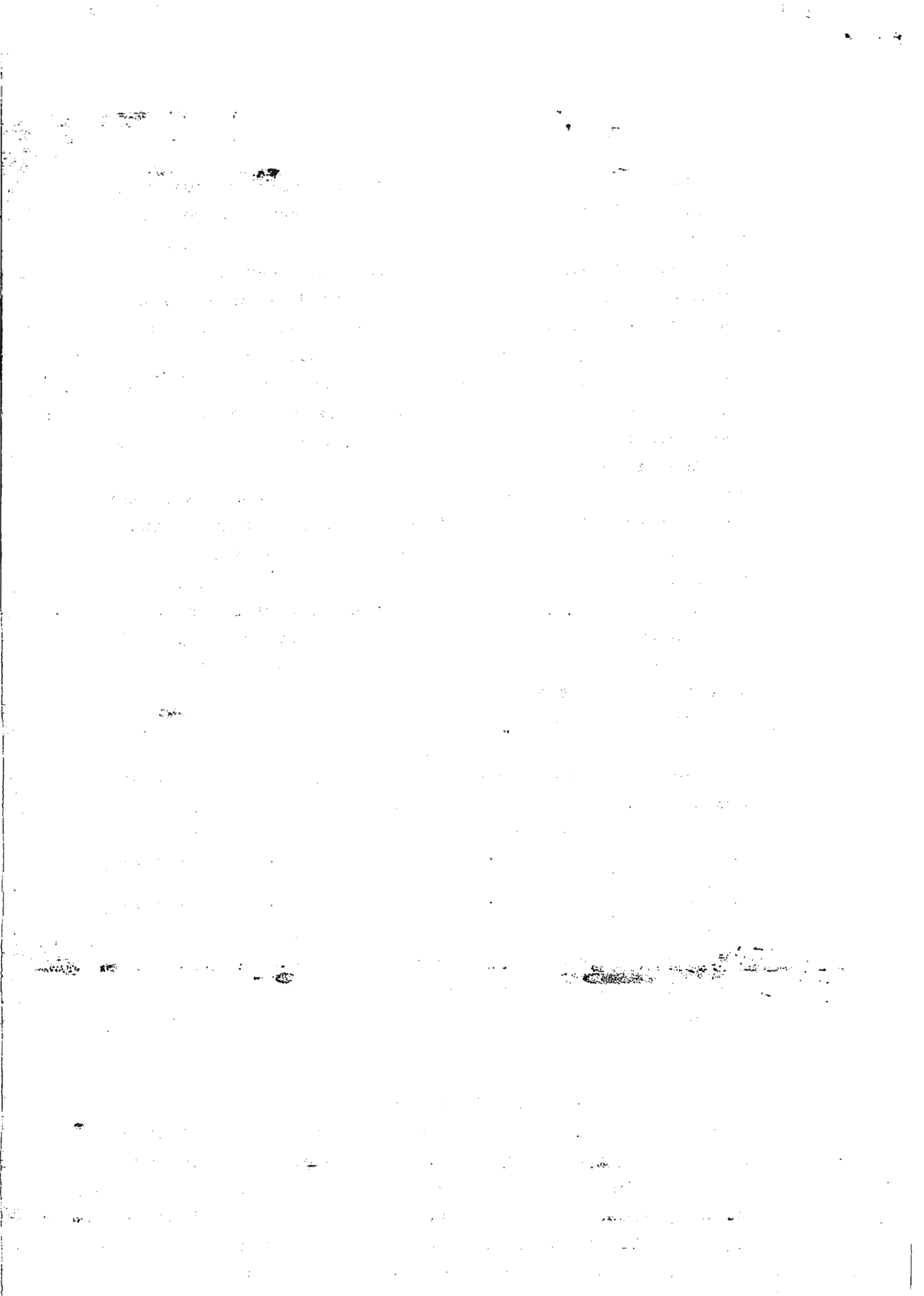


SOCIAL CARE - THE TASK AND THE TRAINING

The organisation styled, now somewhat misleadingly, the National Children's Homes has an honourable record for progressive and dynamic services to children and parents. Contrary to the platitudinous assertions one sometimes hears, especially at present from politicians, there is nothing inherently progressive and dynamic about a voluntary organisation. All of you will know of voluntary organisations which are reactionary and static. Indeed, some of the voluntary organisations now most active in the field of child welfare have had their troughs in the not too distant past. Nor, one should add, is there anything inherently reactionary and static about statutory personal social services. The relationship between the two and the respective contribution of each is a matter for continuing debate and exploration. I am honoured to have the opportunity of pondering matters of mutual concern to all involved in social care with representatives of a voluntary organisation which has been so alert and purposeful in its attempts to relate service provision to contemporary social trends.

For it is upon some contemporary social trends that I wish to dwell in the first part of my paper. The phrase in my title 'social care' was chosen intentionally, for I wished to break free from considerations of roles and tasks as currently defined, whether in field or residential work, and look at the implications of certain social trends for the care of the most dependent and vulnerable in our society.

However, before I do this, I want to make a plea that from time to time those committed to the care of particular groups in society should relate this commitment to the needs and problems of other groups. Because social relationships, and therefore the problems arising from them, are many sided and have multiple interactions. Although it may often be necessary to carve out one piece and say "this is my job and I will worry about this", there is a time and a



place to stop and make links for three reasons. First, we can learn from other fields; secondly, we can detect general trends or gaps in policies and planning; thirdly, we can see more clearly how one area of social functioning affects another.

Some examples may help to clarify my points.

An example of what others may learn from the field of child welfare concerns the development of professional foster care, in which your organisation has been so much involved. In the next 15 years, we are going to be faced with a growth in the numbers of the frail elderly unparalleled in our Society. Every means is going to have to be found to offer short term relief to caring relatives and long term care to the frail elderly without relatives. Whilst it would be foolish to suggest there are not important differences, I would contend that those who may develop professional fostering schemes for the frail elderly would have much to learn from the considerable experience you and others have now gathered on this subject. Similarly if recent Ministerial Statements regarding the abolition of large hospitals for the mentally handicapped are translated into action, foster homes for the adult mentally handicapped will raise some of the same problems that are encountered in the fostering of hard to place children. I hope we will have the imagination to think laterally. Is it too much to have the imagination to think laterally. Is it too much to hope, for example, that some joint working parties might be set up in such matters of common concern?

Detecting general trends in policy and planning is more than an academic exercise. If we look across boundaries, we can begin to see patterns emerging which can have both positive and negative implications.

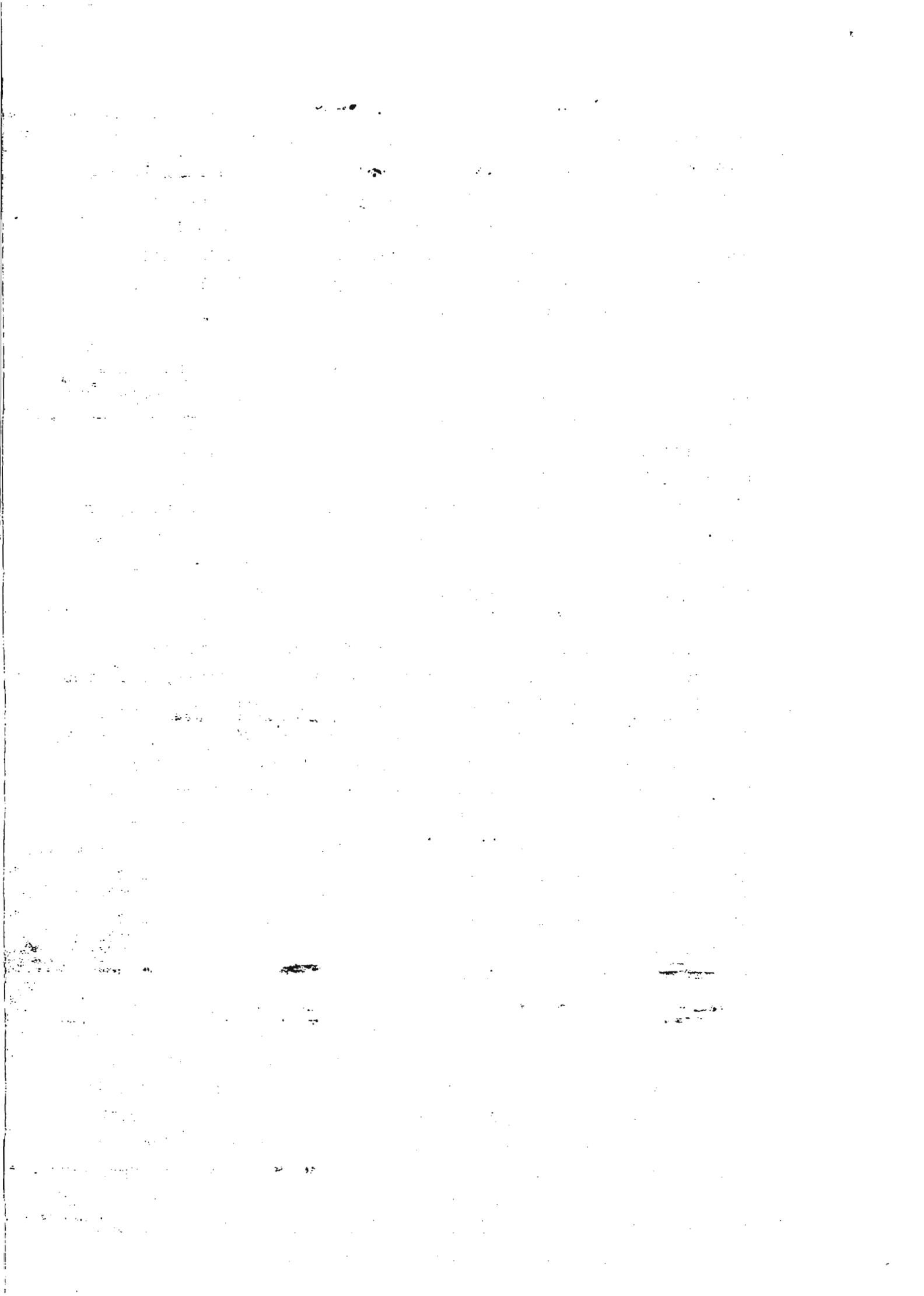
One trend which has positive implications is the breaking down of boundaries between institutional and community care. In many different ways, all of which do not need to be enumerated here, but which cut across all age and client groups, we are seeing the emergence of a

concept of social care which does not fix the person as 'in' or 'out' of residential care. Day care for all ages and stages, short term admissions, focused therapeutic intervention in forms of intermediate treatment - the list is long. The implications of this increased flexibility for staff roles and training are many and I shall return to this at the end of my paper.

Another issue which crosses boundaries has more negative overtones. The present government is committed to social policies of less state intervention and of positive encouragements to the voluntary, private and what one might call the "self help" sectors. This is not the place to argue the merits of such a philosophy. But one thing is crystal clear, if that line is followed, consideration has to be given to the risk of exploitation or abuse of the most vulnerable in our society in a "free market".

In 1973 Robert Holman¹ wrote 'Trading in Children' and showed very clearly the plight of many privately fostered children. No significant legislation has been passed to improve quality control. Similar evidence about whose quality there is concern exists regarding private child minding. The Warnock Committee on Children with Special Needs (1978) was worried at the lack of inspection of independent schools for handicapped children. Age Concern and other organisations have pressed the government for legislation to protect more ~~for handicapped children~~ ~~the~~ ~~concern~~ ~~and~~ ~~other~~ ~~organisations~~ have pressed the government for legislation to protect more effectively the frail elderly in private homes. Here are matters to make common cause.

I also referred to the need to understand the interaction of different aspects of social functioning, which may seem remote from your special interests. A good example of this is the rise of the 4 generation family, as a common everyday phenomenon. Typically from now on, we may see an extended family comprising a great grandmother of say, 85, grandparents of (say) 60, parents in their 30's and children of school age. Although they may or may not live geographically near, they are an extended family in emotional terms, that is, they



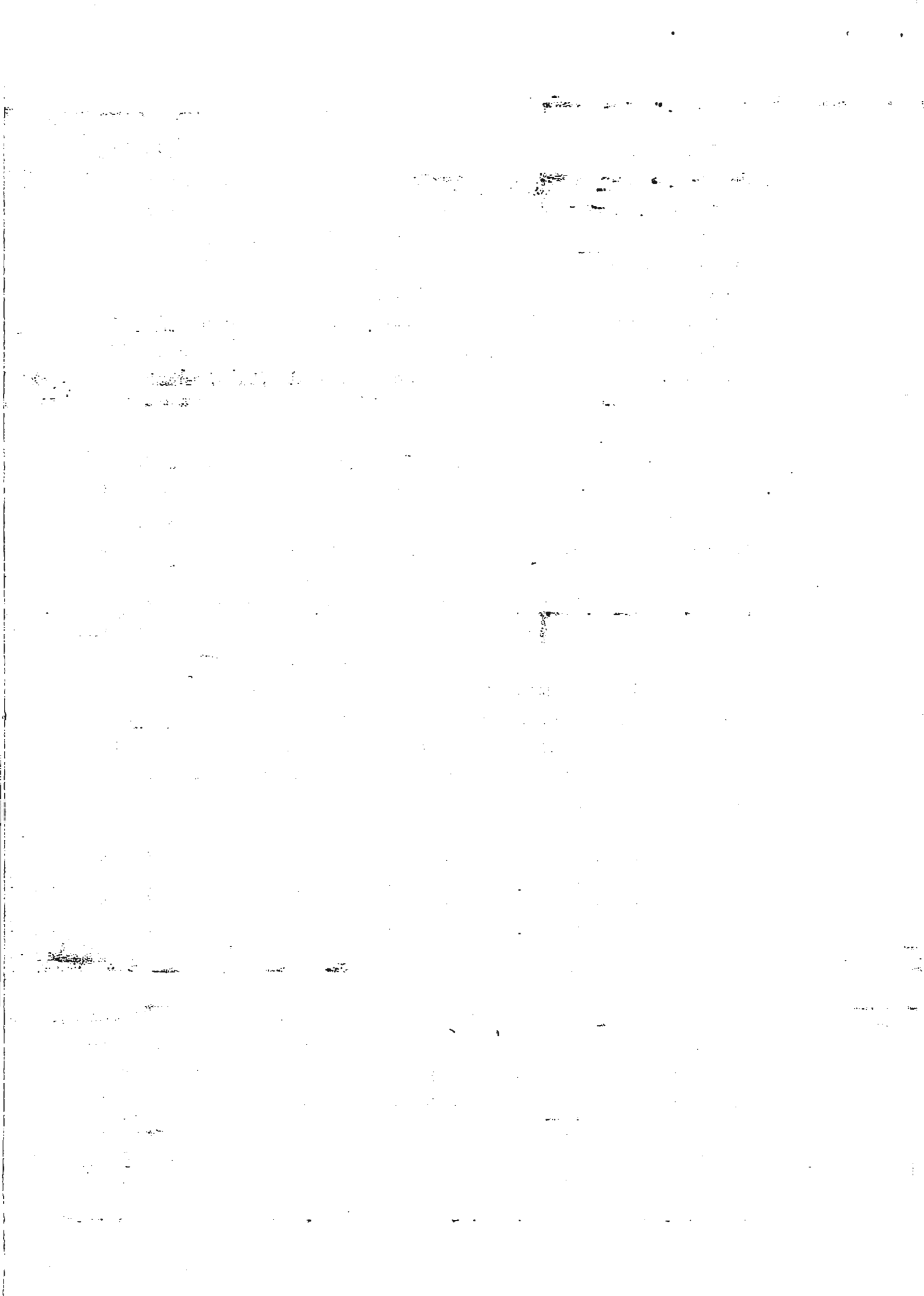
feel some responsibility to one another. (This pattern is further complicated by divorce and remarriage but more of that anon). It makes no sense to concentrate our efforts on one segment of that family system if, with a little probing, we would find that the other segments all play their part in providing or failing to provide sound family support. For example, if the fit young grandmother is fully preoccupied caring for her mother, she will not offer the support that might be wished to her daughter in the care of her children.

Let me clarify the purpose of this discussion. It is not to suggest that organisations which focus upon specific needs and problems are not necessary. On the contrary, some degree of specialisation gives focus and impetus. It is to suggest three things: first, that the knowledge gained from that focus and impetus can be profitably shared with others whose concerns are different but related, to the mutual benefit of all; secondly, that there are some issues in which closer communication and cooperation might make better common cause in pressing for certain developments or reforms; thirdly, that the specialised work we wish to do is impoverished if we do not take sufficient note of the overall effects of social and familial trends.

I turn now to those social issues which may be of the greatest significance in your work in the next 20 or so

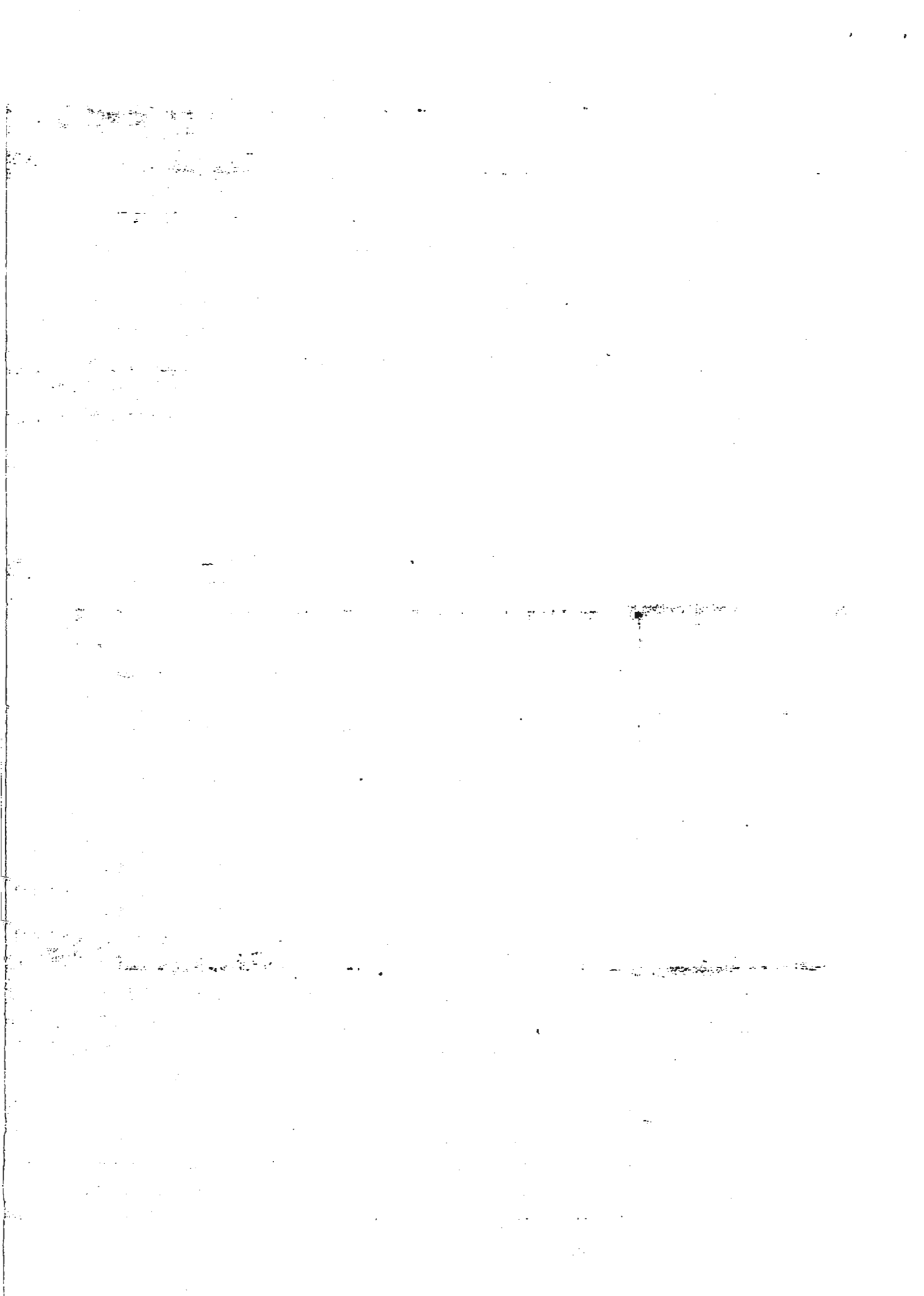
I turn now to those social issues which may be of the greatest significance in your work in the next 20 or so years.

First, reference must be made to the present political and economic climate. Of course, the winds of politics are notoriously fickle and it may be that if I were giving this lecture in 5 years time (just as if I had given it in 1975), the scenario I would draw would be very different. But even if the political climate does change, it will take years to alter the realities of hardship and unemployment, now experienced on a scale unknown since the 1930's.



Let me try to pinpoint my concern, which, though inevitably associated with party politics in peoples' minds, is nothing like as simple as a party political divide. I am not competent to enter a debate about the best way to get the economy on course. That there was agreement between the last Labour administration and this Conservative one, that severe restraint in public expenditure is necessary is not in dispute. But as a social policy analyst, tho' not an economist, I have listened closely and with dismay to the tone and attitudes expressed by those presently in political power towards the most vulnerable in our society. There are a number of strands in this, which are nothing to do with a straightforward acceptance of being hard up and unable to do what one would like to do just now.

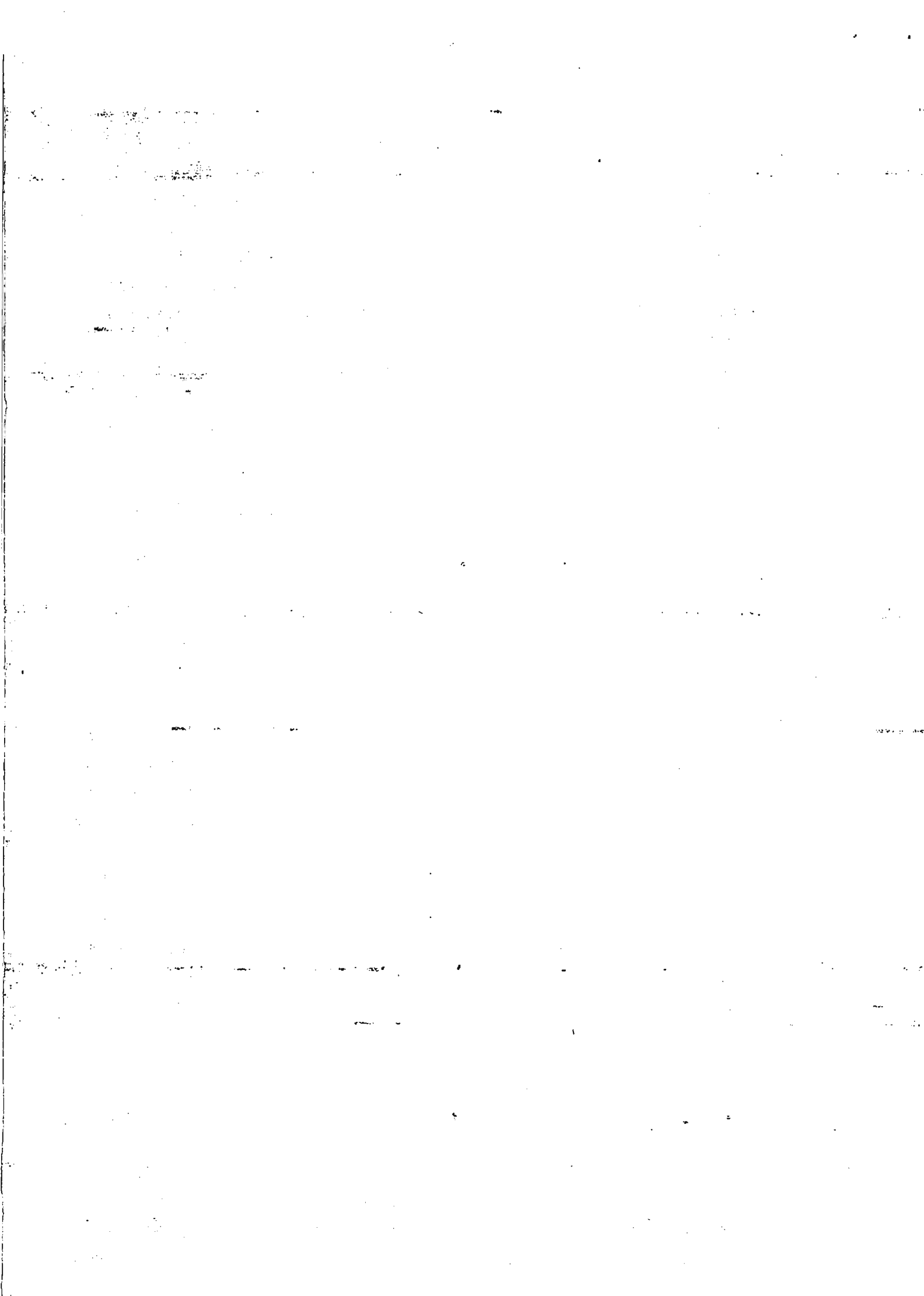
I do not see any drive or momentum towards a more equal distribution of society's wealth and, in particular, towards a reduction in the numbers of those who are, by the standards of the state, in or on the margins of poverty. Amongst these, as you will know, are one parent families and, increasingly, as the government's abolition of earnings related supplement for the unemployed begins to bite, the unemployed, short and long term. The general evidence on this question of relative poverty and undiminished distance between the rich and the poor is powerful and I do not intend to rehearse it here. I will just give you one example. The last Labour administration received proposal from the then last Labour administration received proposal from the then Supplementary Benefits Commission for a 'reform' of the scheme. Amongst other more contentious and difficult proposals, it was proposed to abolish the regulation which does not allow the long term unemployed to qualify for the long term addition. The present government, presumably alarmed by the costs such an addition would involve, have allowed an indefensible regulation to remain in force at a time when millions of people are unemployed through no fault of their own. It cannot be right that a man drawing Supplementary Benefit because he is sick may claim a long term addition but the same man drawing Supplementary Benefit because he is unemployed may not.



This is a small example (tho' not small to the individuals concerned) of much wider questions which ultimately turn on moral and philosophical principles as to what constitutes a good society. Great Britain has lagged behind most other European countries in social security provision and most other European countries have not been dominated by the left. Nor can we be complacent concerning many other aspects of social care, including health provision. The Court Committee on Child Health (1976)² and the Select Committee on Infant Morbidity and Mortality found much to be ashamed of. Always, the evidence points to problems of poverty, poor housing and so on as being associated with infant morbidity and mortality. We have major, alarming deficiencies in housing provision for the frail elderly.

What I want to hear from those who govern us are clear statements of concern, regret, even shame, about these matters, by no means all of which can be laid at their door. And I do not hear them. Instead, how significant this is, you are apparently described as "a wet" if you worry about such matters. The most striking example of moral abdication has apparently described as a wet if you worry about such matters. The most striking example of moral abdication has come in the White Paper 'Growing Older'³, (1981) which makes virtually no statements of policy, as is customary in a White Paper, about a matter of grave social concern and urgency.

My second and related worry is the impression from government of devaluing the public and professional services. Here I tread on delicate ground in speaking to a voluntary organisation, but I do chair a large one myself! It is flattering and attractive to hear government, at last, extolling the merits and advantages of the voluntary sector in opposition to the statutory sector. (There is, of course,

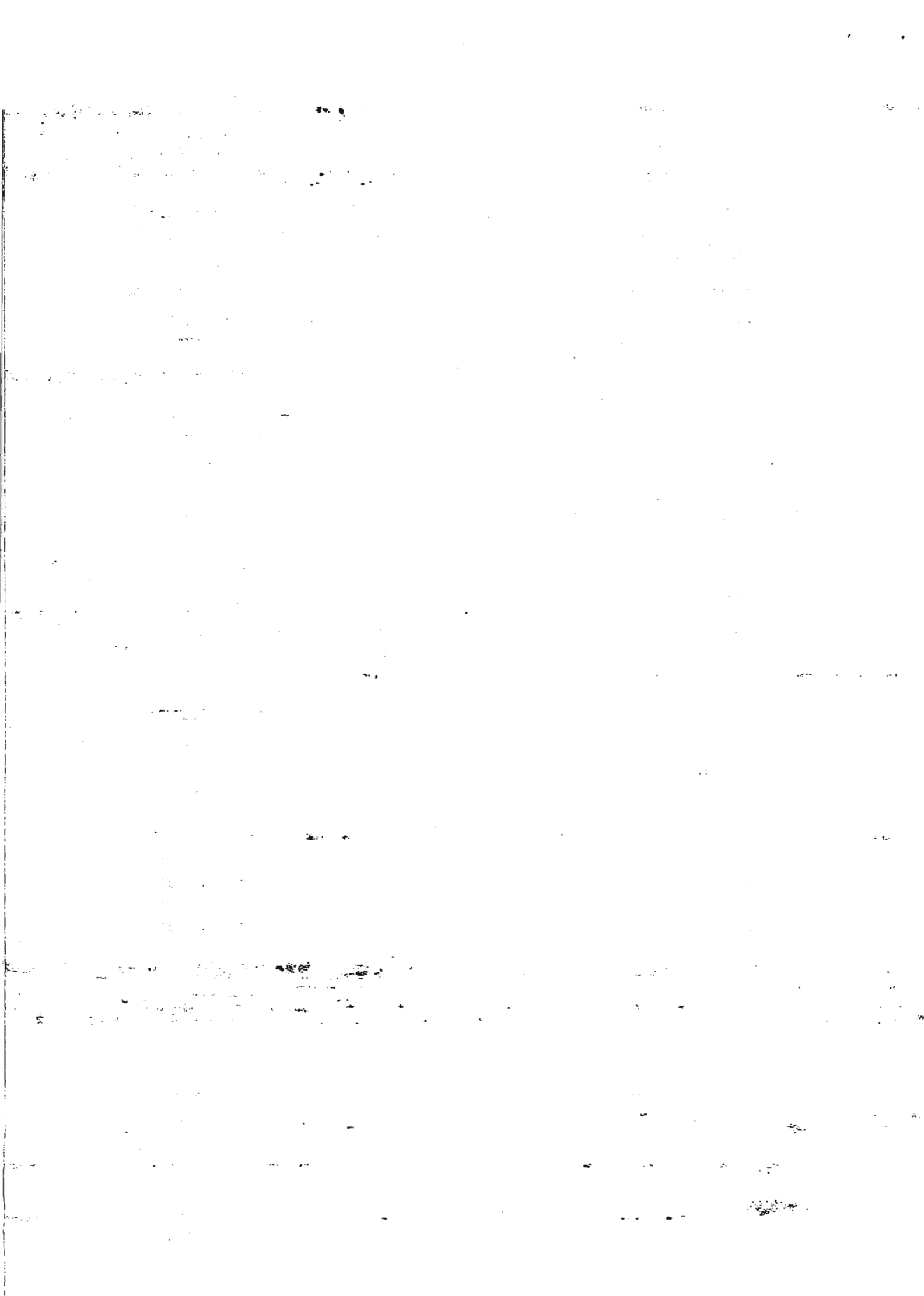


a well known political game of divide and rule). But let us be clear what we are talking about. First, there is the distinction between voluntary and statutory organisations. Clearly what is needed here, in the context of our history, is a strategy for the division of responsibility which examines carefully what each might do best. Interesting questions arise; for example, does a voluntary organisation easily carry two roles simultaneously, that of agent, provider of service, on behalf of the statutory organisations, and that of pioneer, innovator? It is not clear that these issues are being discussed constructively and carefully at central government level. Indeed my colleagues in Age Concern view with some scepticism enthusiasm for the voluntary sector, unless it is matched by appropriate resources. A recent example of confusion, and of a battle fought and won, was over the circular, now withdrawn, from DHSS to Health Authorities, advising them how to raise voluntary funds for the NHS and how to prime the pump. The effect of this on local voluntary fund raising could have been very serious.

The second strand in the devaluing of existing services is in relation to professionalism. Here, of course, an organisation such as NCH is every bit as vulnerable as the statutory services. For it has a longstanding commitment to training and to the professionalisation of its social work service. Curiously, however, it seems to escape the to training and to the professionalisation of its social work service. Curiously, however, it seems to escape the flak!

Here are some of the central issues on which it may be profitable to ponder further.

The words professional and professionalism have become confused by association and by imprecision in their use until we scarcely know what we are attacking or defending. The Sociologists have rightly drawn attention to the less attractive side of professionalisation - the self interested, self protective elements. Social workers have drawn back



from the perceived elitism of the word, disclaiming role and status superior to the clients. Yet we are left with a need to describe a way of approaching the task which is purposeful, economical and skilled, all the attributes we attribute readily to a 'good professional', as we say in sport or music. And in human relationships, we need a word to describe an approach in which our personal feelings are controlled and refined to deal more effectively with other peoples' troubles.

Some of you may know that I have a book shortly coming out on the subject of specialisation in social services teams. One of the arguments for specialisation concerns the need to acquire knowledge and skill in greater depth in a more limited area. This, of course, assumes knowledge and skill is there to be acquired. In my view, this is so and that the growing volume of knowledge including research makes it essential that practitioners do have opportunities to specialise so that they can apply that knowledge purposefully.

It seems to me there has been an unholy conspiracy between the left and the right in politics to denigrate this proper notion of professionalism. Both have played into the hands of the ill-tempered, and unscholarly prejudices of Lait and Brewer⁴, (1980) whose influence upon those politicians already unsympathetic to social work has not been unconsiderable. politicians already unsympathetic to social work has not been unconsiderable.

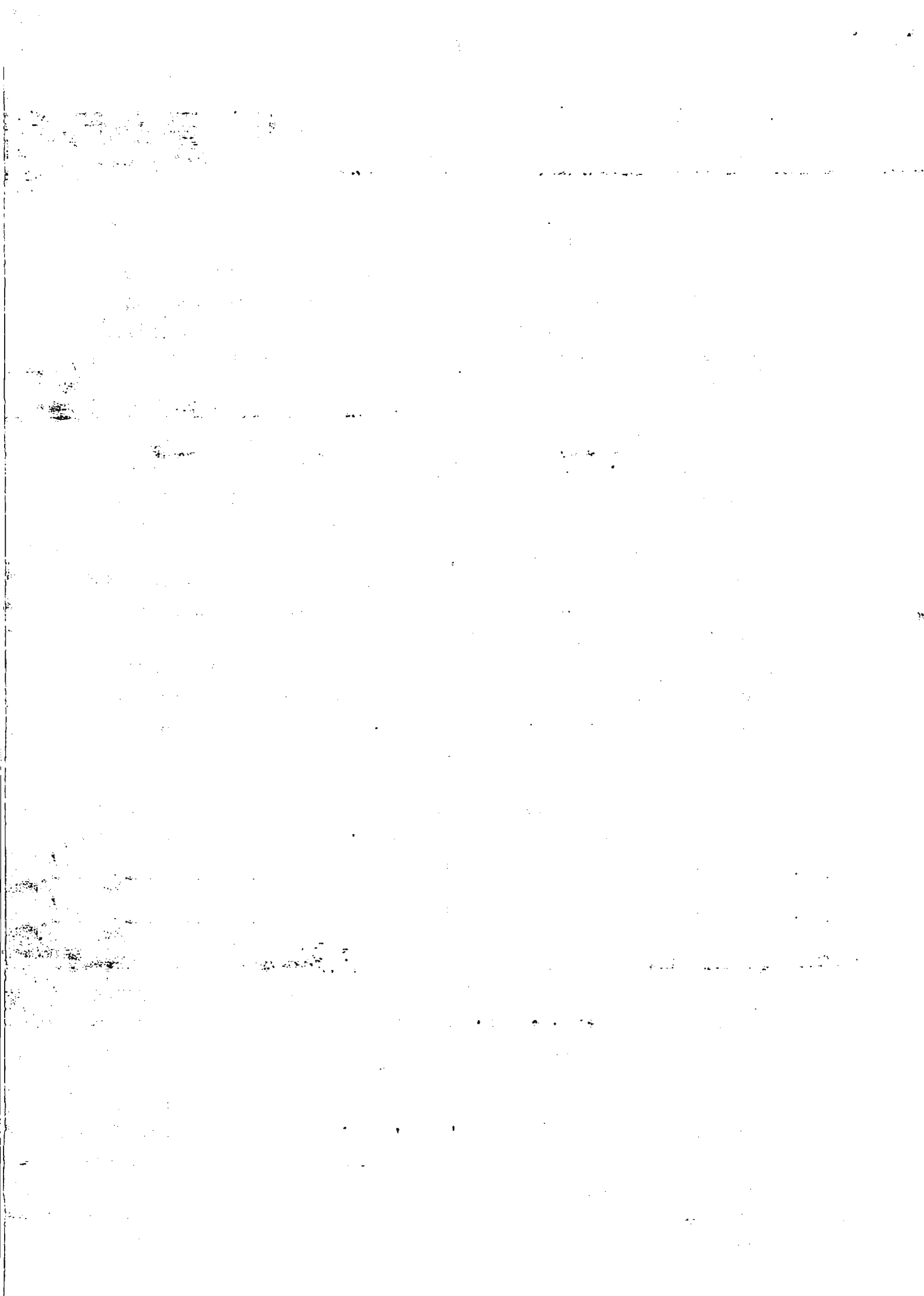
So to sum up so far: I am suggesting that there are grounds for great anxiety that the values and attitudes conveyed by the present government are inimical to the moral foundations of a compassionate society, one of whose foremost priorities must be to improve the quality of life for the vulnerable frail and dependent. This is not to deny that restraint must be exercised or difficult choices made. But in education, health and social security amongst others, trends in policy can be seen which will serve to protect and give more to him that hath already. And that is unacceptable. I have also sought to draw attention to

in devaluing the people who offer the services upon which so many depend.

I turn now to more specific issues and trends. Inextricably linked to the foregoing is, of course, the problem of unemployment. The huge challenge of creating new employment is largely (tho' not necessarily entirely) outside the control of people like ourselves. But we have much to do.

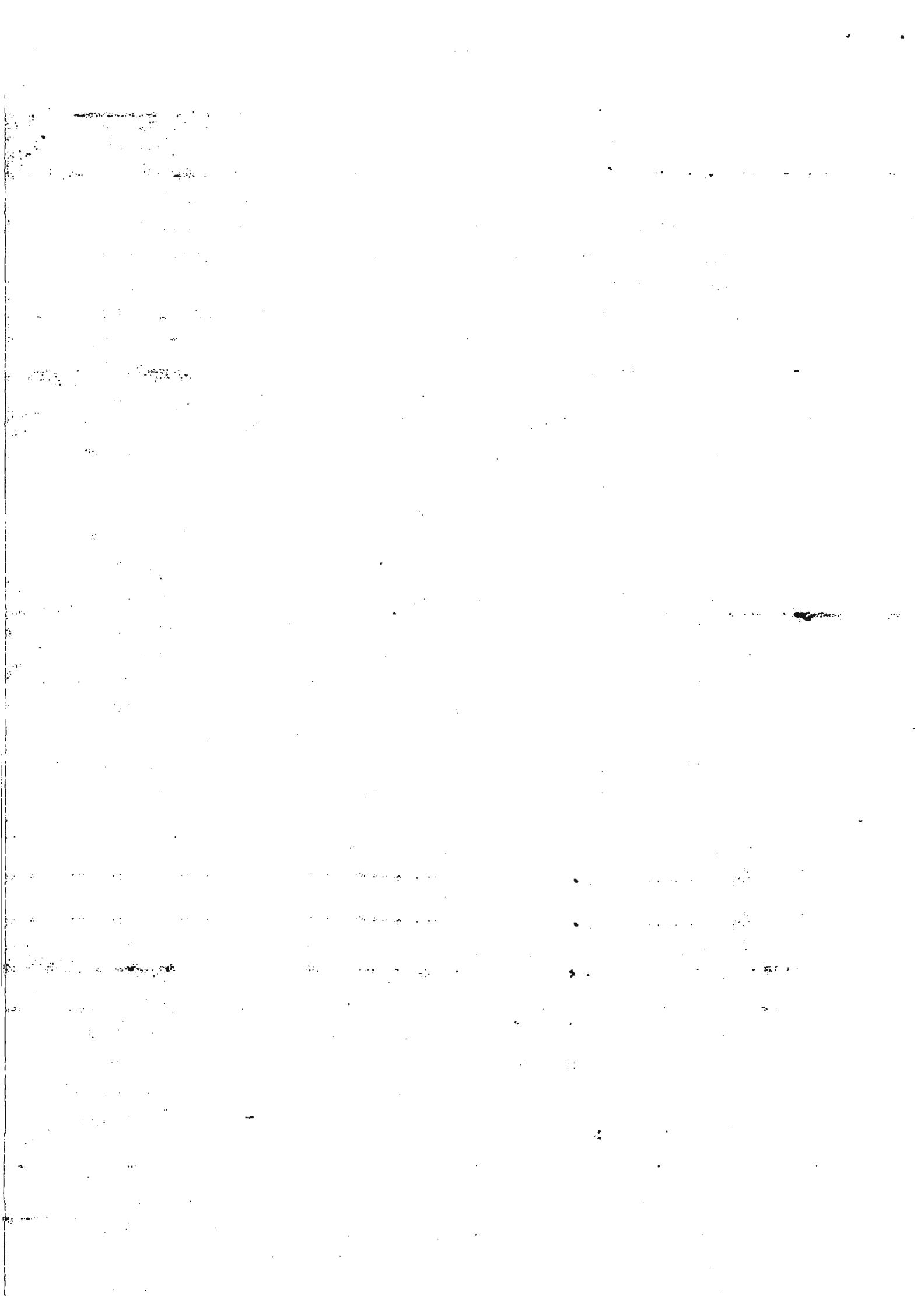
Unemployment, as everybody knows, may bring financial hardship, psychological and physical problems and family stress. We are bound to see an increase in related family problems which will sharpen the need for family support and therapeutic help from social workers - amongst others. I hope we will rise to the challenge. Social workers in this country have not been traditionally active in this field which opens up many possibilities for a different focus and style of intervention. Whatever our long term hopes and goals may be for the unemployed and their families, in the short run there will be casualties who need the best social and psychological first aid we can offer.

A second, longer term challenge is for all who care for children and young people in a parental role. The indications are that the days of full employment for the less skilled in our society may have gone for ever. Here again is a particularly tragic example; that to him that does not have much will not be given. For amongst the children and young people organisations such as yours care for, there have always been a substantial proportion who even in better times presented employment problems. As I read the stress that the Warnock Committee⁵ (1978) placed on interprofessional work at school leaving stage to find employment for handicapped young people, my heart sinks. A teacher at a workshop I was at recently remarked she had heard it frankly said that job placement for handicapped children at present was simply "not on".



Here indeed is a challenge to us all that goes beyond conventional boundaries and definitions of tasks and roles. The challenge is concerned with two elements - usually inseparable but not necessarily. The first challenge is to ensure that handicapped young people have sufficient money, which we would in other times have expected them to earn, to enable them to live reasonably satisfying lives with the same amount of choice that their peers expect. It is futile to talk about alternatives to work unless there is money to buy some of the things that make life richer and more fun. But that alone is not enough. One of my puzzles and regrets is how little the secondary school has engaged the minds and feelings of the less able adolescent. This is in striking contrast to the enthusiasm of primary school children of all abilities. Thus talk about leisure pursuits in a world where less time is spent in work and less work is available must imply finding a key to unlock excitement and enthusiasm for activities which can be pursued and sustained in leisure. If we do not find that key, social consequences of the utmost gravity may ensue. These are surely areas in which voluntary organisations such as your own are well fitted to experiment. For it has to be recognised that even tho' work for many was tedious, repetitive and humdrum, it provided a frame of reference for peer relationships and a sense of occupational identity and some kind of status. Of course work need not be the only or main source for these. But so far we have dismally failed kind of status. Of course work need not be the only or main source for these. But so far we have dismally failed to offer young people alternative sources of such social stability. I am fearful of the price we will pay for an economic policy, however rational and economically justified, which has left hundreds of thousands of young people bitter, disillusioned and lost in a society which seems to have no place for them. The sinister influence of the National Front and allied organisations thrive on such alienation. I would rather we were economically than morally bankrupt.

The second social trend I wish to refer to concerns changing patterns of marriage and divorce. I spoke earlier of the 4 generation family. But that is, of course, too simple. We are in an age of step children, step parents,



step grand parents. Those with computers can work out the permutations. But the facts are that there has been a four fold increase in divorce over the past 20 years: of those divorcing now one third are likely to remarry; of those under 30 when divorced, 80% are likely to remarry. Now that is an issue about which feelings run strongly. No doubt there will be many amongst you who regret, even deplore the trend and wish to work towards the creation of a stabler family system. That is for each to decide according to his conscience. But whatever your angle on that, the reality for social care is that we have now and will have for the foreseeable future stresses and strains in family relationships caused or exacerbated by these multiple relationships. I am not sure that workers in child welfare generally have been as good in helping with this as, for example, in some foster placements where very similar emotions of depression and anxiety consequent upon loss and jealousy occasioned by 'shared' relationships are aroused. Time permits me to raise only one other major social trend - that of working women.

In 1977, of women aged 25 - 34, 52% were working: 67% aged 35 - 44 and 6.6% of those aged 45 - 59. Of course not all worked full time and figures may now look different with increased unemployment. But it is clear that womens' earnings are not pin money. For example, out of 11 million working wives, 7 million contributed 25% of family income and one third were earning 30/35% of family income.

Recently, a colleague of mine worked hard to assess the status of the evidence regarding the effects on children of working mothers. This is bound to be an issue at times of unemployment.

A careful appraisal of the evidence provides no support for the view that mothers who work adversely affect their children. On the contrary, in some cases where mothers are unsupported, their own likelihood of becoming depressed is diminished by their going out to work and this must benefit

their children. (Brown and Harris 1978)⁶. Of course, children vary in their reactions to being separated and the art of good mothering includes an awareness of what a particular child can cope with. It is and should remain a sensitive decision taken in the context of a particular child and family. However, what the research does show is a continuing controversy and considerable doubt about the variable quality of alternative care, ranging as it does from private minding through play groups, day nurseries and so on.

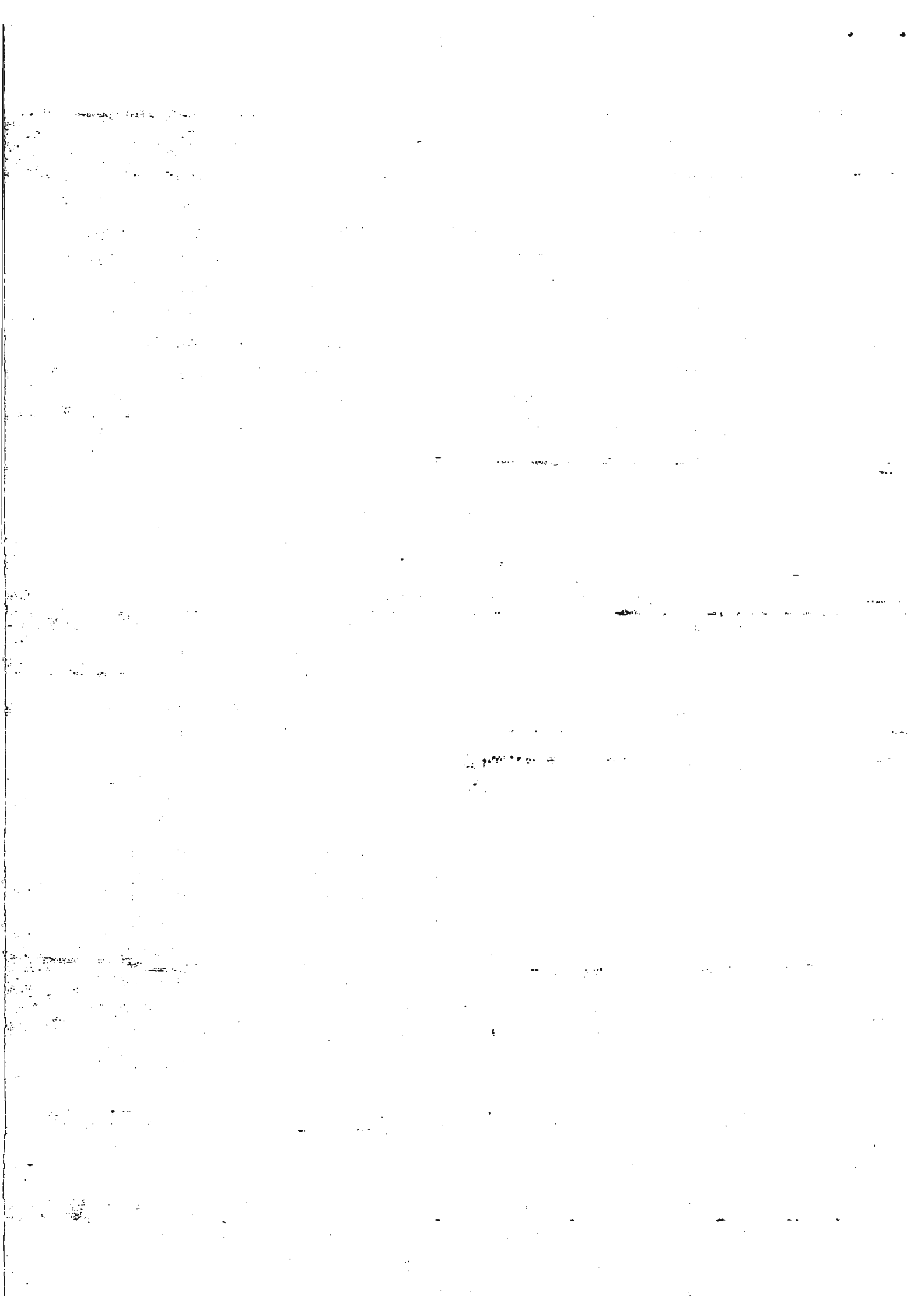
It would seem to me that the evidence of the modern family's financial dependence upon womens' earnings and of mothers' enjoyment and wish to work, but often part time only, outside the home, is so strong that our social obligation is to work towards the provision of better alternative care. Our professional responsibility is to look with a clear head at the evidence, both of what women want and what the effects are, and then to move in with strategies to help to smooth over the rough places.

So what, then, is the burden of my song? I have identified 4 areas of major social concern. The first was elusive, but perhaps the most important, and was about the relationship between moral values and political attitudes: then I have spoken of unemployment, of divorce, or women in employment. There could be many more but they illustrate then I have spoken of unemployment, of divorce, or women in employment. There could be many more but they illustrate two central points I wished to make. First, those involved in social care must be responsive - and quickly - to the strains and stresses which new social trends create for individuals, families and communities. There is no time to beat our breasts and deplore what is happening, tho' there may be lessons to be learnt. Dynamic social systems as sophisticated as those in our society constantly throw us new problems as old ones are conquered or alleviated. The millenium is for another time and another place. Our claim to be heard in the field of social care depends on the precision with which we diagnose the problems as they arise and the strategies and energy which we put forward for their

This requires of us all flexibility and adaptability in roles and tasks as individuals and in the working structures we create. There are innate forces of conservatism in all of us to do the job as we've always done it, to disregard those elements which do not fit in with the work as we have defined it. Nor should this conservatism be portrayed solely in negative terms. For much of life is about the tension between innovation and conservation and the tension is necessary to social health. In the most successful organisations one can usually spot certain individuals who represent the one and the other and who balance each other up!

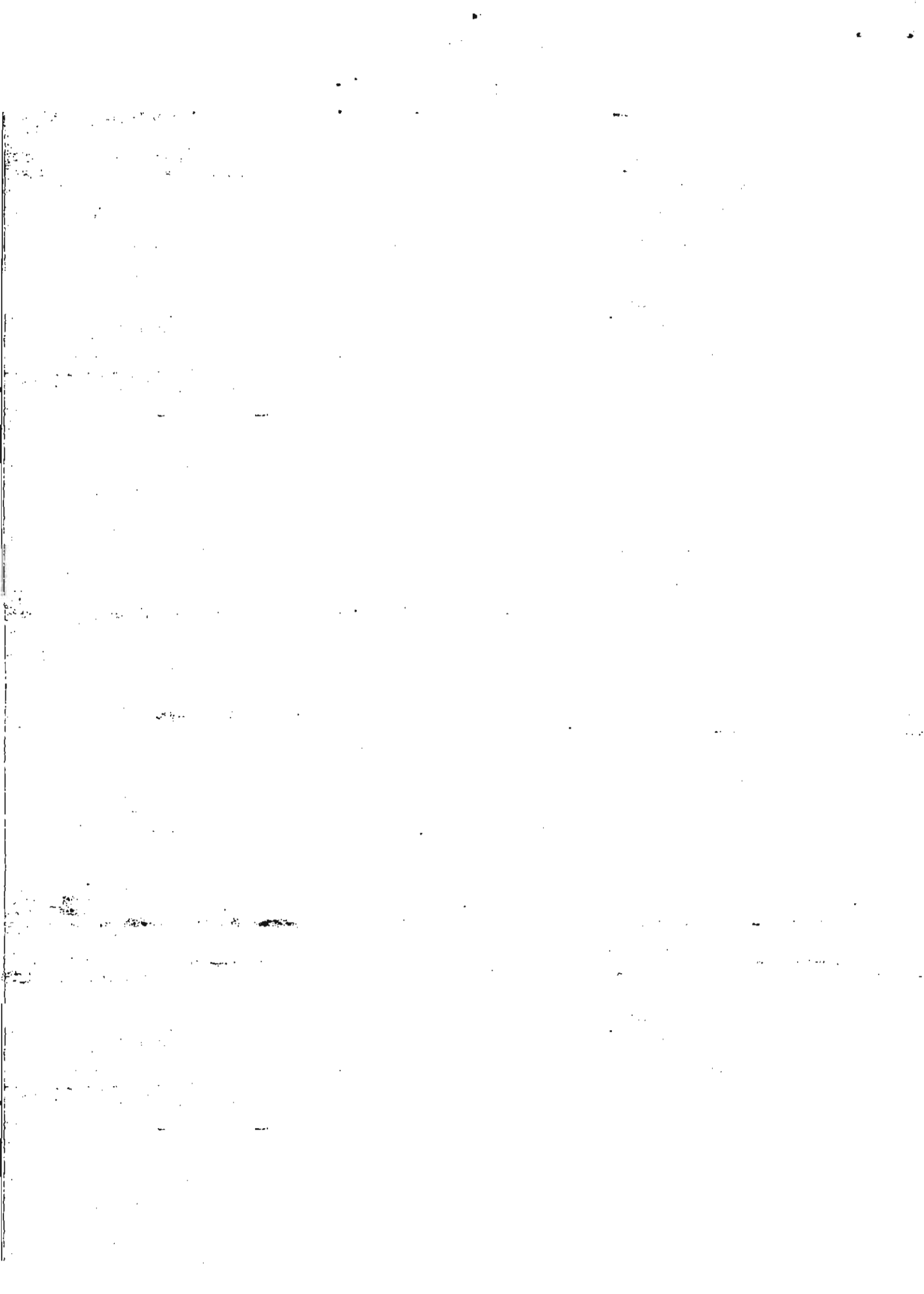
That being acknowledged, it does seem to me that we have seen, and are seeing, some massive social change in our society within a span of 20 years and that this is bound to produce increased tension between those who wish to preserve what is proven and valued in the status quo and those who want 'to shift' the boundaries of their activities.

Let me give an example which I hope is of particular relevance to you. I referred earlier to the blurring of boundaries between residential and community care. This raises important questions about the boundaries between those traditionally described as residential and field workers. The whole notion of residential care comes under scrutiny when we begin to ask residential staff to work with families outside the context of the home, to incorporate parents more into plans of care and so on. Two problems are raised: one concerns the temperament, age and stage of people concerned. We should not devalue the contribution of those who do not feel able radically to change the role which they have defined - or had defined for them - in times past. The second question, however, is how to encourage people to venture into unknown waters. The lessons of the Seebom reorganisation have been learnt too late. An act of reorganisation does not enable people to work in new ways although it may provide a structure for them to do so. But their attitudes to change per se and fears of it and to the new work they are asked to do need to be understood and worked



It is here that the issue of education and training becomes crucial. If what I have been saying has convinced you, then it would seem clear that any form of training for social care - in relation to the problems I have outlined, and many others, must above all equip people to think and act generically. By that, I mean that they must see connections; in the course of a working lifetime, they may move across problems of different age groups, across different manifestations of similar problems (as, for example, those in fostering and in stepparenting). They must have a conception of social service which is wide enough to embrace ways of working not customarily defined as social work, as for example in the area of unemployed youth and leisure. They must look upwards and outwards to make some assessment of emergent social trend and social need, rather than offer service solely on a model determined by an earlier social situation and organisational definitions.

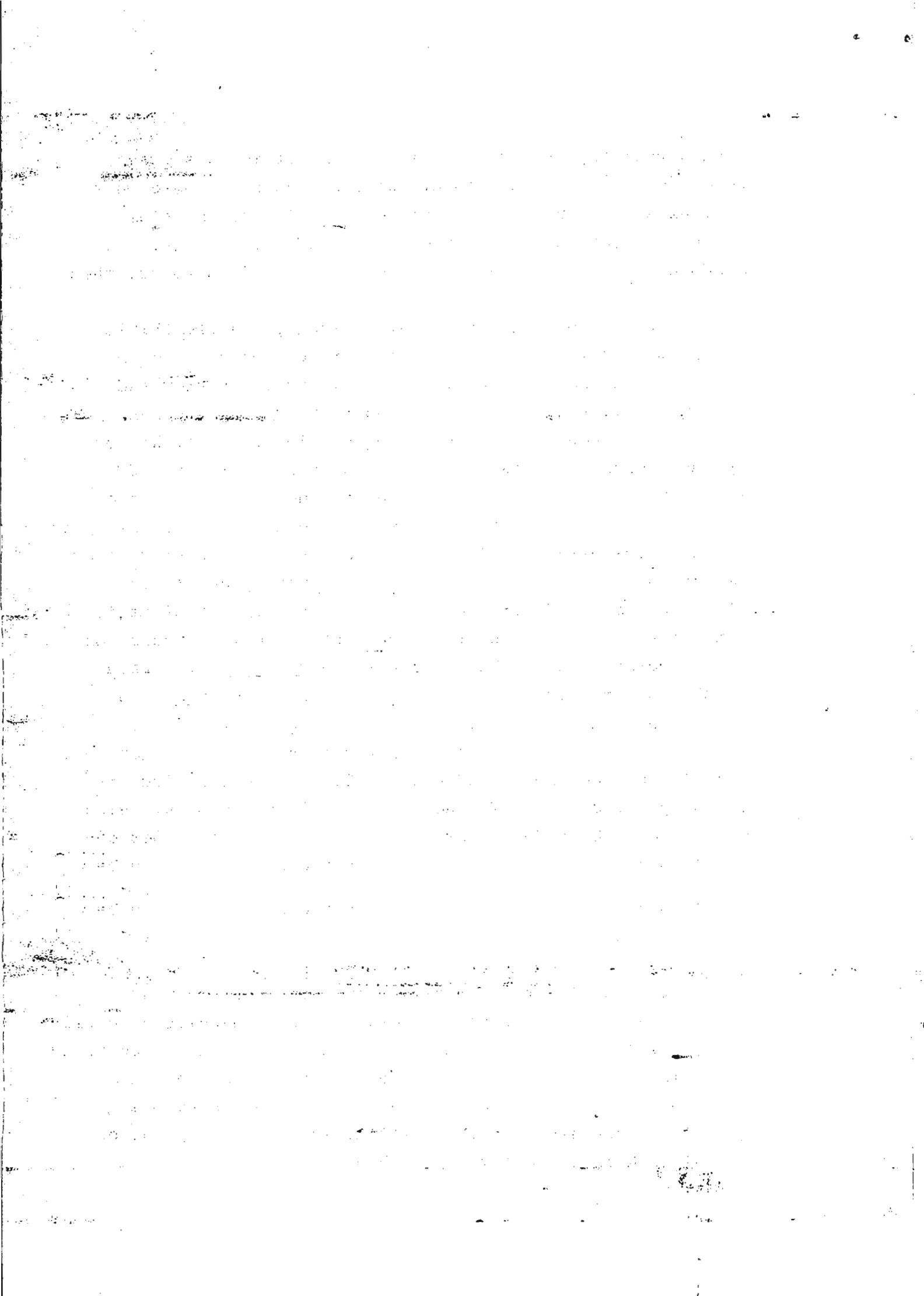
A tall order! Yet at the same time, from employing agencies, we hear criticisms of social work courses which do not equip people adequately for "the job", as that is currently prescribed. Often CQSW products are compared unfavourably with those from CSS courses whose focus has been more precise. I am not here to defend CQSW courses. There are bad ones and good ones - and my definition of good and bad may not be yours. What I do want to argue is that there is no way forward for social work or social good and bad may not be yours. What I do want to argue is that there is no way forward for social work or social service if we persist in a notion of qualification as a 'once and for all' equipment for the job. This is so manifestly absurd if you put it in the context of widespread discussion of updating and retraining in so many areas of work, industrial and professional, that it is amazing how persistent is the notion of the finished product in social work and social service. All those with a commitment to social care must insist that programmes of training, of different kinds, lengths and for different purposes must be built in to the professional life of the social care worker.



What arrogance, masked as anti-elitism, it is to suggest we do not need to learn about welfare rights, unemployment, marital stress in second marriages, the leisure problems of handicapped youngsters and so on. If the Lord gave us minds as well as hearts, He presumably wanted us to use them.

We will need all the mental ingenuity and flexibility we can muster to grapple with some of our emergent social problems. Although understandable, it is in my view sad that programmes of advanced and post qualifying studies were slow to emerge and are now being nipped if not killed by the economic frosts. For the credibility of both CSS and CQSW programmes is in the long run dependent on these developments. CSS alone can lead to a degree of specialisation which reduces staff mobility and fosters a narrow view of an employer-defined task which is not adequately challenged. CQSW alone may indeed create 'jacks of all trades' if it is not backed up with specialist training to equip workers for a particular task at that time - for not for ever. Freed of the constraints of immediacy, CQSW courses could help to pioneer new ways of providing social work service. But they will do so only if their partnership with the agencies, who, it must be remembered provide 50% of the teaching, is mutually encouraging of innovation. CQSW courses have also much more work to do in making the conceptual links between problems and issues and tutors, as any other group, may be resistant to change.

But accepting those reservations, it is in my mind almost tragic that training, whether within agencies or outside institutions, is a prime target for cuts at a time of economic restraint. And there is plenty of evidence that this has been so. Above all, the difficulties in sustaining post qualifying courses at a crucial time in the development of social work is extremely regrettable.



So, in conclusion, my plea is that we will strive to identify the areas and issues in which intervention to our social wellbeing is crucial; that we will strive to identify the knowledge and skills relevant to that intervention; that we will consistently and patiently point out that professionalism need not imply elitism nor lack of love. On the contrary it may be the best we can offer in some circumstances to frail, vulnerable and dependent people. And that, in the cause of providing better social care, we fight for appropriate education and training, with no more apology than would be offered by a doctor or a computer scientist in the 1980's.

Social care, then, is a matter for the heart and the head.

OS/15.6.81

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