Reports so often quoted by the Victorian Parliamentarians in 1906.

"And these conditions, I believe, are better satisfied under the volunteer than the paid probation system, because the volunteer is able to come into more normal, more individual, and more permanent relations with the probationer, than can the paid official." (30)

Many honoraries have felt that they too have learned from their probationers, and grown in wisdom. The most intensive work has to be done in the early weeks of probation, and frequent visits may have to be made to the home.

The family T.V. set is often something with which the officer has to contend. Perhaps towards the end of the probation period the honorary may not want to see the probationer more than once a month, because he must learn to be able to cope unaided, and not be too dependent on the probation officer.

Each probationer is a unique individual, with his own special needs, strengths and weaknesses, and if the stipendiary knows his honoraries well, he can attempt to match the two effectively. The more authoritarian honorary can be assigned to the probationer who has had weak authority figures in the past and learned to be manipulative. The probationer who is being too strictly regulated, or has deeper problems, can be placed with the honorary who works through relationships. The child with learning difficulties can be assigned to a teacher, or the boy who has difficulty relating to girls can be assigned to a young woman honorary. There are infinite variations to the theme.

One of the necessary tools for the stipendiaries understanding of the needs of the probationer, is the pre-court report, and some valuable court helper schemes are being developed with the honoraries. At Geelong and Glenroy, Ringwood and Oakleigh, there is excellent work being carried out. The honoraries are liaising with the police and endeavouring to make certain that they issue the Form 279 to a probation officer, so that it is known when a child is being brought to court. Police Standing Orders instruct them to always issue a form 279 to a probation officer in the district, but this was being neglected continually by the police. As many pre-court reports as possible are made by the honoraries, who visit the home of the young person, and try to assess the essential details of the family background, the home, their attitudes to one another, schooling or work record, leisure activities, attitude to the present offence or to previous offences and treatment, and so on. There are excellent guidelines for the construction of these reports in the Handbook Probation Officers. The probation officer can make a recommendation to the Court, but the magistrate who finds this report of great assistance in his sentencing, is free to accept or reject it. If the young person is released on probation by the Court, this report will be sent to the Chief Probation Officer, who then can study it, and decide which Probation Officers would be most suitable to be assigned to the case.

At Glenroy 2 or 3 honorary probation officers attend every Children's Court sitting, talk to the children and parents there, note any case that needs attention. One honorary always enters the Court room with each case, and afterwards can follow up the case if the child is placed on probation, and see that attention is given in those often critical weeks before a probation officer is officially assigned to the case. The stipendiary magistrate has remarked most favourably on these procedures, and the honorary probation officers involved say it is the most satisfying work they have ever done.

At Ringwood and Oakleigh one honorary attends each Children's Court sitting, provides precourt reports whenever possible, follows up cases released on probation, and reports back to the Senior Probation Officer. Mr. Buckley, who is the experienced honorary who sits at Oakleigh, has provided guidelines

for other honoraries who are thinking of undertaking this Court work. (See Appendix D)

The honorary probation officers are also concerned to become more involved in preventive work, and to liaise with the police when a child is warned, and to make follow up visits and try to insure that that child does not offend again and appear in Court. One of the Council sub-Committees which is studying the Children's Court system, is giving careful consideration to Juvenile Aid Panels. Thus it can be seen what very valuable community work some of these leading honorary probation officers are doing, and how much more could be achieved with effective guidance, support and direction. However, social workers, especially when under pressure, are not always the best administrators and the honoraries see the Department as being in a state of confused turmoil.

An article in Federal Probation 1969 states "Boulder records show that for every hour of staff supervisor time invested, volunteers return 20-25 hours of service . . . the favourability of the ratio can be maximized by capitalising as much as possible on the qualities, talents and experience the volunteer already has." (31)

Ira M. Schwartz in another article says it is necessary to "secure the involvement and commitments of professional staff in all aspects of volunteer program planning." (32)

The professional must not feel threatened by the volunteer because

"the role of the paid professional becomes even more important because it is he who must harness this valuable resource, provide adequate training and supervision, and assign responsibilities in ways which will yield the greatest benefits." (33)

An effective probation service cannot be had on the cheap, even with an increased use of volunteers. There would have to be a greater diversion of funds to the Probation and Parole Division, and an increased number of stipendiaries employed whose conditions of employment were sufficiently attractive to encourage them to remain in the Division, and develop a reservoir of mature experience. One stipendiary to approximately ten volunteers is the ratio favoured by Dr. Scheier, with a caseload of one for the volunteer. However, many volunteers could take two or three probationers, depending on the stage reached in probation, and the difficulties involved. Honoraries could take over all but the most complex cases, with the stipendiaries supporting and guiding them in real partnership. Even though the service would need greatly increased funding, it would still be less expensive than institutionalisation with the added advantage of keeping the child in the community learning to cope with society, and away from the negative and artificial environment of a closed institution. There is also much less stigma attached to probation, particularly when carried out by a volunteer from the community, who is there to 'advise, assist, and befriend'.

If this programme is to be carried out efficiently constant evaluation would be vital. Stipendiaries would need to ensure that the honoraries were regular in their reporting, which a number are not, and if they knew their honoraries sufficiently well, they should be able to make some judgement of the differences in outcome for different types of offender, who have been treated in varying ways. Although it is said that seventy per cent of probationers do not re-offend, it is very difficult to assess the value of probation. The lack of re-offending is not necessarily a good criterion of success, and maybe the client would not have re-offended even if he had been left unsupervised by a probation officer. In England, the Home Office, has been carrying out quite a great deal of valuable research into probation, and this is very much needed in Australia.

Hugh Barr says

"Theory must be developed out of a study of practice and related to theories developed in field allied to probation." (34)

Finally one cannot help but be struck by the remarkable service that Victoria has been receiving from its honorary probation of-

ficers, a service which should be truly appreciated for what it is, and what it could be.

If we are to carry out the vision of its early founders, I would say with Mr. Spencer Colliver

"if the work of the volunteer is critical to the operation of the agency then it must become an administrative priority. That means you have to put time and money into it and very often that is what people aren't prepared for . . . the volunteer should feel that there is ready access and that there are no barriers erected."  
(35)

#### FOOTNOTES

1. The Hon. Thomas Murphy, of Buffalo, quoted by the Hon. A. McLellan, **Victorian Parliamentary Debates** Vol. 112. P.620.
2. Dr. McKellar, N.S.W., quoted by the Hon. D. Mackinnon, **Victorian Parliamentary Debates** Vol. 113 P.3206.
3. **Tappan, Crime, Justice and Correction**, P.539.
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